Democracy in Action:

Public Engagement in Strathcona County

by

Dawn Green

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Community Engagement

School of Public Health

University of Alberta

Abstract

Public engagement is an important part of democratic municipal decision-making, but determining what motivates citizens to participate has not been well researched. This research used a 10-question online survey ($N = 36$), followed by semistructured individual interviews ($N = 7$) and focus groups ($N = 2$), to answer the question, "What role does democracy have in motivating Strathcona County citizens to participate in in-person public engagement sessions?" Findings indicate that egoism was the main reason participants attended public engagement meetings, and some interviewees had not considered that public engagement processes support democracy. Through discussion in public engagement meetings, citizens can work toward the common good through enlightened self-interest. The deliberation that happens in a public engagement process increases understanding of democratic ideals and hones citizens' skills. Municipalities can increase awareness of the importance of public engagement in democracies by educating the public in simple ways. Suggestions for further research include increased study of all facets of municipal public engagement.

Keywords: public engagement, municipal government, democracy, common good, altruism, egoism, enlightened self-interest, Strathcona County

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Dawn Green. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Participation in Public Engagement Meetings: Exploring the Motivations of Strathcona County Citizens,” Pro00099108, July 2, 2020.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to two members of the former Faculty of Extension: Drs. Kyle Whitfield and Mary Beckie. Dr. Whitfield was my wonderful supervisor and provided insightful guidance and continual support during my graduate student journey. Dr. Beckie, the chair of the Master of Arts, Community Engagement (MACE) program, was the first person I met when I was trying to decide if this degree was right for me. Dr. Beckie was very encouraging and was the professor for my first MACE graduate class, "Theoretical Foundations of the Scholarship of Engagement." The class was challenging, and I learned about many philosophers: Foucault (how I hated Foucault!), Freire, Marx, and Gramsci, among others. This class set the groundwork for my success in the MACE program.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my survey participants and my interviewees. I literally could not have done it without you! My interviews took place in the fall of 2020 when COVID-19 was raging. Zoom meetings were still new to many of the interviewees, and I thank them for their patience and understanding when glitches occurred.

I am blessed to have many friends (too many to name here) who encouraged me, listened to my frustrations, reviewed drafts of assignments, held my hand, and dried my tears when necessary. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. I simply could not have persevered without my very good-looking and wonderful husband, Gary Shelton. It has taken me a decade to fight my way through a graduate degree, and he has been there cheering me on the whole time. Gary read countless papers, came to my rescue to help me with formatting said papers ad nauseum, and provided crucial technical support on a daily

basis. I could not have done this without his ongoing love and support. Thanks are also due to my two daughters, Quinn Shelton and Kira Shelton. It was interesting being back at university when they were also University of Alberta students! They commiserated with me while slogging through their own assignments and presentations and reviewed many of my papers. Thanks to the three of you for being with me every step of the way. And them's the facts!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

A dog control bylaw review. A study for a municipal cemetery. A diversity and inclusion policy. A water fill station plan. The Bremner Area Concept Plan. These are just a few of the many public engagement processes that have taken place in Strathcona County, Alberta, since 2015. Public engagement is democracy in action, as evidenced by the requirement for municipalities Alberta to provide opportunities for their citizens to have input on matters of municipal concern as stipulated by the province's Municipal Government Act (2000/2022). However, many municipalities in Alberta have been actively conducting public engagement for well over a decade that goes beyond the legislative mandate. Strathcona County approved a public engagement policy in 2010 (Strathcona County, 2019), the third municipality in Alberta to do so after Calgary, which approved one in 2003 (City of Calgary, n.d.), and Edmonton, which approved one in 2006 (City of Edmonton, 2021). Elected officials and administrative staff in municipalities across the province rely on the input and opinions of citizens to contribute to municipal decisions as deemed appropriate. This research examined the role democracy plays in motivating Strathcona County citizens to attend in-person public engagement sessions.

Researcher Positionality

Each researcher should identify and reflect on their position of power and biases in the research process to gain insight about the research process approach and data generation (Bourke, 2014). This acknowledgement is important because mixed methods research and writing are closely aligned with the author's insights and experiences, which may impact the participants' contributions (Creswell, 2013). I have worked in municipal public engagement for almost three decades and have been employed by Strathcona County for 18 years. Over that time, I have planned, implemented, and evaluated hundreds of public engagement processes.

I am also an active member of my professional association, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). IAP2 (n.d.-b) serves members' needs by organizing events, publishing research that sheds a light on issues specific to public participation, advocating for public participation, supporting research in the field, and providing technical assistance to further the practice of public participation. It also provides various training opportunities, in which I have regularly and gratefully participated. My present position at Strathcona County requires that I provide leadership and direction to staff and consultants who are involved in public engagement activities. I write policies, directives, and procedures that support public engagement within the county. I also support the development and implementation of staff training around public engagement.

Throughout the research process, I have reflected deeply on how my knowledge and experience have influenced all aspects of my research. I have relied on the academic literature to help me reflect as a researcher while still recognizing the significance of my experience as a public engagement practitioner.

Research Question, Purpose, and Significance

Public engagement is increasingly important in today's Western democracies (McComas, 2003; Nabatchi, 2012). I have used Strathcona County's (2019) definition of public engagement: "a formal, defined, interactive process between the municipality, the public and stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding, gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions" (p. 1). My research question was, "What role does democracy have in motivating Strathcona County citizens to participate in in-person public engagement sessions?" Citizens in democracies have the right to contribute to decision-making that affects their lives (Kelshaw & Gastil, 2007; McComas, 2003). In-person

public engagement processes at the municipal level have been used to gather citizen input on everything from bylaw revisions to area structure plans and reviews of municipal services. Sometimes these sessions are well attended by the public, whereas other times, only a handful of people might attend. There appears to be little academic research regarding the importance that democracy plays in motivating citizens to attend municipal public engagement sessions.

Thesis Organization

This chapter introduces the topic and its significance. Chapter 2 reviews key literature on democracy, public engagement, and the common good, as well as motivation theory (altruism, egoism, and enlightened self-interest). In the third chapter I outline my ethics approval, my methodological approach (mixed methods), the paradigm I chose (pragmatism), phenomenology, and how I collected and analyzed the data using grounded theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how my research is trustworthy. The results gathered from this research are found in Chapter 4. My survey results as well as the findings from the individual interviews and focus groups are presented. The final chapter discusses why the results from my research are important by connecting the results to the literature review. It also presents recommendations to set the foundation for next steps and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

"Democracy requires space for compromise, and compromise is best won through acknowledging the legitimate concerns of the other. We need to bridge opposing positions, not accentuate differences" (Yankelovich, 2004, para. 5). This quotation sets the stage for the second chapter of my thesis. In the last few decades, citizens have demanded more of a say in decisions that affect their lives, especially at the municipal government level (Nabatchi, 2012; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). There are many ways in which the public can have its say about municipal issues in a democracy. People can write letters to, or meet with, elected officials. They can speak at council meetings, complete surveys, write letters to the editor of the local newspaper, or attend public engagement sessions. All of these actions contribute to the concept of democracy; however, they are not part of a "formal, defined, interactive" (Strathcona County, 2019, p. 1) public engagement process. The purpose of my research was to examine what role democracy plays in motivating Strathcona County citizens to attend in-person public engagement sessions.

My literature review first examines the broad concept of democracy and how it is connected to public engagement, particularly at the municipal level. A discussion of the common good follows. The chapter finishes with an examination of motivation theory and then ties it to the concepts of democracy, public engagement, and the common good.

Democracy

This section investigates the connections between democracy and the concept of public engagement and how the two support each other. The word *democracy* comes from the Greek *demos*, meaning the people or the many, and *kratos*, meaning rule or strength (Barber, 2003; Crick, 2007; Oxford Reference, 2000b). Democracy is a political system in which "all eligible citizens have the right to participate, either directly or indirectly, in making decisions that affect

them" (Parliament of Canada, 2021, p. 8). This brief definition belies the complexities of defining democracy. Some political theorists have described democracy as notoriously vague, ambiguous, contradictory, indefinable, elastic, and even diabolical (Fierlbeck, 2008; Johnston & Pocklington, 1994; Mazo, 2005; Pearson, 1992; R. C. Post, 2006). Broadly speaking, democracy is a way to make group decisions based on the "equality of input among the participants" (Christiano, 2015, p. 85).

There are several consistent themes regarding what constitutes democracy. These include recurring elections that are free and fair, citizens having access to alternative sources of information other than what the government provides or controls, the right of citizens to associate with whom they wish, citizens being free to form their own organizations, and citizens freely expressing their opinions without fear of reprisal (Butler, 2021; Dahl & Shapiro, 2015; Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Fierlbeck, 2008). Christiano (2018) proposed three basic ideals of democracy: popular sovereignty, political equality, and discussion. The first ideal, popular sovereignty, entails fulfilling the political will of citizens through the concept of majority rule (Haxhiu & Alidemaj, 2021). For the second ideal, political equality, all adult citizens are included in the decision-making and have "a right to participate as an equal" (Christiano, 2018, p. 3). Finally, for the ideal of discussion, citizens have both a right and an obligation to express their thoughts on decision-making matters and to listen to others' views on the topic. Johnston and Pocklington (1994) supported this assertion and added that citizens should, to the greatest degree possible, actively participate in public engagement processes regarding issues of public concern. The goal of democracy is to make collective choices for citizens in a fair way (Butler, 2021).

With this information about the basic principles of democracy, it is important to note that governments in Canada at all three levels operate as representative democracies (also called indirect democracy), meaning that citizens exercise their right to make political decisions through their elected representatives who serve for a limited amount of time (Saward, 2003). Johnston and Pocklington (1994) argued that representative government is almost synonymous with the way democracy is practiced. Canadian jurisdictions also operate as liberal democracies, a form of representative democracy in which maximizing individuals' basic rights and freedoms are the most important considerations in any majority decision (Pocklington, 1994). The government's role in a liberal democracy is to intervene to preserve those individual rights and freedoms (Butler, 2021). Additionally, the practice of liberal democracies means that much of how citizens conduct themselves and what they do is none of the government's concern (Johnston & Pocklington, 1994).

Many academics have stated that that engaging citizens in decision-making is crucial to democracy: the citizens involved strengthen their democratic attitudes by participating (Barber, 2003; Christiano, 2018; Gauvin & Abelson, 2006; Nabatchi, 2012; Prugh et al., 1999; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014), as it is hoped that participation will lead to discussion that is fair and open. Equally important is that governments provide ongoing accountability to the public by developing processes and institutions that are regularly reported to the community (Dahl & Shapiro, 2015; Fierlbeck, 2008).

Democracy, Citizenship, and Citizens

The political participation of diverse citizens in matters of common concern is central to the concept of democracy. In this case, the word "political" means having citizens vote as well as involving them in making decisions regarding public concerns (Johnston & Pocklington, 1994).

Even the word “politics” has one meaning of which some people may be unaware. According to Stoker (1996), politics “involves collective decision making” (p. 192). Politics links cooperation and conflict in an intricate way (Heywood, 2013), which is the point of public engagement. Simply put, public engagement is democracy in action.

Why define the words “politics” and “political”? I do this because they are inextricably linked to the concepts of the citizen and citizenship. Defining the two latter words is not a simple task. Most people would agree that being a citizen generally means belonging to a community of some kind (Oldfield, 1990). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford Reference, 2000a) provides this definition of *citizen*, among others: “a legally recognized subject or national of a state, commonwealth, or other polity, either native or naturalized, having certain rights, privileges, or duties” (para. 2a). Leydet (2017) suggested a straightforward definition that supports the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* meaning: “A citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership” (para. 1). Warner (2012) used a slightly different approach that suggests a citizen is a person who is both protected by the state (i.e., the government) while being a part of the state, and who uses the privileges and rights that being a citizen provides.

Lister (1998), Pykett et al. (2010), and Oldfield (1990) have argued that being a citizen requires two distinctions: being a citizen and acting like one. Being a citizen involves benefiting from the rights that flow from meaningfully participating both socially and politically in the community. Lister believed that acting as a citizen encompasses working towards the full potential of the status of citizenship. She then clarified that these two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Lister’s assertion was buoyed by Barber (2003), who stated that once the “masses” start to deliberate, discuss, and contribute, they become citizens.

Now onto citizenship, which has a broader meaning. Marshall (1987), the famous British sociologist, defined citizenship as a status given to those who are full members of a locality, and all of these members are equal by virtue of the designation of that status. Many academics have agreed that each citizen should participate in political decisions (Allen, 1998; Balibar, 1988; Marshall, 1987; Oldfield, 1990). In fact, there is "an expectation that the practice of citizenship [will be] engaged on a wide scale" (Oldfield, 1990, p. 183), and this practice relies on actual opportunities to act as citizens (Oldfield, 1990). Merrifield (2002) supported this view. She believed that citizenship should be considered as taking an active role in decisions that affect the lives of people who live in the community.

In his often-quoted classic essay "Citizenship and Social Class," Marshall (1987) presented three elements of citizenship: civil, political, and social. The civil element includes the rights that are required to guarantee individual freedom. Here Marshall specifically included liberty, thought, who and how to worship, the ability to complete contracts, and the right to access the justice system. The civil element is sometimes called the legal element by others in the field (Merrifield, 2002). Citizenship also encompasses a political element (Marshall, 1987), which includes the right to use the political power that a person is afforded just for being a citizen such as voting in elections or participating in civic meetings. This element could be called the practice of citizenship (Merrifield, 2002).

Further to this idea of practice of citizenship, Lister (1998) believed that practicing citizenship involves the representation of "human agency in political arena" (p. 228). She believed that when citizenship is considered a right, citizens can then act as agents, working with accepted political processes to further the good of the community overall. Finally, Marshall's (1987) social element refers to "liv[ing] the life of a civilized being" (p. 8) according to society's

prevailing standards. This includes having a minimum standard of living and prosperity and sharing in the social behaviours of the community. Marshall specified that the education system and social services are institutions that support this final element of citizenship. Marshall asserted that the civil, political, and social elements also include agency, which Torres (2010) defined as the ability to "make informed choices about what to do, how the action should be implemented and being responsible for the consequences of the action taken" (p. 193).

These principles and elements all build on the writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who believed that when citizens acted as a group for the public interest, they formed a *polis* (i.e., a political community) in which they would discuss issues of common interest, develop shared values about how to handle conflict, and make decisions that affected the citizens as a whole (as cited in Stivers, 1990). Aristotle postulated that participation in the polis would result in a virtuous life (as cited in Stivers, 1990). Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/2002a, 1840/2002b), the author of *Democracy in America*, agreed. He asserted that enlightened self-interested citizens were crucial to democracy. Those enlightened self-interested citizens understood how to balance their private interests with the public good in order to make fair and just decisions for all (Allen, 1998). Thus, the purpose of public engagement is to share and generate knowledge to the benefit of all citizens. Democratic public life exists when citizens discuss issues of common concern.

Democracy and Public Engagement

In this section I discuss how the practice of public engagement supports and is intertwined with the principles of democracy. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to his friend William Charles Jarvis, a statement that still rings true over two centuries later,

> I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion. (Jefferson, 1899, p. 161)

There are many names for democratic public discussion in the present day: public participation, public engagement, community engagement, public consultation, community involvement, stakeholder engagement, and so on. The common element is face-to-face discussion or dialogue between ordinary citizens (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006; McCoy & Scully, 2002) and the organizer of the public participation process (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Discussions in public processes should be about "active, reciprocal and informed contributions that citizens can make to a policy process through a range of public involvement activities" (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006, p. 2). Please note that the concepts of deliberative democracy, public discourse, and the like are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Public engagement has an important role to play in democracies. Its purpose is to find answers to questions of public interest, so that the government and its citizens can make decisions that conform with justice and the common good of the people (Sellers, 2003). Municipal governments and citizens share responsibility for public engagement, and together they contribute to a vigorous democracy. This benefits not-for-profit organizations, local municipal influencers and leaders, and, of course, citizens (Centre for Public Involvement, 2015). This idea fits with Geren's (2001) definition of public engagement, which is "a collective inquiry whose subject matter is the effect of private actions upon the common good" (p. 195). According to Geren, citizens must put effort into fully understanding the issues in order for public discussion to be successful. In addition, citizens must consider their own "needs, attitudes,

beliefs, and desires" (Geren, 2001, p. 192), as well as work toward the equality of the participants contributing to democratic public engagement processes.

Various other definitions for public engagement can be found in the academic literature. Rowe and Frewer (2005), in their oft-referenced article, defined public participation as the practice of involving members of the public in the agenda setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of the organizations and institutions responsible for policy development. Oldfield (1990) asserted that in a democracy, it behooves a community to define its short- and long-term intents and purposes and determine how to achieve them. This process would involve, among other things, public engagement. Nabatchi and Amsler's (2014) definition of public engagement at a municipal level includes both online and in-person processes that provide citizens with the opportunity to "personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into governmental decision making" (p. 65S).

As noted in Chapter 1, I have used Strathcona County's (2019) definition of public engagement. The important take-away from this definition of public engagement is that it must be "a formal, defined, interactive process" (Strathcona County, 2019, p. 1). In Strathcona County, public engagement involves gathering data, developing options, discussing the options' pros and cons, proving feedback, writing a report that provides an overview of the public engagement process, and finally, making a decision (Strathcona County, n.d.-b, 2019). Lagerspetz (2012) proposed two requirements for making public decisions. The first is that the decisions should be good ones, meaning that they are "reasonable, well-informed, and morally acceptable" (Lagerspetz, 2012, p. 754). Second, the decisions must be made correctly, meaning that those with decision-making authority are legitimate and the public engagement process itself is both

valid and justifiable. If these two requirements are accepted, they then exclude interactions such as Twitter or Facebook exchanges, impromptu conversations that take place at the grocery store, or knocking on a neighbour's door to discuss a community problem. In short, the decisions made in public engagement processes are not arbitrary. Citizens make decisions that are reasoned "about their own lives and the directions they prefer to see their lives and their society move" (Pearson, 1992, p. 86).

At its best, democracy encourages citizens to come together to discuss common problems and agree to solutions. The Centre for Public Involvement (2015) noted that "engagement is sometimes characterized as the interaction that makes democracy work" (p. 3). Its report, *Strengthening Public Engagement in Edmonton*, also noted that municipal public engagement "by ordinary citizens supplies the democracy in a political system" (Centre for Public Involvement, 2015, p. 3). Without actively engaged citizens, municipal government is overly influenced by elected officials, consultants, and other experts who lobby both administration and councils (Centre for Public Involvement, 2015). Nackenoff (2009) asserted that democracy requires developing compromises that respect other citizens' needs, values, and opinions. Espousing a similar view, Goodin (2008) posited that public engagement participants need to seriously consider the interests of others and to weigh these considerations against their egoistic points of view.

If done well, public engagement can lead to citizens actively engaging with others. These interactions can increase their understanding of, and commitment to, democracy. Public engagement processes (e.g., open houses, kitchen table meetings, focus groups, charrettes, world cafés, and so on) provide citizens with the opportunity to learn about the issues of importance to them and make their opinions known, which, in turn, engages them in the democratic process

(Delanty, 1997; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Michels, 2019, Michels & De Graaf, 2017). These authors have suggested that by participating in public engagement processes, citizens are empowered and increase their democratic understanding by exercising their rights and responsibilities.

According to Innes and Booher (2004), there are several reasons to justify public engagement. First, it is a way for those making decisions to hear and understand the preferences of the public. A second reason is to incorporate the collective local knowledge of citizens so decisions can be improved. Innes and Booher suggested that these first two reasons are becoming more "important as government gets larger and more distant from its constituencies" (2004, p. 422). Third, public engagement advances and improves both justice and fairness. Fourth, including citizens in public engagement can increase the validation of public decisions. Fifth, sometimes there is a legal requirement to involve citizens in public engagement processes. Two final reasons include opportunity building and developing civil society, and providing citizens with skills to become an "adaptive, self-organizing polity" (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 423). Taken together, and even separately, these seven reasons increase the legitimacy of public decisions.

Charles Sanders Peirce, a scientist, mathematician, and philosopher, is considered to be the father of pragmatism (Pardales & Girod, 2006; Royce & Kernan, 1916/2018). Pragmatism is "a method of understanding facts and events in terms of cause and effect, and of inferring practical lessons or conclusions from this process" (Oxford Reference, 2000e, para. 2). Peirce developed the concept of the "community of inquiry" that was further improved by Dewey and Addams (Shields, 1999). A community of inquiry is a group of people who come together to consider ideas and hypotheses to come to some kind of agreement (Pardales & Girod, 2006).

Peirce based his thinking in the scientific method of inquiry (Legg & Hookway, 2021). The process of searching for agreement provides space for the participants to "speak of knowledge, truth, and reality but these concepts will be grounded in the *community* of inquirers [emphasis in original], not in the individual consciousness" (Murphy, as cited in Pardales & Girod, 2006, p. 301).

Dewey, an educator, applied Peirce's theory to a broader social context, further developed in Dewey's books about education and democracy (Shields, 1999). He promoted the experiences of the community with which inquirers worked to confirm or correct their suppositions (Shields, 1999). There is an assumption that the issue under discussion has two distinct and opposing sides (dualism). Dewey proposed that dualism could be dissolved by participants' reflection on the issue and group mediation (Shields, 1999). The community of inquiry concept could be considered as the foundation of public participation in a broad sense as it is known today.

Public engagement typically has specific goals: providing information to the public, collecting data from participants, generating suggestions or alternatives, obtaining feedback, and working to achieve consensus (IAP2, n.d.-a; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Some public engagement processes require more than one of these goals to be effective, and each one requires different process approaches. An advantage of public engagement includes improving relationships between elected officials, bureaucrats, and the citizens they serve (Gauvin & Abelson, 2006). Patten (2000) contended that in the past, policymaking has served the elites such as business owners and industry. Public engagement offers an opportunity for ordinary people, local community groups, small local businesses, and the like, to participate in community decision-making.

Phillips and Orsini (2002) illustrated eight dimensions or steps of citizen engagement in policy processes (see Table 1). Their descriptions could also be considered to be underlying and broad goals of public engagement. Table 1 illustrates the complexity of public engagement processes and, by implication, the work behind the scenes to develop and implement a process that the public trusts and in which they will participate.

Barber (2003), in his book *Strong Democracy*, used the broader term *civic engagement* to describe public engagement. He asserted that by engaging in what he called "civic activity," "people become aware how to think publicly as citizens" (Barber, 2003, p. 152); this process requires consideration of publicness and justice. An outcome is that citizens feel an increased sense of responsibility for issues that affect them, which can result in feeling more positively about democracy while increasing their skills in civic democracy. Barber et al. (as cited in Michels, 2019) suggested that public engagement encourages citizens to be active in public life, fostering a sense of community and increasing feelings of responsibility among the citizenry. Citizens become more engaged in civic life, thus expanding their understanding of democracy and benefits society as a whole (Cohen, 1997).

Table 1

Eight Dimensions of Citizen Involvement in Policy Processes

Dimension	Description
Mobilizing interest	Creates a public space for debate on an issue, potentially igniting or increasing interest in the issue, and encouraging citizens with a latent but not yet active concern to develop positions and acquire information.
Claims making	Allows individuals and organizations to express their existing claims, positions, and values on public policy issues. Citizens may have such claims represented indirectly by advocacy organizations, and thus feel no need to participate personally, or they may make their own representation.
Knowledge acquisition	Shares knowledge that may either be expert, obtained through analytical study, or experiential, based on personal experience (for example, what is it like to live in a particular neighbourhood or to be the victim of violence).
Spanning and bridging	Taps into a breadth of knowledge and facilitates participation across a broad span of society. The breadth that comes from convening and hearing from different networks of citizens and communities may also enable the parties to better learn from one another and to cultivate allies (and, possibly, to better identify opponents as well). There may be a trade-off, however, between acquiring breadth and depth of participation.
Convening and deliberating	Enables direct participation in a dialogue among equals. Allows individuals to exercise citizenship skills and form horizontal bonds of affiliation.
Community building capacity	Enables the creation of social capital, fosters the emergence of leaders, and, through collective action, helps communities attract financial, human, and technical resources that may last long after the issue at hand has been resolved or has faded.
Analysis and synthesis	Analyzes and reports the results of citizen involvement in a manner that can be of direct use in policy-making.
Transparency and feedback	Demonstrates how public input was used and whether it made a difference to actual decisions.

Note. Reproduced from *Mapping the Links: Citizen Involvement in Policy Processes* by S. D. Phillips & M. Orsini, 2002, p. 9. Copyright 2002 by Canadian Policy Research Networks.

It would be remiss to ignore the criticisms that bureaucrats, elected officials, experts, and others have made regarding citizens participating in public engagement processes. Some of these

stakeholders have argued that most citizens simply cannot grasp the concepts being presented for discussion, and they are too short-sighted to understand why the issue is important (Beetham & Boyle, 2009; Gauvin & Abelson, 2006). Often elected officials and bureaucrats are afraid that citizens who are passionate about the issue at hand will hijack the public engagement process, which could usurp the formers' decision-making authority. Additionally, these "hijackers" may raise expectations beyond the powers or abilities of the organizers (Gauvin & Abelson, 2006). Public engagement can cause delays in project deadlines, and the participants may recommend what others think is a bad decision (Innes & Booher, 2004). Sometimes public engagement processes have extremely short deadlines or the resources available to plan and implement them (e.g., financial, human, time) are limited, putting pressure on the sponsoring organization (Gauvin & Abelson, 2006). Finally, elected officials and bureaucrats may want to continue with the status quo. Their importance in the decision-making might be challenged by citizens, which could lead to being seen as avoiding their roles as leaders (Gauvin & Abelson, 2006).

Sellers (2003) believed that if citizens remained true to deliberating an issue, and did so while seeking the best solution for the common good, then the participants would find the process both educational and elevating. Undoubtedly, citizens enjoy the buildings, green spaces, and gathering places that physically benefit their community that are the results of previous community decisions to serve the common good. However, learning how to effect change in one's municipal government gives citizens more knowledge and confidence to participate effectively in further democratic processes.

Municipal Government and Public Engagement

Elected officials make better decisions when they involve citizens in a formal, defined way, because that involvement contributes to a more robust and healthier democracy (Kelshaw &

Gastil, 2007; McCoy & Scully, 2002). Democratic institutions are successful, in part, due to the collective wisdom of both citizens and the leaders they elect (Kent, 2013). The relationship between representative democracy and the widespread participation of citizens makes the most sense at the local level (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014; Pratchett, 2004; Schugurensky, 2004). People primarily connect with the municipal government because the municipality is where they live, work, learn, and play (Steyaert, 2000), making it an essential component of representative democracy. Citizens also possess local knowledge, of which outside public engagement consultants may not be aware. Local citizens can develop both the understanding and skills that lead to local autonomy (Pratchett, 2004), and they can play a vital role in democracy, which thrives when citizens actively participate in decisions that directly affect their lives most closely (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999; McCoy & Scully, 2002). Schugurensky (2004) likewise believed that when citizens participate in local government matters, it broadens their interests and views, thus developing their capacity for even more involvement at the local level due to the salience of local issues to the lives of community members.

Giving local citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions in a formal, defined, interactive way provides a "wider context for the conversation" (McCoy & Scully, 2002, p. 118) to make decisions that have wide-reaching effects in a community. From the citizens' perspective, being asked to be part of public engagement processes is a signal that the local government welcomes their opinions and accepts their role in the democratic process (Marzuki, 2015). Public engagement processes are opportunities for citizens to practice their civic skills, leading to a better-quality democracy (Barber, 2003; Tocqueville, 1835/2002a, 1840/2002b). Democratically elected officials should strongly support and encourage opportunities that give citizens the chance to solve public problems and issues by supporting democratic principles and

making their decision-making “more strategic, systematic, and effective” (Sirianni, 2009, p. 2). Kent (2013) concurred, writing that government leaders have a responsibility to ensure that citizens are well informed and engaged, making public engagement processes “cornerstones of a democracy” (p. 343). Additionally, when citizens actively participate in public engagement processes, they are more likely to support the outcome (Kent, 2013; Sirianni, 2009). They also contribute to the democratic ideals of inclusion, civic skills and virtues, deliberation, and legitimacy (Michels & De Graaf, 2017).

Legislation in Alberta has supported the assertion that public engagement is essential to provide good information to help elected officials make informed decisions. Relatively recent changes to Alberta’s Municipal Government Act (2000/2022) now require municipalities to ask citizens’ opinions on a variety of topics. Municipal governments are increasingly committed to actively engage with the broadest spectrum of citizen experience and opinion to inform decision-making (Municipal Government Act Public Participation Policy Regulation, 2017). According to Alberta’s Municipal Government Act, elected officials have certain responsibilities such as attending council meetings and obtaining appropriate information from the chief administrative officer to operate the municipality. Two of these responsibilities relate to public engagement. Elected officials must “consider the welfare and interests of the municipality as a whole and, to bring to council’s attention anything that would promote the welfare or interests of the municipality” (Municipal Government Act, 2000/2022, s. 153a). They are also required to direct staff to develop and evaluate municipal policies and programs.

One could argue that the best way elected officials can accomplish these responsibilities is to ask their citizens. Beierle and Cayford (2002) reasoned that although elected officials and municipal bureaucrats have considerable knowledge and power, citizens determine the true

public interest through public engagement. Achen and Bartels (2016) wrote that for democracy to be effective, there must be a careful balance between the expertise provided by bureaucrats and elected officials and the preferences that may be favoured by citizens. Municipal elected officials must carefully examine their own self-interest, as well as those of other public and private actors who seek to further their own agendas (Stoker, 1996). Policy decisions and outcomes are improved by having a better understanding of the concerns and values of the public (Nabatchi, 2012).

Patten (2000) discussed public consultation at the federal level, yet it is reasonable to extrapolate his point for application to public engagement at the municipal level. He contended that a public administration that is both participatory and democratic permits staff to become the "democratic access point for societal interests" (Patten, 2000, p. 228). It is vital to remember that public engagement is not simply talking to citizens in the library parking lot. Rather, it is "a formal, defined, interactive process between the municipality, the public and stakeholders" (Strathcona County, 2019, p. 1). Good public engagement entails a great deal of planning and implementing to ensure that the public understands the issue being discussed, how they can influence the decision, and who the decision-makers are.

In sum, public engagement is an essential contributor to a successful democracy, broadly speaking, and to municipal governments specifically. Its successful implementation can lead to decisions that are "informed, accountable, and legitimate" (Gauvin & Abelson, 2006, p. 12). Citizens and elected officials each have roles and responsibilities in the public engagement process that contribute to better decision-making and to robust municipal democratic processes.

The Common Good

I mentioned the concept of the common good in this literature review in the section entitled Democracy. The idea is inextricably linked to democracy and public engagement. Samuelson (1992), a *Newsweek* columnist, wrote: "We face a choice between a society where people accept modest sacrifices for a common good or a more contentious society where groups selfishly protect their own benefits" (A responsible society? section, para. 13). This quotation perfectly captures the struggle between egoism (self-interest) and altruism (selflessness) in a democratic society, which is the conceptual basis of the common good. Sellers (2003) wrote convincingly that the consideration of different views is significant in democratic processes but striving for the common good is crucial. Young (as cited in Mansbridge et al., 2010) wrote that successful democratic processes tend to consider the common good and do not focus on promoting the self-interests of participants or organized groups of participants.

When citizens discuss a particular topic, that discussion helps to clarify the facts, understand the different points of view of the participants, and, it is hoped, move toward finding a preferred solution (Barber, 2003). Barber (2003) went on to say that "community, public goods and citizenship" (pp. 133–134) are the trifecta of democratic processes that represent the "interdependent parts of a democratic circle" (p. 134). Public goods, in this statement, can be understood as the common good. Cohen (1997), likewise, wrote eloquently that it is important that democratic politics be properly conducted and involve "*public deliberation focused on the common good* [emphasis in original]" (Cohen, 1997, p. 69) that necessitates equality among those participating. This deliberation influences citizens' interests and identities as members of the larger community that contribute to forming the public's concept of the common good (Cohen, 1997). This type of citizen deliberation and agreement for shared benefits results in

developing deep social relationships between citizens because everyone must consider the interests of others while moving toward an acceptable solution (Hussain, 2018).

Over the last two millennia, philosophers of all stripes have weighed in on the concept of the common good, which is "often contrasted with governments that were corrupt and the pursuit of narrow self-interest" (Jaede, 2017, p. 1). The roots of the idea come from the ancient Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato (Finnis, 1980; Mastromatteo & Solari, 2014; Velasquez et al., 1992); Aristotle (as cited in Diggs, 1973) called it the common interest. The Athenian philosophers believed that a good life could be obtained only when life for citizens was harmonious (Mastromatteo & Solari, 2014)—harmony that stemmed from the common good.

How the common good is defined has changed over the many centuries since Aristotle and Plato pontificated in Athens' agora. Certainly, how democratically elected governments consider what the common good is has changed too. Fundamentally, the common good is a political concept and refers to social benefits that citizens enjoy as a whole (Mastromatteo & Solari, 2014; Velasquez et al., 1992). The common good is intended to benefit every member of society by contributing to their well-being, and that benefit cannot be "reduced to private advantage" (Douglass, 1980, p. 105). Reich (2018) argued that the common good consists of the shared values that citizens in a particular society owe to one another, along with collective norms and ideals. Lagerspetz (2012) asserted that democracy is "a continuous attempt to realize the common good" (p. 755). Newman (2014) concurred, writing that the common good is required in order for democracy to be effective. Douglass (1980) believed that it consists of specific goals that promote the population's general well-being, "such as peace, order, prosperity, justice and the community" (p. 104). Examples of the common good include social systems such as schools, hospitals, and museums; public parks and gathering spaces; policing and the judiciary; and

building and maintaining infrastructure to provide for the health of the community such as clean drinking water, safe transportation systems, and community planning.

Velasquez et al. (1992) wrote that all members of the community must have access to the benefits of the common good. They went on to say that it should be difficult to exclude citizens from enjoying its advantages. Finnis (1980) provided a more comprehensive definition:

> [The common good is] a set of conditions which enables the members of a community to attain for themselves a reasonable objective, or to realize reasonable for themselves the value(s), for the sake of which they have reason to collaborate with each other (positively and/or negatively) in a community. (p. 155)

Lynn and Oldenquist (1986) suggested that there are two requirements of the common good: first, that it is the result of collective effort on behalf of citizens, and second, that resources are spent. It is costly to obtain and maintain the public good, but not nearly as costly as not having it. This value also means that individual actions are unlikely to subvert the common good once it is established (Lynn & Oldenquist, 1986). Some academics have argued that fundamentally, the common good has two competing interests which must be reconciled in order for a good decision to be made for the good of the community: individual interests versus the interests of citizens as a whole (Etzioni, 2004; Geren, 2001; Sellers, 2003).

Often the common good results in things that provide for no one specifically and sometimes offer no immediate benefit (Etzioni, 2004). A good example of the first point is Canada's system of national parks, established in 1885 by the federal government under John A. MacDonald's Conservatives. The government decided that instead of giving land titles for the Cave and Basin Hot Springs to businesses and industry, the hot springs should benefit all Canadians (McNamee & Finkelstein, 2021). Banff National Park was formally established in

1887. As of 2022, there are now 37 national parks and 10 national park reserves across the country (Parks Canada, 2022). Could Prime Minister MacDonald have envisioned what would unfold over the following decades? Could he have imagined that millions of visitors would have flocked to the parks since 1887? The common good was certainly served in this instance.

In his book *The Common Good*, Reich (2018) presented another way citizens contribute to the public good. He described how citizens fought for civil rights and the right to vote for disenfranchised people in the United States in the 1960s. A Canadian example springs to mind immediately: the decades-long fight of Indigenous peoples to have their pain and suffering acknowledged as a result of Canada's long history of residential schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Christiano (2004) suggested that democracy advances the common good and contended that when citizens work within the democratic process, they can deliberate policies and other issues of importance that take place in public engagement processes. He also asserted that for the democratic system to work well, citizens must play a significant role in societal governance (Christiano, 2018). Palmer (2011) quipped that "democracy is not a spectator sport in which citizens can watch the pros at work" (p. 133).

Motivation Theory

Thus far in this literature review, I have written about democratic theory, the connection of democracy to public engagement, and the role of citizens and municipal government in making decisions that affect the common good. Citizens being involved in decision-making is central to a successful democracy. This section of the literature review examines motivation theory and then considers how it intersects with democracy, public engagement, and the common good.

Like the concept of democracy, there is no simple definition of motivation. Generally, the definition depends on behaviour. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford Reference, 2000d) stated that motivation is "the general desire or willingness of someone to do something" (para. c). Nevid (as cited in Strombach et al., 2016) explained that motives indicate why people act the way they do: "Motivation refers to factors that activate, direct and sustain goal-directed behavior" (p. 4). Most people understand that slaking their thirst is likely the prime motivator when they need a drink of water after mowing the lawn. The person mowing the lawn wants to "fulfill a specific need or desire" (Strombach et al., 2016, p. 4) either consciously or unconsciously. Unconscious motivation refers to those motives that are central to human survival—a biological need (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018; Longe, 2016; Strombach et al., 2016). Conscious motivation results from learning from one's experience, which is influenced by cultural and social factors (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018; Strombach et al., 2016). One illustrative example Heckhausen and Heckhausen (2018) provided is money. Eating a five-dollar bill will not make the eater any less hungry, but that same five dollars could buy food to consume. However, this hungry person must have learned that by having money, they can fulfill the biological need of hunger by buying food. This is a conscious motive which can also garner social rewards such as positive public recognition (Strombach et al., 2016). It is important to note that motives, either conscious or unconscious, cannot be observed but human behaviour can be. One can only infer someone else's motive based on their observed behaviour (Strombach et al., 2016).

Motivation theory also studies intrinsic and extrinsic motives. Intrinsic motivation involves someone doing something because it is personally interesting, satisfying, fun, or enjoyable (Gagne & Deci, 2005). It is a natural human tendency, so individuals willingly

participate in activities they find appealing or gratifying (Legault, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsically motivated people often feel autonomous and competent (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation typically involves receiving contingent rewards or punishments, almost always from a second party, that encourage or discourage certain behaviours (Legault, 2020: Strombach et al., 2016). Unsurprisingly, extrinsically motivated tasks are sometimes performed with bitterness or a lack of interest (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The quality of the behaviour experience differs depending on the motivation (intrinsic versus extrinsic) of the actor (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Altruism and Egoism

The concepts of altruism (also known as selflessness) and egoism (also called self-interest) are important elements of motivation theory. They are "dual, coexisting principles of human nature" (Li et al., 2014, p. 541). The term *altruism* is derived from the Latin word *alter* (the other), which, when translated, means "other-ism" (Mastain, 2007) and refers to individual self-sacrifice on behalf of others (Batson, 1991). Schreiber (2016) described altruism as deriving pleasure by giving others what they would like to receive. Altruism is ultimately concerned with increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). This definition was supported by Scott and Seglow (2007), who focused on the willingness of the person doing the good deed. They described altruism as being willing to help others without concern for oneself (Scott & Seglow, 2007). Altruists act because they believe that their actions can improve the lot of beneficiaries (Fowler & Kam, 2007), "rather than a means towards self-promotion or internal well-being" (S. G. Post, 2002, p. 52). Additionally, altruistic behaviour cannot be coerced by authorities who may impose rules or regulations (Li et al., 2014). Indeed, Bar-Tal (1986) asserted that one's behaviour must include five requirements in order to be altruistic: "a) benefit another person; b)

be performed voluntarily; c) be performed intentionally; d) the benefit is the goal by itself; and e) the benefit is the external reward" (p. 5).

The etymology of egoism is also derived from Latin. *Ego* is the Latin term for "I" in English (Oxford Reference, 2000c, Etymology section, para. 1). Egoism is "a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing one's own welfare" (Batson, 1991, p. 7). Cropanzano et al. (2005) described it as doing something solely to achieve a personal benefit. Egoistic benefits can be both tangible (e.g., receiving money) and intangible (e.g., being appointed to a prestigious board).

Some of the academic literature considers that altruism and egoism are motivational states on a continuum (Batson, 1991). This thought was developed by Auguste Comte, a 19th century philosopher who was a founder of sociology and positivism (as cited in Batson, 1991). Comte believed that egoism and altruism were two distinct motivations that each individual exhibits (as cited in Batson, 1991). However, Piliavin and Charng (1990) stated that if one looks at the fields of biology, economy, sociology, political science, or psychology, all point to egoism as being at the root of altruism. "Anything that appears to be motivated by someone else's needs will, under closer scrutiny, prove to have ulterior selfish motives" (Piliavin & Charng, 1990, p. 28). Some academics have theorized that people are altruistic both for themselves and for others (Batson, 1991; Li et al., 2014). This theory has contributed to the claim that altruism is founded in egoism. It is also possible to fulfill both altruistic and egoistic needs at the same time, as Hartenian and Lilly (2009) pointed out. They provided the example of a volunteer. While volunteering, one could fulfill one's internal need to care for others (egoism) and simultaneously satisfy one's altruistic need to help others (Hartenian & Lilly, 2009).

Enlightened Self-Interest and Public Engagement

The preceding content leads to the concept of enlightened self-interest. As discussed in the previous subsection, it is widely accepted in the social sciences that egoism is the dominant motive for human action (Alvi, 1998). In the 1800s, Tocqueville (1835/2002a, 1840/2002b) was the first person to write that citizens needed to properly understand self-interest, which is now commonly called enlightened self-interest (Vearrier, 2020). That is, citizens need to understand how to balance their private interests with the public good (Allen, 1998) in order to make fair and just decisions for all citizens. The more modern interpretation of enlightened self-interest contends that people act to "further the interests of others (or the interests of the group or groups to which they belong) ultimately to serve their own self-interest" (Graafland, 2009, pp. 477–478). In other words, the individual may appear to be serving the good of many people but, in the end, the person's actions fulfill their own needs and interests. The individual's personal ambitions become meshed with the interests of others (Frimer et al., 2011). Graafland (2009) argued that egoism has "a narrow short-term focus" (p. 478), whereas enlightened self-interest takes a long-term view.

Issues put forth to citizens in public engagement processes often encourage participants to consider the greater community interests in relation to their own, but self-interest will always play a part. Oldfield (1990) tied the concepts of democracy, citizenship, and egoism together. He wrote that "political participation enlarges the minds of individuals" (Oldfield, 1990, p. 184) and familiarizes them with what may interest them beyond their personal circumstances and environment. He also believed that appealing to the interests of individuals is required to start the conversations upon which public engagement requires. Mansbridge et al. (2010) supported Oldfield's position. They posited that each person knows their own interest(s) best, and those

interests need to be understood and debated so the decision reached is an informed and reasonable one. Mansbridge et al. went on to suggest that if these self-interests are not explored or taken into account, then the solution (the common good) may not be accepted.

These viewpoints are targeted at the egoistic motivations of citizens. The egoistic nature of human beings piques citizens' interests to pay attention to a particular public engagement process. Will the decision made affect my property values? Increase traffic on the street in front of my house? Increase the time it takes for me to recycle items? Make the walk to school more dangerous for my children? Strathcona County might suggest, for example, the introduction of traffic calming to a particular neighbourhood that could have those residents up in arms, but if Citizen A never drives on those roads, they are unlikely to care. Their reaction would likely be different if the road outside their apartment building were due for traffic calming measures. Oldfield (1990) supported this view: "No effort to inculcate a practice of citizenship is likely to succeed unless some appeal is first made to individual interest, however widely or narrowly that is conceived" (p. 184).

Batson (1994) wrote an article in which he suggested that people act for what he called the public good. His definition of the public good, as "goods that can be used by more than one person (roads, parks, information, clean air, etc.)" (Batson, 1994, p. 603), is similar to Finnis's (1980) definition of the common good. In the article, Batson (1994) asked why people act for the public good if self-interest is the motivation of human activity. He provided four options: egoism, altruism, collectivism, and principalism. Although I have already discussed egoism and altruism, Batson (1994) clarified a few points for his thesis on these two motivators. He affirmed that enlightened self-interest has a large role to play in egoism (i.e., serving the public good while benefiting oneself for long-term gains). Altruistic motivation has empathy at its source,

which he defined as “other-oriented feelings congruent with the perceived welfare of another person” (Batson, 1994, p. 606).

That leaves collectivism and principalism to describe. The essential motivation in collectivism is “increasing the welfare of a group or collective” (Batson, 1994, p. 605). Instead of acting for oneself, one acts for the good of the group. Examples of a group could include being a transgender person, a gardener, a service club member, an elite athlete, or a university alumna. It could also mean working towards eradicating poverty or houselessness. If the ultimate goal is to further a group’s well-being, regardless of its size, the motivation is collectivism (Batson, 1994). Principalism is a bit different as its motivation aims to support a moral principle such as justice (Batson, 1994) or beneficence (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Finally, Batson (1994) pointed out that principalism is based on morality, in which the ultimate objective is to strongly encourage a “universal and impartial moral principle” (p. 608). Principalism is most applied in the field of medical ethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Theories about motivation, and enlightened self-interest in particular, are important to understand the underlying reasons why citizens take the time and effort to participate in in-person public engagement sessions.

Summary of Literature Review

Democracy can be understood as dispersing influence and power among different societal groups to make the best decision for the common good (Dahl, 1989). The concept of public engagement has given rise to commonly accepted practices of involving citizens in decision-making in modern-day democracies. Nabatchi (2012) and Crick (2007) believed that public engagement is a microcosm of democracy. When citizens are asked to make their opinions known on a particular municipal issue, they balance their altruistic and egoistic considerations

along with their commitment to the democratic process. Decision-making by the masses is the crux of democracy, as Aristotle espoused when he spoke about the *polis* (as cited in Stivers, 1990). Public engagement can be empowering for citizens and is integral to democratic governance. Different motivations for supporting the common good were examined in this chapter. All of this contributes to understanding what motivates the public to participate in public engagement processes, which was the purpose of this research. I describe the methodology I used in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses my methodological approach to answer my research question: "What role does democracy have in motivating Strathcona County citizens to participate in in-person public engagement sessions?" I examine mixed methods research, grounded theory, and my approach to my research. I also cover my procedures for data collection (a survey, individual interviews, small focus groups, and memoing), data and content analysis, and trustworthiness.

Methodology

The approach I used in my research was mixed methods. Mixed methods research gathers both qualitative and quantitative data. Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) defined the research method this way: "A class of research where the researcher mixes or combine quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (p. 17). In a mixed methods research design, the researcher collects the qualitative data first, to delve into a phenomenon, and then gathers quantitative data to describe relationships found in the qualitative data (Molina-Azorin et al., 2018).

Polit and Beck (2014) described four advantages of the mixed methods approach. The first is that it is complementary. By using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, a researcher avoids the limitations of using a single method. The second advantage is practicality. The researcher uses the methodological tools that best suit the research question. The authors wrote that the researcher's hands are not tied by adhering to either a qualitative or quantitative approach. Incrementality is the third advantage of mixed methods research. The progress made during the research process tends to be incremental. Quantitative data provide information from which hypotheses can be developed. In turn, these hypotheses are useful for qualitative testing. The fourth and final advantage Polit and Beck suggested is enhanced validity. Mixed methods

researchers can be more assured about what they have inferred from the data sets they have amassed. By collecting and analyzing various kinds of data, the end result may provide a deeper understanding of the research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It is an alternative way to study complex issues.

My mixed methods approach included a survey, individual interviews, and small focus groups. This approach worked well for my research because I used the results of the survey data to develop questions for my individual interviews, as Molina-Azorin et al. (2018) and Polit and Beck (2014) have suggested. Mixed methods worked well for my research project.

Research Paradigm

Researchers are strongly encouraged to base their research in a particular paradigm (Doyle et al., 2009). A paradigm is a worldview defined by five components: (a) the researcher's epistemology, or what counts as knowledge; (b) ontology, or the nature of reality; (c) axiology, or the role that values play in the research; (d) methodology, or the process used to conduct the research; and (e) rhetoric, or the language of the research (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Doyle et al., 2009; Mayan, 2009). Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) reviewed elements of different worldviews and suggested the pragmatic stance researchers could consider. The epistemological perspective in this research is one of practicality—the collection of data was driven by what works to find answers to the research question. The ontology of pragmatism requires consideration of different realities, both singular and multiple. The consideration of values (axiology) requires multiple stances, which Creswell and Plano Clark described as including "both biased and unbiased perspectives" (2018, p. 38). The methodology I used mixed qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, the language of the research (i.e., the style of writing) can be formal, informal, or both. I have chosen to use formal language in my thesis.

I chose pragmatism as my philosophical base for this research project because it is generally associated with mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Pragmatism, "a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world" (Patton, 2002, p. 69), is characteristically associated with mixed methods research. It attempts to bridge the gap between scientific and naturalistic methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Mixed methods researchers who are pragmatists believe that the research question is of utmost importance and drives "the inquiry and its design and methods" (Polit & Beck, 2014, p. 340). In the end, the research approaches used should be combined in ways that provide the best chance for answering the research question at hand (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism comes from the Greek word *pragma*, meaning action (Pansiri, 2005). Action, unsurprisingly, is a central concept of pragmatism. Pragmatists believe that humans' past experiences, and ultimately their beliefs and actions, are inextricably linked (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). As action is a seminal tenet of pragmatism, there is a belief that people take actions that are based on the possible consequences of said action. Thus, pragmatists assert that the meaning of human actions and beliefs is found in their consequences (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Doyle et al., 2009).

Researchers should use the philosophical and/or methodological approach that works best for the particular research problem that is being studied (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Significant value is placed on both objective and subjective data that aims to provide the researcher with emerging knowledge. As one can see, both the mixed methods approach and the paradigm of pragmatism value scientific data and objective data, making them a good fit for the current study. The next section discusses my use of grounded theory combined with the philosophical framework of pragmatism to collect and analyze my research data.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a method of collecting and analyzing data in a consistent, logical way with the purpose of developing a theory (Charmaz, 1996), as well as providing strategies that can result in rigorous qualitative research (Charmaz, 2004). It was developed in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss (as cited in Creswell, 2013). Grounded theory systematically generates social process theories from data gathered from participants and is appropriate for "studying individual processes, interpersonal relations, and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes" (Charmaz, 1996, pp. 28–29). The beauty of using grounded theory for a research project is that it focuses on studying individuals, their interpersonal connections, and the correlated effects between individuals and broader social processes (Charmaz, 2004). This worked well with my research question, which investigated the role that democracy has in motivating Strathcona County citizens to participate in public engagement.

Grounded theory involves examining raw data to search for different concepts (Creswell, 2013). Charmaz (2004) asserted that the grounded theory approach is flexible and connects the two distinct phases of the research: data collection and data analysis. The most common methods for gathering data when using a grounded theory approach are interviews (both individual and group), memoing, and observation (Creswell, 2013). I conducted individual interviews and small focus groups for my research and combined it with a survey to employ a mixed methods approach. This led to a rich data set from which I extrapolated my findings and developed my conclusions.

Phenomenology

This research is a phenomenological study. The purpose of phenomenology is to understand human experience (van Manen, 2007) using qualitative research that is based on

common experiences of groups of people. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Englander (2012) suggested that that a phenomenological approach focuses on describing the common meaning of several individuals' lived experience to discover human scientific meaning. Seamon (2000) defined phenomenology as the exploration and description of what human beings experience. He went on to say that this can include what people hear, taste, or understand (to name just a few variables) and that the topics for phenomenological examination are vast and varied: relationships, power, terrain, wealth, etc. He wrote that by examining specific examples of a phenomenon, the researcher can delineate "the essential nature of the phenomenon as it has presence and meaning in the concrete lives and experiences of human beings" (Seamon, 2000, p. 159).

Phenomenological analysis seeks to understand how participants consider the everyday world to be constituted in an intersubjective way by accurately describing the participants' experiences (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011; Schwandt, 2000). Donalek (2004) described the purpose of phenomenological analysis as exhaustive, one that works toward the "essential description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 516). This thick description leads others to understand what is central to what is being researched. Phenomenology allows the researcher to focus on the lived experiences related to a specific phenomenon, understand the meaning behind a person's real-world experiences, and then extract and condense that person's experiences into one essential concept (Moustakas, 1994; Seamon, 2000). Donalek (2004) and Munhall (2007) suggested that the researcher must mull over the data, consider alternatives, and determine themes in order to identify that essential concept. Grounded theory, which was used for the research in this thesis, is one analytical approach to phenomenological research (Alase, 2017).

Ethics Approval

I received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board 2 (Pro00099108) on July 2, 2020. By completing the survey, the respondents provided implied consent. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A. No personally identifying information was collected for the survey. Interview participants were emailed the consent form, which can be found in Appendix B, a day before the interview. They were urged to read the form before the interview. At the start of each individual interview and the small focus groups (which were audio and video recorded), I reviewed the consent document, answered any questions, and then asked for participants' verbal consent. Each participant provided that consent.

Data Collection

I used a mixed methods research approach which included a short survey, semistructured individual interviews, and two small focus groups. The individual interview questions can be found in Appendix C. Participants for the survey and the interviews were recruited through Facebook and word of mouth. The Facebook recruiting post can be found in Appendix D.

Survey

Surveys are often used in social science research to determine specific information about a discrete population. Surveys are a fixed set of questions from a sample of individuals to collect information on a particular subject (Check & Schutt, 2012). Singleton and Straits (2010) suggested that surveys are a highly effective way of providing detailed information about the issue at hand. My survey was administered using the Faculty of Extension's Survey Gizmo platform (now known as Alchemer; https://www.alchemer.com/). The data from the 36 respondents were downloaded to my University of Alberta Google account for analysis.

Individual Interviews

I interviewed seven people using a semistructured interview format via my University of Alberta Zoom account. Semistructured interviews are "verbal exchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions" (Longhurst, 2010, p. 103). Berg (2001) described this interview format as conversations between two individuals that follow a loose script but that may deviate depending on the interviewee's answers. All interviewees were Strathcona County citizens who had attended at least one in-person public engagement session in Strathcona County between 2015 and 2020. The interviews were both audio and video recorded and lasted between 45 min and 1 hr. Each interview was cleanly transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, who signed a confidentiality agreement. The confidentiality agreement can be found in Appendix E.

Small Focus Groups

A focus group is one way to conduct group interviews as a means to ascertain participants' ideas, attitudes, perceptions, and perspectives on a particular topic (Coreil, 1994; Kelly, 2003). The small focus groups, also semistructured, consisted of those people who were previously individually interviewed. The focus group questions can be found in Appendix F. I provided each person with several meeting options. Based on the responses, two meeting dates were chosen; three people were available for one time (all attended) and four were available for the other (two attended). The small focus groups lasted about 45 min. I met with the other two participants individually as they were unable to attend either group meeting. These individual sessions took about 20 min. All of the interviews were held virtually on Zoom via the University of Alberta's account. The focus groups were both audio and video recorded. I presented the relevant data from the survey as well as themes that arose from my coding of the individual

interviews. Participants were asked if the findings reflected their experiences and if they had any more thoughts about how democracy and public engagement might be linked. The small focus group recordings were cleanly transcribed by the same professional transcriptionist who transcribed the individual interviews.

Memos

A basic tenet of grounded theory is memoing (Creswell, 2013; Glaser, 1998). Memos help the researcher to capture their musings, ideas, concepts, and connections throughout the research process. In order to ensure that ideas that emerge during the research process are not lost, researchers reflect on patterns in the data and then describe them. Researchers also muse on emerging categories and conceptualizations (Polit & Beck, 2014). I used my memos and notes from the individual interviews to discover emerging concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in mixed methods research takes a bit of a different tack than a strictly qualitative analysis does. The researcher must use qualitative analysis methods for the qualitative data and quantitative methods for the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 209). This section examines how I conducted data analysis for my survey, the individual interviews and small focus groups, and my memos and notes.

The survey data obtained through the online survey were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A basic frequency analysis procedure was performed on the data to determine which public engagement sessions people participated in and to identify and rank the reasons that compelled people to participate. A percentage breakdown of the reasons for participation, organized by the ranking of these reasons, was also completed to determine which were most predominant. The reasons for participation were analyzed

independently from the public engagement sessions that people attended. The open-ended responses were reviewed and coded for themes. Those themes were then compared to the themes that emerged from the individual interviews and focus groups, as described below.

Data analysis using grounded theory requires constant comparison (Polit & Beck, 2014), which I followed for the data from the seven individual interviews. After these interviews were transcribed, I reviewed each one of them five times. I used different coloured highlighters and identified recurring words and phrases. Each time I reviewed the interviews, more connections and themes revealed themselves. After the fifth review, I counted the number of times each phrase or word was highlighted and thought deeply about what they might mean. I developed nine themes using this process.

There were two small focus groups as well as two individual meetings with the participants who were unable to attend either of the group meetings. Consent was obtained as outlined in the Ethics Approval section of this chapter (see also Appendix B). The participants were presented with high-level results from the survey as well as the nine themes that I had developed from the individual interviews. After giving the participants the opportunity to discuss my findings and provide their insights, I then proceeded to ask them questions about public engagement and democracy. They were also given the opportunity to ask me questions and/or add anything that they believed had been missed. Once the recordings were cleanly transcribed, I reviewed them three times for emergent common themes.

I took notes during, and memoed after, each individual interview, both focus groups, and the interviews with the two individuals who were unable to attend the focus groups. I also memoed and took notes as I was digging through the survey results. It was important to reflect on my experiences from each part of the research process. My memos from the individual

interviews and focus groups were not extensive, as I tended to write notes as I was conducting each session.

I believe that the mixed method approach I employed provided me with rich data from which to draw my findings. Participants provided extensive input on their motivations for participating in in-person public engagement sessions in Strathcona between 2015 and 2020. Those results are presented in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research has been criticized for not being as reliable or as valid as quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). The criticism is based on the perceived inability to verify the results of naturalistic research by quantitative researchers. Thus, it is crucial that qualitative research be trustworthy and methodologically rigorous. This section describes several ways that trustworthiness can be achieved in qualitative research and how I strove to achieve it during my research and analysis.

Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that the issue of trustworthiness was of utmost importance. Their published academic work in books and articles on trustworthiness has influenced qualitative researchers to improve their research designs, practices, and analyses. Guba suggested four terms for trustworthiness for naturalistic research: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. These terms, he asserted, equalled the accepted scientific terms, as displayed in Table 2. He then provided more detailed research techniques to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research. In 2004, Shenton wrote an article describing Guba's techniques in more detail, describing 14 ways to increase trustworthiness to qualitative research. In this section I address only those most relevant to my research and my master's thesis, as some techniques were not applicable to my project.

Table 2

Scientific and Naturalistic Terms for the Four Aspects of Trustworthiness

Aspect	Scientific term	Naturalistic term
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity, generalizability	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

Credibility

Credibility relates to the care the researcher uses to describe the phenomenon being scrutinized as communicated by the interviewees, sometimes referred to as key informants (Cooney, 2011; Sikolia et al., 2013). Credibility is considered to be the most important of the four aspects of trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2014). Additionally, it is critical to determine if the results are consistent with, and ring true with, what people experience (Merriam, 1998).

Developing a familiarity and ease with organizations (such as Strathcona County) participating in the research process contributes to credibility (Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) has described this approach as "prolonged engagement at a site" (p. 84). Although my research did not involve prolonged engagement with participants, I have worked in public engagement for Strathcona County for many years. As well, I have a strong connection to and understanding of both the county and public engagement processes. One drawback to my familiarity is that it may have influenced my professional judgement (Shenton, 2004, p. 65) and thus, my interpretation of the data. However, as I describe in this section, I took many steps to mitigate against my judgement possibly biasing my results.

Triangulation. Triangulation can be described as gathering data from various sources, such as focus groups, observations, and individual interviews, and combining them to draw conclusions (Cope, 2014; Shenton, 2004). My research included a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups, as well as memoing. Another way to triangulate data is to review any documentation for background and/or supporting data. This step may help to authenticate statements or details made to the researcher and could help explain participants' attitudes (Shenton, 2004). I reviewed the reports of Strathcona County's (n.d.-b) public engagement page to refresh my memory of recent public engagement sessions, which provided a clearer context for me and reminded me of the history of the issues and recommendations that had been brought to citizens for public engagement.

Honesty. Encouraging honesty in participants is another important part of credibility (Shenton, 2004). I engaged my interviewees with a spirit of honesty and asked them to describe their public engagement experiences and their thoughts on the topic as precisely and frankly as possible. I did my utmost to capture their opinions accurately to increase the credibility of my theory generated from their data. I interviewed seven people and asked them to give honest answers during both the individual interviews and small focus groups. I presented the interpretations of my survey results and the individual interviews to those who participated in the two small focus groups and the two participants who were unable to attend the group meetings. The credibility of my research is strengthened by having used these three data sources.

Member Checks. Member checks involve providing preliminary results to participants and soliciting their feedback. Member checks provide the "singular most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility" (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). Each individual was sent the transcript of their interview, which I requested they review for accuracy, and everyone

complied. Sometimes member checking means providing the participants with the researcher's interpretations that emerge through the data analysis (Polit & Beck, 2014). For the focus groups and the two individual interviews, I provided the results of the survey as well as themes from the coded data from the individual interviews. I asked participants to provide their comments on the survey results and the themes. I then incorporated their feedback in my final data analysis.

Debriefing. Another way to ensure credibility is to participate in debriefing sessions with another experienced individual; this approach provides external validation (Polit & Beck, 2014). My debriefing sessions were held between me and my supervisor, Dr. Kyle Whitfield. I spoke with her on a regular basis about how my research was progressing. We discussed the findings and made plans about what to concentrate on next. I found these conversations very helpful.

Transferability

Transferability describes how research findings can be applied to, or are useful to, other situations, groups, or settings (Connelly, 2016; Cope, 2014; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maher et al., 2018; Polit & Beck, 2014) or how the findings resonate with other people who have had similar experiences (Burns & Grove, 2011). Transferability also helps to determine emerging patterns (Stahl & King, 2020). Sandelowski (1986) suggested that researchers should be able to make generalizations about the phenomenon being studied so that it may become relevant to others.

My colleagues across Canada who are involved in municipal public engagement will likely be interested in my research and findings. I anticipate that the information will be helpful when considering how to design and implement public engagement processes. I believe that the discussion on how public engagement promotes the tenets of democracy will give them much food for thought. I plan to present my research to colleagues who participate in the Canadian

municipal community of practice group that is supported by the IAP2, my professional association. I also plan to apply to present my research at the next IAP2 North American conference in the fall of 2023.

Dependability and Confirmability

Another criterion that qualitative researchers can use to increase trustworthiness is dependability (Guba, 1981). It is important for researchers to describe the processes they followed in enough detail so that other researchers can repeat the work (Maher et al., 2018). The process I used to code both types of interviews and the open-ended survey data is described above and could be replicated by other researchers.

The fourth and final aspect of trustworthiness in qualitative research data is confirmability (Guba, 1981). Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research can be corroborated by others, such as by running data audits and checking for researcher bias (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Gasson, 2004). I triangulated my data from the survey, the individual interviews, and the focus groups. My memos could also be used to confirm my research.

It is important to note that I interviewed seven people and conducted two focus groups, along with two interviews with people who were unable to attend the group meetings. My survey had 36 respondents. These low numbers, which are appropriate for research at the master's level, may make it difficult to discern the dependability and confirmability of my research.

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter described the mixed method methodology I used for my research. This approach generated rich data, making it possible to develop several themes to answer, at least in part, why Strathcona County citizens have participated in in-person public engagement sessions. I discussed grounded theory, pragmatism, phenomenology, and the ethics approval, as well as

my data collection and analysis processes. Finally, I demonstrated how I used trustworthiness to increase the validity of my research. Notably, Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed these terms for a wide variety of qualitative research, including academic studies that may take years to complete, not only those completed by graduate students for their theses. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the survey, the individual interviews, and the focus groups.

Chapter 4: Findings

This findings chapter addresses the role of democracy in motivating Strathcona County citizens to participate in in-person public engagement processes. It presents the results of the survey and the themes from the individual interviews and focus groups. These results were supported by my written memos.

Survey Results

The survey was available for respondents to complete from September 30 to October 25, 2020. Please refer to Appendix A for the survey questions. There were 36 survey respondents. Table 3 provides information about where they lived.

Table 3

Survey Respondents' Place of Residence

Domicile location	%	*n*
Sherwood Park	77.8%	28
Other hamlets in Strathcona County	5.6%	2
Rural parts of Strathcona County	16.7%	6

These percentages are close to the actual split of rural and urban populations in the county (Government of Alberta, n.d.). The Alberta Regional Dashboard for Strathcona County indicated that as of September 2022, 73% of the population lived in Sherwood Park; the remaining 27% lived in rural parts of the municipality (Government of Alberta, n.d.). Half of the survey respondents (n = 16; 50%) attended one in-person public engagement event and 10 (31.3%) went to two or three. Three people (9.4%) went to four events, and one person went to six events. Two people attended more than six events (one went to 12 and another went to 18 of the events).

The next survey question was about respondents' age, the data for which are shown in Table 4. Strathcona County (n.d.-a) did a census in May 2022 which included a question regarding the age of respondents. The average age of the total population, according to census data, is 42.2 years (Strathcona County, n.d.-a). The data show that the 18–34 and 55–74 age brackets in my survey and in the census were fairly close. The 35–54 age bracket is slightly over-represented in my data set. The biggest discrepancy between percentages of my respondents' ages and those of Strathcona County residents is in the 75 and older age bracket, even though there was only one person who responded to the survey.

Table 4

Age of Survey Respondents Compared to 2022 Strathcona County Census Data

	Study data		Strathcona County census data	
Age range	%	*n*	%	*n*
18–34	17.1%	6	19.5%	14,005
35–54	42.9%	15	35.4%	25,371
55–74	37.1%	13	34.0%	24,313
Over 75	2.9%	1	11.1%	7,976
Total	100.0%	35	100.0%	71,665

Note. Table does not include data on individuals under 18 years of age (who were excluded in the current study) or on those who chose not to answer (n = 1 for this study; n = 7,041 for Strathcona County).

The Strathcona County (n.d.-a) survey included a question about the highest level of education each respondent had achieved. In the current study, six respondents (17.2%) had a high school education. Twenty respondents (57.1%) had completed either technical school or university. Eight people (22.2%) had completed postsecondary degrees, and one respondent preferred not to answer. These figures align with Statistics Canada's (2017) report on education,

which stated that in 2016, 54% of Canadians aged 25–64 had graduated from either college or university.

According to the census completed in 2022, 88% of Strathcona County's population (100,362) are Canadian citizens (Strathcona County, n.d.-a). Thirty-six percent of residents are employed full-time, and 18% are elementary to postsecondary students (Strathcona County, n.d.-a). The residents tend to be White (79.1%) and live primarily in single detached homes (74.2%) that they predominantly own (74.5%). Please note that residents could choose not to answer census questions (Strathcona County, n.d.-a), and these questions were not asked in my survey.

In the survey, respondents were asked why they attended an in-person public engagement session that had taken place between 2015 and 2020. Respondents could choose as many reasons as applied to them (nine reasons were listed), including a 10th option to indicate their own reason. As shown in Table 5, 86.1% of respondents participated in the public engagement sessions because the issue was important to them. Three-quarters of respondents wanted to contribute to municipal decision-making. This contrasts with the 27.8% of them who responded that it was their duty to contribute to municipal decision-making. Just over two-thirds of those who completed the survey believed it was important to voice their opinion about issues that were important to them, whereas 61.1% wanted to learn more about the issue. Five people (13.9%) attended a public engagement session because someone asked them to attend.

Table 5

Reasons for Attending In-Person Public Engagement Sessions

Reason	*n*	%
The issue was important to me.	31	86.1%
I wanted to contribute to municipal decision-making.	27	75.0%
It is important to voice my opinion about issues that matter to me.	24	66.7%
I wanted to learn more about the issue.	22	61.1%
My life would be positively/negatively affected by the outcome of the decision being made.	19	52.8%
I believed that I could make a difference in my community by participating in the in-person public engagement session.	18	50.0%
Participating in municipal decision-making contributes to a strong democracy.	15	41.7%
I have a duty to contribute to municipal decision-making.	10	27.8%
Someone invited me to attend.	5	13.9%

The next survey question asked respondents to rank the importance of having the opportunity to express their opinions to the county at an in-person public engagement session, as illustrated in Table 6. Note that percentages add up to 100% in each row, but the column percentages do not due to respondents being able to choose as many reasons as were applicable. Thirty-three people (84.6%) said it was moderately, very, or extremely important to be able to express their opinions to the county.

Table 6

Ranked Reasons for Attending In-Person Public Engagement Sessions

Reasons	Ranking of Reasons						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
The issue was important to me.	**44.4%**	25.9%	22.2%	3.7%			3.7%
It is important to voice my opinion about issues that matter to me.	**35.0%**	5.0%	25.0%	15.0%	10.0%	10.0%	
I wanted to learn more about the issue.	27.8%	16.7%	16.7%	22.2%	11.1%	5.6%	
My life would be positively/negatively affected by the outcome of the decision being made.	23.5%	23.5%	29.4%	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	
I wanted to contribute to municipal decision-making.	9.1%	**40.9%**	9.1%	9.1%	22.7%	4.5%	4.5%
Participating in municipal decision-making contributes to a strong democracy.	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	25.0%	41.7%	8.3%	
Someone invited me to attend.		25.0%	25.0%		25.0%	25.0%	
I have a duty to contribute to municipal decision-making.				50.0%		50.0%	
I believed that I could make a difference in my community by participating in the in-person public engagement session.		**40.0%**	26.7%	26.7%		6.7%	

Note. The bolded percentages highlight the two most popular reasons provided by respondents for their first and second choices.

Respondents were asked to reflect on the importance of expressing their opinions regarding the issue being discussed at the in-person public engagement sessions they attended. Table 7 displays respondents' answers. Two people did not answer this question. Twenty-eight

people (82.3%) said it was very or extremely important to be able to express their opinions to the county.

Table 7

Importance of Expressing One's Opinion at an In-Person Public Engagement Session

Importance	*n*	%
Not at all important	0	0.0%
Slightly important	2	5.9%
Moderately important	4	11.9%
Very important	18	52.9%
Extremely important	10	29.4%

Respondents were then asked if they thought that they were contributing to the democratic process by participating in the in-person public engagement session. Almost 83% of respondents agreed. When asked to elaborate on their answer, 15 survey respondents added comments. Nine people wrote that they believed that they had the opportunity to learn more about the issue at hand and hear the opinions of others. In turn, by expressing their opinions, two respondents felt that their input would be considered by the decision-makers. Three people said that their input was "not reflected in the outcome of the decisions," and three others thought that the final public engagement reports were biased.

One respondent wrote about citizens participating in public engagement sessions to promote democratic ideals: "I think that public consultation is a vital part of democracy." Another person supported this view, writing, "I believe that government considers and listens to opinions, which is important to democracy." Some comments pertained to the local government's responsibility to listen to the results of public engagement. For example: "I also believe that they [local government administration and elected officials] have specific ideas already in mind, and receiving public input isn't necessarily going to change those ideas."

Finally, when asked if there was anything else respondents would like the researcher to know about in-person public engagement sessions, 11 responses were similar to those described in the previous paragraph. One person favoured “further involvement, collaboration” with the county. Concern that the “low numbers of participants in in-person public engagement may not be truly representative” was also expressed by one survey respondent. Two people were concerned about all citizens having “equity of access” to public engagement processes. One person indicated that their understanding of the issue was enhanced by attending an in-person session through conversations with other attendees and staff.

The final open-ended question asked if respondents had anything else they would like to add on the topic. Again, some of the comments reflected what has been written in previous paragraphs, such as concerns about not seeing evidence that their input was considered in the final decision, lack of equity of access to the sessions, and the county being biased. One person remarked that low numbers of people attending sessions results in decisions that are not representative of the population. Another person expressed concern that the same people attend many public engagement meetings. One respondent highlighted that residents tend to participate in things that impact them directly. This person went on to write that when the county uses participants’ input, it makes them feel heard.

Individual Interviewees’ Demographic Data

Seven people agreed to be individually interviewed regarding their participation in in-person public engagement sessions. The interviews took place between October 18 and October 24, 2020. Of the seven interviewees, one was a high school graduate, one had a technical school diploma, two had undergraduate degrees, and three had graduate degrees.

Table 8 shows the number of public participation processes and the number of meetings per process each interviewee attended. For example, Interviewee C attended six meetings on six different topics. Interviewee D participated in one public engagement process and attended eight meetings.

Table 8

Public Engagement Sessions and Meetings Attended Between 2015 and 2020

Interviewee	Public engagement processes attended	Meetings attended
Interviewee A	2	2
Interviewee B	1	2
Interviewee C	6	6
Interviewee D	1	6
Interviewee E	1	8
Interviewee F	2	3
Interviewee G	1	7

Themes From the Individual Interviews

After the individual interviews were cleanly transcribed and the coding was complete, six themes evolved from the data. They are ranked by the number of times interviewees mentioned them in the interviews: (a) altruism or community-mindedness, (b) vested interest or self-interest, (c) democratic duty, (d) civic involvement and engagement, (e) increased understanding and learning about the issue, and (f) the importance of public engagement. This section discusses how interviewees described their motivations for participating in in-person public engagement sessions using the themes.

Altruism or Community-Mindedness

Although the interviewees never used the word *altruism* specifically, the concept of altruism or community-mindedness came up 56 times in the conversations. Some interviewees took a broad view by expressing concern generally about how decisions affect Strathcona

County and being part of larger plans. Some interviewees described altruism in public engagement as contributing to the common good. Interviewee E said, “I mean, it is the community that we live in. It is going to affect our taxes and livability and future planning.” This person went on to say, “[I am interested in] what is both esthetically pleasing in terms of a vision and what’s functional for us, as well” (Interviewee E). Another interviewee said, “We have to go beyond what really touched us personally, but what it means for our community” (Interviewee C).

Being community-minded was of import to some of the interviewees, as Interviewee F expressed:

> I tend to think of myself as community minded. I tend to look at the broader picture of things. . . . It’s quite natural to take an interest in what’s happening around my community and [wonder], “Is there some way that I can provide some input that may be beneficial for future development?”

Interviewee E attended public participation meetings regarding the possibility of establishing a municipal cemetery in Strathcona County. This person’s comments were specific to that topic but had implications for residents across the county. They asserted that a cemetery is integral to the social infrastructure of any municipality and should therefore be nonreligious and accessible to everyone. This person finished by stating, “People need a space where they can dignify their relatives” (Interviewee E).

Vested Interest or Self-Interest

During the interviews, the interviewees mentioned vested interest or self-interest 51 times to describe why they participated in the in-person public engagement process. They were clear that the main motivation was self-interest in a general way. For example, Interviewee G said,

"Initially, self-interest. There is no doubt about it, self-interest." Interviewee B said, "The issue would directly affect me, and I was curious. I wanted to participate because I wanted to make an impact on any kind of decision that would be made." Others were interested in protecting their property and/or their standard of living; for example, "We don't want that built next to us, right?" (Interviewee G). Maintaining the nature of their community was also important to interviewees, as illustrated in this statement: "I guess to also satisfy myself that there weren't any outlandish proposals coming forward" (Interviewee D). Interviewee G believed that people participated in the in-person public engagement process because they were against the proposals being suggested by the county. One person was so concerned about the future development of Centre in the Park (a multi-use development area in the heart of Sherwood Park) that he formed an association of citizens who lived in the neighbourhood, met with county officials, wrote position papers, and attended every public engagement meeting that was scheduled.

Democratic Duty

Interviewees remarked repeatedly (37 times) that democratic duty was an important motivator for participating in in-person public engagement processes. Six of them talked about how public engagement is important to the future of Strathcona County: "If one wants to have an opportunity to help shape the future of the community where you live, then don't pass up on those opportunities that are presented" (Interviewee F). Good decision-making was also important: "Democracy is much more how we listen and how do we arrive at a solution that reflects a good decision for the community for the present and future" (Interviewee G).

Others spoke about the responsibility to the greater good or the common good. They believed it was their duty to provide input to contribute to the betterment of Strathcona County. When asked about the responsibilities of a citizen in a democratic society, Interviewee B said, "It

was a right and a privilege to be able to participate, and I think it would be fair to say, yes, some duty, some sense of duty to it." Another person stated,

> It could be governing the country, it could be making a new Centre in the Park [a multi-use development area], or it could be about new recreation facilities in the community, but democracy is involving people, stakeholders, and getting their input so that you're moving forward in a way that can be successful. (Interviewee F)

Civic Involvement and Engagement

Civic involvement and engagement were important to interviewees, with 31 mentions. They talked about feeling a responsibility to participate because it was the right thing to do. Interviewee G suggested that it made him feel good inside knowing that he was an informed citizen and engaging in a process that would impact his future. Others talked about feeling a sense of civic involvement or civic duty that contributes to the betterment of the community. For example, Interviewee A said, "It makes me feel like I'm more a part of my community and the decision-making process." Another person stated, "I just really want to know what people are thinking about and what the future could hold for this area. In some ways, I think it is just citizens'/residents' duty" (Interviewee B).

Another part of the civic involvement and engagement theme that emerged was the need for the participants to understand that their proposed or preferred solution may not be reflected in the final decision. This theme was mentioned eight times. This idea is commonly referred to in public engagement circles as "having your say, but not necessarily your way." It means that even though one has contributed to a public engagement process, that opinion may not be reflected in the final decision. Interviewee G stated, "This isn't going to satisfy everybody 100%, but it's a reasonable and fair plan that will meet the needs for the future." Similarly, Interviewee F said, "I

kind of compare it to voting. You know, you can't complain or whatnot, about the government, if you don't vote."

Interviewees viewed the possibility of not having their way as an acceptable part of the public engagement process. There was an acknowledgement that every decision made by the municipality will not satisfy every citizen all of the time. Compromise and reasonableness are both necessary to meet the needs for the future. One person stated:

> For me, living in a democratic society, it means that I don't always get what I want. It means an element of compromise in terms of being about to live with the views of others. Sometimes, it's a matter of understanding and accepting, or understanding and agreeing to disagree, but still live in some sort of harmonious way with one's neighbours. (Interviewee F)

Increased Understanding and Learning About the Issue

Four interviewees were keenly interested in learning more about the particular public engagement issue as well as hearing others' perspectives. This concept came up 21 times. Interviewee B said, "The information at the public open house increased my understanding of Centre in the Park now. I learned about . . . the long-term look at the mall and the hotel area." This participant wanted to increase their understanding so they could provide well-informed feedback to the county, as illustrated by this quote: "Some of the concerns that I had going in because of lack of knowledge were tempered or certainly eliminated" (Interviewee B).

The Importance of Public Engagement

Five interviewees expressed appreciation and satisfaction with having the opportunity to provide input to Strathcona County via in-person public engagement sessions. As Interviewee F commented, "The municipal government is doing the right thing in terms of engaging citizens in

a thoughtful manner to gather input and ideas." It was important to participants that their municipal government ensured specific opportunities for public engagement.

Small Focus Groups

This section presents the feedback provided by the participants in the two small focus groups and the two individual interviews for those who were unable to attend the group sessions. The participants reviewed and discussed the survey analysis and the themes from the individual interviews. Each of the interviews was split into two parts. In the first part, participants were presented with the survey analysis and were invited to give their impressions. In the second part, I showed them the qualitative themes that had emerged from the coded data from the individual interviews. Once again, they were asked to provide their comments and reactions. For the ease of the reader, I have retained the letters that I used in the individual interviews (A through F) for the focus group participants. That is, Interviewee A is the same person as Focus Group Interviewee (FGI) A. The two data sets, however, are separate, and they were analyzed separately.

Survey Data Review

When reviewing the survey data, one participant in each group (FGI A and C) said that the survey data were not a surprise. FGI D stated, "People want to participate in issues that are important to them. I mean, that's a driver for me." FGI D went on to say, "[For] those issues that do have a direct impact on me, I'd like to have my voice heard and participate, as much as learning about what's being done as contributing to some outcome." FGI A noted that people want to participate in public engagement sessions that have meaning for them as citizens. FGI B stated that it was important to have their voice heard in matters of municipal public engagement and that Strathcona County citizens expected to be consulted on a variety of issues. Focus group participants concurred that citizens participate in public engagement because they either agree or

disagree with what the county is proposing, and they want an opportunity to share their views. One focus group participant also stated that they voiced their opinion occasionally by writing letters to the editor in the local newspaper on matters of personal concern (FGI A).

When asked to explain why they believed that attending an in-person public engagement session contributed to a democratic process, four survey respondents wrote that citizen rights and responsibilities are important. FGI F said that they have observed that people talk about their rights but at the same time ignore their responsibilities as citizens. This participant believed that asserting one's rights and responsibilities was necessary so that society (in this case, Strathcona County) can function well. FGI C was interested in the data in which "only" (that person's word) 50% of the survey respondents believed that they could make a difference by taking part in public engagement sessions. FGI C also observed that "only 27% of respondents felt it was their duty to contribute to municipal decision-making," and 41% wrote that by doing so, they were contributing to a strong democracy. This group participant interpreted these data to mean that people participate in public engagement sessions because the issue is of personal importance to them, but they do not think that their input will make a difference because their voices will not be heard. FGI D agreed with this observation, adding that they thought that it was likely that the people who chose to complete the survey would have had a positive regard for public engagement before participating in the survey.

Individual Interview Theme Review

Following the survey data review, the focus group participants, as well as the two people who were unable to attend the focus group meetings, were presented with the six qualitative themes from the individual interviews and asked to provide their impressions. Four focus group participants expressed surprise that increased understanding and learning about the issue, the

fifth most common theme, was not higher on the list. FGI B thought that being interested in an issue (i.e., having vested interest or self-interest) and wanting to learn more about that issue could be related. Another person said that people do not attend a meeting for just one reason, but rather for several interrelated reasons (FGI A). FGI D suggested that in order to get people involved, the county would do well to advertise in such a way that the general population could see their self-interest as important.

One participant found it surprising that, as the researcher, I had connected democracy and public engagement: “I was surprised about the democracy piece because I didn’t look at it from that lens. It wasn’t civic duty or anything like that but myself in my community” (FGI A). Another participant from that group agreed, stating, “The democratic lens never crossed my mind” (FGI B). When probed, FGI B opined that citizens in Canadian society expect to be able to express their opinions and that this expectation is simply a cultural phenomenon, “a part of a cultural characteristic of living here,” and had little to do with democracy.

One participant asserted that they saw the role of the municipal government simply as a service provider: “I think that people don’t equate democracy with a municipality. I don’t link a democratic duty to participating in public engagement. I’ve never made that connection” (FGI G). Participants in one of the focus groups discussed how they understood how democratic duty and civic responsibility were different. Their view was that democratic duty is more important and is of a higher order than civic responsibility.

Chapter 4 Summary

This findings chapter presented the raw data from the survey results, the six themes that emerged from the individual interviews, and the discussions about those data sets from the small focus groups and the two individuals. The interviewees were forthright in both the individual

interviews and small focus groups. The data and the subsequent analysis have provided much information to be included in the discussion and conclusions chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of my research was to examine the role democracy plays in motivating Strathcona County citizens to attend in-person public engagement sessions. Findings from the survey I conducted, along with the individual semistructured interviews and small focus groups, are examined in the context of the literature as they relate to democracy and its interrelationship with citizens, citizenship, municipal public engagement, the common good, and motivation theory. This chapter includes recommendations for municipal public engagement practice as well as further research and ends with key conclusions to my research question.

Six themes were developed from the seven individual interviewees: altruism or community-mindedness, vested interest or self-interest, democratic duty, civic involvement and engagement, increased understanding and learning about the issue, and the importance of public engagement. These themes fit into the main subject areas discussed in Chapter 2, which I examine further in this chapter: democracy and public engagement, the common good, and motivation.

Democracy and Public Engagement

The crux of my thesis is to determine the role of democracy in motivating citizens of Strathcona County to participate in municipal public engagement processes. In reviewing the themes from the individual interviews I conducted, four of them relate to democracy and democratic processes: democratic duty, civic involvement, increased understanding and learning about the public engagement issue, and, of course, the importance of public engagement. Interviewees' thoughts on democratic duty included the acknowledgment that it was an important motivator for participating in in-person public engagement sessions because it was

understood that the decisions made would affect the future of Strathcona County. Interviewees also commented on the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen.

When reviewing the transcripts of the individual interviews for the civic involvement and engagement theme, I found that interviewees participated because it was the right thing to do, and it felt good to contribute to bettering Strathcona County. The survey data mirror their assertions (see Table 5). The top answer as to why respondents participated in an in-person public engagement session was that the issue was important to them personally (86.1%). For more detail, please see the motivation section later in this chapter. The interviewees were also plain-spoken about people being unable to complain about the outcome of the public engagement process if they had not participated in said process. Increasing one's understanding and learning about the issue was very important to four participants. These interviewees also wanted to hear others' perspectives to better inform their own opinions. Finally, they expressed the importance of the municipal government providing opportunities for public engagement so the citizens could deliberate and have input on issues that affected them.

The academic literature on democracy and democratic processes was described at length in Chapter 2, but I would suggest that most people do not crack open graduate theses, political science textbooks, or academic journals for leisurely reading. So, what are the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy? The Government of Canada (2016, 2021) has provided straightforward and simple descriptions on its website. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (Government of Canada, 2021), and the government's webpage describes the protected rights and fundamental freedoms of Canadians. It explains Canadians' democratic and legal rights as well as rights regarding mobility, equality, official languages, and minority language education (Government of Canada,

2021). The website explains that rights go hand-in-hand with responsibilities. Citizens are responsible for obeying the law, being willing to serve on a jury, voting, helping others, and caring for oneself and one's family, as well as protecting and enjoying the environment and Canadian heritage (Government of Canada, 2016).

With the information from the Government of Canada (2016, 2021) in mind, one could infer from the interviewees' responses that, for the most part, they had a reasonable understanding of democracy and their responsibilities as citizens. Interviewees had various responses to the interview question "What does democracy mean to you?" Those responses included the following:

- voting in free and fair elections or in plebiscites;
- understanding policies and the electoral system;
- participating in townhall meetings;
- obeying the law;
- being informed about, and providing input to, community issues; and
- serving the greater good (e.g., volunteering, giving to charities) to better the community.

The fact that the interviewees provided informed answers about democratic rights and responsibilities is encouraging. When asked about their democratic responsibilities in a municipal setting, two interviewees said that it was limited to exercising their right to voting in municipal elections. Others declared that democracy involves listening to, and consulting with, others to make good decisions for the municipality. Additionally, only 27.8% of survey respondents indicated that they had a duty to contribute to municipal decision-making.

Two survey respondents wrote thoughtful comments on the topic. These responses support Christiano's (2018) proposed democratic ideal of political equality, in which citizens have both the right and the obligation to listen to what others think about community decision-making matters and express their thoughts. Answering the same question, one survey respondent wrote, "It's our duty to actively participate in the process of decision making. It's also the government's job to make sure citizens' voices are heard and that their opinions are considered seriously." Another survey respondent indicated that they thought that the local government listened to the opinions of public engagement participants. Active participation in public engagement processes on issues of public concern is an important part of democracy (Johnston & Pocklington, 1994).

However, based on the comments and observations of both interviewees and survey respondents, it appears that not everyone understands how democracy is supported by public engagement, nor the relationship between them. Two small focus group participants indicated that they had not considered public engagement being related to democracy whatsoever. FGI A expressed astonishment that democracy and public engagement were connected, saying, "I don't link a democratic duty to participating in public engagement." As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is notable that two interviewees commented that voting was the extent of their democratic duties. On the other hand, Interviewee D mentioned that public engagement in a democratic context is the act of involving citizens and stakeholders to get their input in order to move forward successfully. Another, Interviewee F, opined that they perceived that Strathcona County citizens both want and expect to be consulted on various issues and suggested that being asked to participate in issues of public importance is part of the culture of the municipality. As

Butler (2021) wrote, the goal of democracy is to make fair, collective choices for citizens. This idea leads to the next section: making collective choices for the common good of the community.

The Common Good

Although Canadian jurisdictions function as liberal, representative democracies that are focused on maximizing the basic rights and freedoms of individuals (Pocklington, 1994), there remains the concept of the common good. The common good is beneficial to, and shared by, all community members by contributing to their well-being (Douglass, 1980). Benefits are the result of citizens actively and collectively participating in decision-making (Hussain, 2018; Lynn & Oldenquist, 1986). There is individual positive self-development that occurs as the common good is discussed and developed (Simhony, 2005). Several of the interviewees made comments about the common good, or variations thereof, when talking about their public engagement experiences. They recognized the value that public spaces, including parks and public facilities, have in enhancing the community. They also realized that decisions must "be based on the common good" (Interviewee B) that are advantageous to the community as a whole.

The literature review explained how democracy and the common good sustain each other. As Lagerspetz (2012) wrote, democracy is simply "a continuous attempt to realize the common good" (p. 755). The common good includes social, legal, and educational systems and public infrastructure for both safety and enjoyment, to mention just a few. These amenities are significant and take years or decades to implement. But Finnis (1980) pointed out the common good is, at its heart, a process in which interested people come together to work toward a reasonable intention or goal that requires cooperation to achieve. I make this point because the vast majority of the 2015–2020 public engagement meetings in Strathcona County would not have the same impact on a community as, for example, establishing a school system.

Nevertheless, the issues deliberated during these in-person public engagement meetings are equally important, and the decisions made do contribute to the common good even though the reach may not be significant in the larger picture.

Motivation

The motivation theory section of the literature review established that altruism (selflessness) and egoism (self-interest) are "dual, coexisting principles of human nature" (Li et al., 2014, p. 541). It is clear that both the survey respondents and the interviewees were motivated by self-interest to attend Strathcona County's in-person public engagement sessions. "The issue was important to me" was survey respondents' top answer (86.1%) when asked why they attended these meetings. There were other answers that could be attributed to self-interest. For example, 66.7% of the respondents selected "it is important to voice my opinion about issues that matter to me." There were 61.1% of respondents who wanted to learn more about the issue, and 52.8% indicated that their lives would be affected either positively or negatively by the outcome of the decision being made. Altruistic reasons included making a difference in their community by participating (50.0%), contributing to a strong democracy through participation (41.7%), and believing that they had a duty to contribute to municipal decision-making (27.8%). When given the opportunity to provide comments, one survey respondent wrote, "I think things that directly impact a resident will encourage them to participate."

Egoism was the main motivator for public engagement participation for six of seven interviewees, who stated they had a vested interest in the outcome of the decision. Interviewees wanted to either improve or limit amenities in their neighbourhood. Maintaining or increasing their property values or keeping the municipal taxes low were also mentioned as motivating factors.

The seventh interviewee stated they had altruistic motivations for participating in public engagement meetings. As Bar-Tal (1986) wrote, altruistic motivation is intentional and voluntary, benefits others, is its own external reward, and is its own goal. For example, this person was involved in the county's public engagement process to study the need for a municipal cemetery in Strathcona County, as one does not currently exist. The premise of the public engagement process was that the cemetery would be established and operated by Strathcona County. One could argue that a public cemetery is the very definition of the common good and the altruistic motivations of the interviewee are admirable. However, the interviewee worked in the funeral industry. This occupation casts doubt on their motivation. It is possible that if a public cemetery were established, the interviewee could stand to benefit. It could be questioned whether this interviewee's motivation is egoistic or altruistic. Is it both? That answer is difficult to determine, as one's motive can be inferred only by their behaviour (Strombach et al., 2016). As previously discussed, altruism and egoism are motivational states on a continuum (Batson, 1991; Li et al., 2014; Piliavin & Charng, 1990). Furthermore, Hartenian and Lilly (2009) posited that altruistic and egoistic needs can be fulfilled at the same time.

These observations and discussion lead to the concept of enlightened self-interest. As Tocqueville (1835/2002a, 1840/2002b) proposed almost 200 years ago, citizens must consider their own personal interests along with those of the larger community (Allen, 1998) so that decisions are fair and just for all. This is the very essence of municipal public engagement. Consider that public engagement issues could affect citizens who live on a few particular streets (e.g., installation of a stop sign) or the entire municipality (e.g., a 30-year municipal strategic plan). However, given the findings discussed in the previous few paragraphs, egoism is what frequently piques citizens' interest and encourages them to participate in the public engagement

process. This is what Oldfield (1990) described when he stated that egoism, citizenship, and democracy (specifically public engagement) are related.

Recommendations for Strathcona County

This recommendation section suggests ways for Strathcona County to increase citizens' participation in municipal public engagement processes and their understanding of how public engagement supports democracy. I first discuss the ideas suggested by Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b) and Dewey (1916/2008), and then I propose some simple ideas for the county to implement.

Educate Citizens About Democracy

Can educating citizens about democracy help develop their understanding and skills to increase participation in public engagement processes and improve decision-making? Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b) and Dewey (1916/2008) certainly thought so. Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b) believed democracy and education were inextricably linked and described citizens' participation in local government as a primary school for democratic principles (Gannett, 2005). By actively participating in democratic processes, citizens learned how to listen carefully and practice humility while being both polite and respectful during discussions (Gannett, 2005; Tocqueville, 1835/2002a, 1840/2002b). By modelling these behaviours, local governments "offered its citizens the chance to participate in decisions that made a difference in their lives, directly affecting their private well-being or public happiness" (Gannett, 2005, p. 724). Essentially, these local government actions encouraged individuals in the township to become citizens through a process of socialization. This encouraged healthy deliberation and respect for all voices at the table (Gannett, 2005) at the local government level. Together, this participation would beget a "multitude of citizens who are regulated, temperate,

moderate, farsighted, masters of themselves" (Tocqueville, 1840/2000b, p. 502). Group deliberation was foundational in developing better public policy as citizens brought their wisdom and a wide range of opinions to the table (Verba & Nie, 1972). By doing so, Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b) believed, group decisions would consider several factors, competing or otherwise.

Dewey (1916/2008), an American philosopher, educator, theorist, and cofounder of pragmatism, wrote *Democracy and Education* in 1916. Themes included in that book overlap with those of Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b). Dewey believed that it was crucial for citizens to deeply understand democracy (Boyte, 2003). According to Kauppi et al. (2019), Dewey asserted that democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communication, which is a result of experience individuals gain through "social relationships, practices and interdependencies" (p. 46). Associating with others in an interconnected manner results in people treating others with respect, being willing to change their opinions, and digging into cooperative discussions about matters of common interest (Dewey, 1916/2008).

Essentially, Dewey (1916/2008), Tocqueville (1835/2000a, 1840/2000b), and other pragmatists believed that democratic education would result in people becoming better "moral, social and political problem-solvers" (Ryder & Wegmarshaus, 2007, p. 97). Warren (1993) supported this hypothesis, writing that democratic participation provides a social experience which makes it probable that citizens could acquire values and abilities that support a system of government to be "viable [and] thriving" (p. 210), teaching people how democracies work. Learning about their democratic roles and responsibilities would lead to more citizen participation and better decision-making. As noted in the literature review, Lister (1998), Pykett

et al. (2010), and Oldfield (1990) have suggested that being a citizen involves acting like one. By actively participating in public engagement processes, people become citizens.

Practical Applications for Municipalities

I undertook a master's degree to make a difference in the practice of public engagement at a municipal level. After three decades of working in the public engagement field for both the City of Edmonton and Strathcona County, I have been involved, in one way or the other, with hundreds of public engagement processes. I propose two different approaches Strathcona County could use to improve its public engagement processes in the name of democracy. Based on Tocqueville (1835/2002a, 1840/2002b) and Dewey's (1916/2008) theories, the most obvious solution would be to run classes for citizens to teach them about democracy and their responsibilities as citizens in public engagement settings. This scenario is unlikely to be successful, however. First, it sounds boring. Why would anyone attend? As my research shows, citizens attend public engagement sessions because they have a vested self-interest in the issue being discussed, not because they care, or even know, about democratic principles that are upheld by public engagement. Therefore, my recommendations focus on what Strathcona County, and perhaps other municipalities, can do with a minimum of effort on their end and that of their citizens.

Policy and Promotion. Educating all municipal citizens about democratic decision-making processes, as well as citizens' roles and responsibilities, is unrealistic. However, there is an opportunity that presents itself to Strathcona County, and indeed to all Canadian municipalities: imbue democratic education into governance documents, public engagement processes, and promotional materials. Most municipalities include guiding principles in their public engagement policies. An easy and significant win would be adding a sentence or two that

refer to how public engagement contributes to municipal democracy in policies and supporting documents. At public engagement meetings, staff and consultants could talk about democracy and public engagement with participants as appropriate.

Strathcona County could also create a short handbook to provide information on public engagement generally and citizens' democratic responsibilities in a public engagement context specifically. The City of St. Albert (2017) has produced something similar called *Planning Primer: Planning and Development in the City of St. Albert*. This easy-to-read booklet explains planning and development processes and includes some information about public engagement. Generally, when municipalities promote public engagement opportunities, the information is standard: topic, date, time, place, and the website address for more information. It would behoove Strathcona County to be more specific when it promotes public engagement opportunities by simply including a phrase in promotional materials that briefly explains the link between public engagement and democracy.

Self-Interest. Self-interest appears to be the main motivator in encouraging citizens to attend in-person public engagement meetings. If Strathcona County were quite specific about the considerations and potential outcomes that will be discussed, more people would choose to be involved. Specifics would give citizens more information to determine whether the issue being discussed would directly affect them in a negative or positive way. My research indicates that their motivations have to be piqued in order to get citizens out of their homes and into the public engagement meeting room.

Further Research

My research question and research methodology were planned in 2019, and I received ethics approval in July 2020. One reason my ethics approval was delayed was due to COVID-19.

I had planned in-person interviews, which had to be switched to Zoom. The change to virtual technology for meetings of all kinds quickly became the norm.

Until March 2020, Strathcona County had not to my knowledge conducted any virtual public engagement sessions. As the lockdown and isolation dragged on, it became apparent that virtual public engagement was the only way the county would be able to hear the opinions of its citizens and involve them meaningfully in decision-making. The learning curve for public engagement staff was steep. Facilitating virtual meetings requires a different skill set than conducting in-person meetings. Strathcona County started reintroducing in-person public engagement meetings in June 2022, but the county will continue to host virtual meetings. They have tended to be a popular option as citizens do not have to drag their kids to a meeting or, if someone is feeling unwell, they can still participate from the comfort of their own home. I contend that the reason citizens have participated virtually is the same as for in-person public engagement processes: self-interest. An excellent question for future research would be, "Do citizens participate in virtual engagement sessions for the same reasons they participate in in-person engagement sessions?"

There is a significant amount of academic research on public engagement, but little of it focuses on what is happening at the local government level. Much of this research discusses how municipal public engagement contributes to democracy (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999; Michels & De Graff, 2017; Pratchett, 2004; Steyaert, 2003; Stoker, 1996). Nabatchi and Amsler (2014) examined variables in municipal public engagement and recommended further study of "sponsors and convenors" (p. 19) of municipal public engagement processes. These two researchers produced an impressive list of possible research questions on the topic. It is somewhat discouraging that I could not find any research that looked at municipal public

engagement from the participants' point of view. There is a plethora of research on motivation, but again, nothing specific to public engagement, at any level of government. This is an untapped area of research with many possible research questions: determining the depth of citizens' understanding of the common good, studying the differences in citizens' motivations in virtual and in-person public engagement processes, and exploring the understanding of municipal public engagement practitioners and elected officials of the link between public engagement and democracy and why it is important.

Study Limitations

My research had a few limiting factors. The number of survey responses was low (N = 36), and I completed only seven individual interviews, which is a small sample size. Although other municipalities may benefit from these findings, the results cannot be extrapolated to a larger population with reliability.

Conclusion

Municipalities play an important role in supporting democratic ideals (Steyaert, 2003). In-person public engagement has been a mainstay of Canadian municipalities for many years, and these municipalities depend on citizens, businesses, industries, and not-for-profit organizations to participate in public engagement processes. Their input contributes to well-informed decisions made for the common good of citizens and stakeholders. Individual citizens and stakeholders listed above depend on local government (Steyaert, 2000) for a variety of services such neighbourhood planning, safe drinking water, recycling depots, ditch clearing, emergency services, recreation programming, and facility operations, to mention a just fraction of municipal services. Municipal government is the closest to the people, as municipalities are where they live, work, learn, and play (Steyaert, 2000).

It is important that municipal programs, services, and facilities meet the needs of citizens and stakeholders. It is equally important that citizens contribute to the decisions on issues that matter to them (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association & Alberta Municipal Services Corporation, 2015). Citizens benefit when they use the municipal amenities which are funded by their taxes and program fees. One of the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy is actively participating in the opportunities provided by the municipality to provide input about how those resources and amenities are used.

My research shows that citizens are somewhat knowledgeable of their democratic duties (e.g., voting, being lawful) but are less aware of how their participation in in-person public engagement processes contributes to democracy. That is not to say that they are ignorant of the concept of common good. One outcome of public engagement on the democracy front is increased knowledge and skill development in public engagement. My research also reveals that egoism is the main reason citizens participate in these meetings. The goal is to move participants from selfish motivation to that of enlightened self-interest in order to move toward the common good. Municipalities could improve their promotional practices to appeal to citizens' egoistic motivations and add language about democratic responsibilities as it relates to public engagement processes. My recommendations for municipalities are fairly easy to implement and will positively impact the practice of municipal public engagement and the tenets of democracy.

Public engagement is central municipalities and its citizens. It also supports democratic principles. More research on municipal public engagement would behoove political scientists, public engagement practitioners, and elected officials and administrators at the local level.

References

Abelson, J., & Gauvin, F.-P. (2006, March). *Assessing the impacts of public participation: Concepts, evidence and policy implications*. Canadian Policy Research Networks. https://ipea.gov.br/participacao/images/pdfs/participacao/abelson_julia_gauvin_francois_assessing_impacts_public_participation.pdf

Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*. Princeton University Press.

Alase, A. (2017). The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, *5*(2), 9–19. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association & Alberta Municipal Services Corporation. (2015). *Understanding Alberta's municipal governments*. https://www.abmunis.ca/sites/default/files/About_AUMA/government_resources/munis_101_larger_format_2015.pdf

Allen, B. (1998, September 2–6). *Alexis de Tocqueville on civic virtue and self-interest rightly understood in American democracy* [Conference session]. Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, United States. http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/599/Allen,_Barbara--Alexis-de-Tocqueville-on-civic-virtue-and-self-interest--american-democracy.pdf?sequence=1

Alvi, E. (1998). Fairness and self-interest: An assessment. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, *27*(2), 245–261. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-5357(99)80087-0

Balibar, E. (1988). Propositions on citizenship. *Ethics*, *98*(4), 723–730. https://doi.org/10.1086/293001

Bar-Tal, D. (1986). Altruistic motivation to help: Definition, utility and operationalization. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, *13*(1-2), 3–14.

Barber, B. R. (2003). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. University of California Press.

Batson, C. D. (1991). *The altruism question: Toward a social-psychological answer*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Batson, C. D. (1994). Why act for the public good? Four answers. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*(5), 603–610. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294205016

Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2001). *Principles of biomedical ethics*. Oxford University Press.

Beetham, D., & Boyle, C. K. (2009). *Introducing democracy: 80 questions and answers*. UNESCO.

Beierle, T. C., & Cayford, J. (2002). *Democracy in practice: Public participation in environmental decisions.* Routledge.

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences.* Allyn & Bacon.

Bourke, B. (2014). Positionality: Reflecting on the research process. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1026

Burke Johnson, R., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, *33*(7), 14–26. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014

Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2001). *The practice of nursing research: Conduct, critique and utilization* (4th ed.). W. B. Saunders Company.

Butler, E. (2021). *An introduction to democracy.* The Institute of Economic Affairs.

Centre for Public Involvement. (2015). *Strengthening public engagement in Edmonton*. https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=StrengtheningPublicEngagementinEdmonton_July2015.pdf

Charmaz, K. (1996). The search for meanings—grounded theory. In J. A. Smith, R. Harré, & L. van Langeenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 27–49). Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2004). Grounded theory. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice* (pp. 496–521). Oxford University Press.

Check, J., & Schutt R. K. (2012). Survey research. In J. Check & R. K. Schutt (Eds.), *Research methods in education* (pp. 159–185). Sage Publications.

Chiovitti, R. F., & Piran, N. (2003). Rigour and grounded theory research. *Methodological Issues in Nursing Research*, *44*(4), 427–435. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0309-2402.2003.02822.x

Christiano, T. (2004). The authority of democracy. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *12*(3), 266–290. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2004.00200.x

Christiano, T. (2015). Democracy: Normative theory. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (2nd ed. pp. 85–89). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.63017-9

Christiano, T. (2018). *The rule of the many: Fundamental issues in democratic theory*. Westview Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429495861

City of Calgary. (n.d.). *Engage*. Retrieved February 14, 2021, from https://engage.calgary.ca/

City of Edmonton. (2021, June 7). *Council policy: Public engagement*. https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=PoliciesDirectives/C593A.pdf

City of St. Albert. (2017). *Planning primer: Planning and development in the City of St. Albert.* https://stalbert.ca/site/assets/files/1042/pd_planning-primer-feb_2022_edits.pdf

Cohen, J. (1997). Deliberation and democratic legitimacy. In J. Bohman & W. Rehg (Eds.), *Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics* (pp. 67–91). MIT Press.

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, *25*(6), 435–436.

Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *41*(1), 89–91. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.89-91

Coreil, J. (1994). Group interview methods in community health research. *Medical Anthropology*, *16*(1-4), 193–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.1994.9966115

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.

Crick, B. (2007). Citizenship: The political and the democratic. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *55*(3), 235–248. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00377.x

Cropanzano, R., Goldman, B., & Folger, R. (2005). Self-interest: Defining and understanding a human motive. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*(8), 985–991. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.353

Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics.* Yale University Press.

Dahl, R. A., & Shapiro, I. (2015). *On democracy* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press.

Delanty, G. (1997). Models of citizenship: Defining European identity and citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*, *1*(3), 285–303. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621029708420660

Dewey, J. (2008). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. The MacMillian Company. https://archive.org/details/democracyeducati00deweuoft/page/n9/mode/2up (Original work published 1916)

Diamond, L., & Morlino, L. (2004). The quality of democracy: An overview. *Journal of Democracy*, *15*(4), 21–31. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2004.0060

Diggs, B. J. (1973). The common good as reason for political action. *Ethics*, *83*(4), 283–293. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2379966

Donalek, J. G. (2004). Phenomenology as a qualtiative research method. *Urologic Nursing*. *24*(6), 516–517.

Douglass, B. (1980). The common good and the public interest. *Political Theory*, *8*(1), 103–117. https://doi.org/10.1177/009059178000800108

Doyle, L., Brady, A., & Byrne, G. (2009). An overview of mixed methods research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *14*(2), 175–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987108093962

Englander, M. (2012) The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *43*, 13–35. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916212X632943

Etzioni, A. (2004). *The common good*. Polity Press.

Fierlbeck, K. (2008). *Globalizing democracy: Power, legitimacy and the interpretation of democratic idea* (2nd ed). Manchester University Press.

Finnis, J. M. (1980). *Natural law and natural rights*. Oxford University Press.

Fowler, J. J., & Kam, C. D. (2007). Beyond the self: Social identity, altruism, and political participation. *The Journal of Politics*, *69*(3), 813–827. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00577.x

Frimer, J. A., Walker, L. J., Dunlop, W. L., Lee, B. H., & Riches, A. (2011). The integration of agency and communion in moral personality: Evidence of enlightened self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *101*(1), 149–163. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023780

Gagne, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*, 331–362. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322

Gannett, R. T., Jr. (2005). Tocqueville and local government: Distinguishing democracy's second track. *The Review of Politics*, *67*(4), 721–736. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500035683

Gasson, S. (2004). Rigor in grounded theory research: An interpretive perspective on generating theory from qualitative field studies. In M. Whitman & A. Woszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook for information systems research* (pp. 79–102). Idea Group Publishing.

Gauvin, F., & Abelson, J. (2006, July). *Primer on public involvement.* Health Council of Canada. http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/ccs-hcc/H174-33-2006-eng.pdfv

Gaventa, J., & Valderrama, C. (1999, June 21–24). *Participation, citizenship and local governance* [Background note for the workshop "Strengthening Participation in Local Governance"]. University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom. https://www.uv.es/~fernandm/Gaventa,%20Valderrama.pdf

Geren, P. R. (2001). Public discourse: Creating the conditions for dialogue concerting the common good in a postmodern heterogeneous democracy. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *20*, 191–199. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010376511519

Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.

Goodin, R. E. (2008). *Innovating democracy: Democratic theory and practice after the deliberative turn.* Oxford University Press.

Government of Alberta. (n.d.). *Alberta regional dashboard*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/strathcona-county/#/

Government of Canada. (2016, October 26). *Discover Canada—Rights and responsibilities of citizenship.* https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/rights-resonsibilities-citizenship.html

Government of Canada. (2021, September 1). *The rights and freedoms the Charter protects.* https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/rfcp-cdlp.html

Graafland, J. J. (2009). Self-interest. In J. Peil & I. van Staveren (Eds.), *Handbook of economics and ethics* (pp. 477–483). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal*, *29*(2), 75–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02766777

Hartenian, L. S., & Lilly, B. (2009). Egoism and commitment: A multidimensional approach to understanding sustained volunteering. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *21*(1), 97–118.

Haxhiu, S., & Alidemaj, A. H. (2021). Representative democracy: Its meaning and basic principles. *Acta Universitatis Danubius Juridica*, *2021*(2), 76–91. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01762

Heckhausen, J., & Heckhausen, H. (2018). Motivation and action: Introduction and overview. In J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen (Eds.), *Motivation and action* (pp. 1–14). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65094-4_1

Heywood, A. (2013). *Politics* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hussain, W. (2018). The common good. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/common-good/

Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2004). Reframing public participation: Strategies for the 21st century. *Planning Theory and Practice*, *5*(4), 419–436. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464935042000293170

International Association for Public Participation. (n.d.-a). *Public participation spectrum* [Infographic]. https://iap2canada.ca/resources/Documents/IAP2%20Canada-Foundations-Spectrum_revised_june_orange.pdf

International Association for Public Participation. (n.d.-b). *Who we are.* https://iap2canada.ca/about

Jaede, M. (2017). *The concept of the common good* (Working Paper). University of Edinburg.

Jefferson, T. (1899). *The writings of Thomas Jefferson Volume X 1816–1826* (P. L. Ford, Ed.). The Knickerbocker Press. https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=jlI8AAAAIAAJ&pg=GBS.PR2&hl=en

Johnston, P., & Pocklington, T. C. (1994). Democracy and representative government. In *Representative democracy: An introduction to politics and government* (pp. 2–31). Harcourt Brace & Company.

Kauppi, V., Holma, K., & Kontinen, T. (2019). John Dewey's notion of social intelligence. In K. Holma & T. Kontinen (Eds.), *Practices of citizenship in East Africa: Perspectives from philosophical pragmatism* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279171

Kaushik, V., & Walsh, C. A. (2019). Pragmatism as a research paradigm and its implications for social work research. *Social Sciences*, *8*(9), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8090255

Kelly, B. T. (2003). Focus group interviews. In F. K. Stage & K. Manning (Eds.), *Research in the college context* (pp. 49–62). Brunner-Routledge.

Kelshaw, T., & Gastil, J. (2007). When citizens and officeholders meet: Part 1. *The International Journal of Public Participation*, *1*(2), 1–18. https://www.montclair.edu/profilepages/media/315/user/Journal_Issue2_Kelshaw_Gastil.pdf

Kent, M. L. (2013). Using social media dialogically: Public relations role in reviving democracy. *Public Relations Review*, *39*(4), 337–345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.024

Kymlicka, W., & Norman, W. (1994). Return of the citizen: A survey of recent works on citizen theory. *Ethics*, *104*(2), 352–381.

Lagerspetz, E. (2012). Democracy. In R. Chadwick (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied ethics* (2nd ed., pp. 754–761). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-373932-2.00197-6

Legault, L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences* (pp. 2416–2419). Springer.

Legg, C., & Hookway, C. (2021, April 6). Pragmatism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/pragmatism

Leydet, D. (2017). Citizenship. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/citizenship/

Li, N., Kirkman, B. L., & Porter, C. L. H. O. (2014). Toward a model of work team altruism. *Academy of Management Review*, *39*(4), 541–565. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0160

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage Publications.

Lister, R. (1998). Citizen in action: Citizenship and community development in a Northern Ireland context. *Community Development Journal*, *33*(3), 226–235. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/33.3.226

Longe, J. L. (Ed.). (2016). Conscious and unconscious motivations. In *The Gale encyclopedia of psychology* (3rd ed., Vol. 1., pp. 248–250). Gale.

Longhurst, R. (2010). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In N. Clifford, S. French, & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key methods in geography* (2nd ed., pp. 103–115). Sage.

Lynn, M., & Oldenquist, A. (1986). Egositic and nonegoistic motives in social dilemmas. *American Psychologist*, *41*(5), 529–534.

Maher, C. Hadfield, M., Hutchings, M., & de Eyto, A. (2018). Ensuring rigor in qualitative data analysis: A design research approach to coding combing Nvivo with traditional material methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918786362

Mansbridge, J., Bohman, J., Chambers, S. D., Føllesdal, A., Lafont, C., Manin, B., & Martí, J. (2010). The place of self-interest and the role of power in deliberative democracy. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *18*(1), 64–100.

Marshall, T. H. (1987). *Part I: Citizenship and social class*. In T. H. Marshall &T. Bottomore, *Citizenship and social class* (pp. 1–52). Pluto Press.

Marzuki, A. (2015). Challenges in the public participation and decision-making process. *Sociology & Space*, *53*(1), 21–39.

Mastain, L. (2007). A phenomenological investigation of altruism as experienced by moral exemplars. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *38*(1), 62–99. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916207X190247

Mastromatteo, G., & Solari, S. (2014). The idea of ‘‘common good’’ and the role of the state in present day social economics. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali [International Journal of Social Sciences]*, *122*(1), 85–102.

Mayan, M. J. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry.* Routledge.

Mazo, E. (2005). What causes democracy? *Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law Working Papers*, *38*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2779819

McComas, K. A. (2003). Citizen satisfaction with public meetings used for risk communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *31*(2), 164–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/0090988032000064605

McCoy, M. L., & Scully, P. L. (2002). Deliberative dialogue to expand civic engagement: What kind of talk does democracy need? *Civic Review*, *91*(2), 117–135.

McNamee, K., & Finkelstein, M. W. (2021, August 11). National parks of Canada. In *The Canadian encyclopedia*. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/national-parks-of-canada

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Qualitative research and case study application in education.* Jossey-Bass.

Merrifield, J. (2002, July). *Learning citizenship* (Working paper No. 158). Institute of Development Studies. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/Wp158.pdf

Michels, A. (2019). Participation in citizens' summits and public engagement. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *85*(2), 211–227. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852317691117

Michels, A., & De Graaf, L. (2017). Examining citizen participation: Local participatory policymaking and democracy revisited. *Local Government Studies*, *43*(6), 875–881. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2017.1365712

Molina-Azorin, J. F., Tari, J., Lopez-Gamero, M. D., Pereira-Moliner, J., & Pertusa-Ortega, E. M. (2018). The implementation and advantages of mixed methods in competitive strategy and management systems. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, *10*(1), 412–421. https://doi.org/10.29034/ijmra.v10n1a28

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Transcendental phenomenology: Conceptual framework*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995658

Munhall, P. L. (2007). *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective* (4th ed.). Sudbury, Jones and Bartlett.

Municipal Government Act, Public participation policy regulation 193/2017. https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2017_193.pdf

Municipal Government Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, c. M-26 (rev. 2022). https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/acts/m26.pdf

Nabatchi, T. (2012). Putting the "public" back in public values research: Designing participation to identify and respond to values. *Public Administration Review*, *72*(5), 699–708. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02544.x

Nabatchi, T., & Amsler, L. B. (2014). Direct public engagement in local government. *American Review of Public Administration*, *44*(4), 63S–88S. https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074013519702

Nackenoff, C. (2009). New politics for new selves. In M. Fisher, C. Nackenoff, & W. Chmielewski (Eds.), *Jane Addams and the practice of democracy* (pp. 119–142). University of Illinois Press.

Newman, I. (2014). *Reclaiming local democracy: A progressive future for local government.* Policy Press.

Oldfield, A. (1990). Citizenship: An unnatural practice? *Political Quarterly*, *61*(2), 177–187. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1990.tb00809.x

Oxford Reference. (2000a). Citizen. In *Oxford English Dictionary online*. Retrieved October 14, 2019, from https://www-oed-com/view/Entry/33513

Oxford Reference. (2000b). Democracy. In *Oxford English Dictionary online*. Retrieved October 14, 2019, from https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49755

Oxford Reference. (2000c). Ego. In *Oxford English Dictionary online*. Retrieved November 12, 2022, from https://www-oed-com./view/Entry/59915

Oxford Reference. (2000d). Motivation. In *Oxford English Dictionary online*. Retrieved November 12, 2022, from https://www-oed-com./view/Entry/122708

Oxford Reference. (2000e). Pragmatism. In *Oxford English Dictionary online*. Retrieved January 18, 2023, from https://www-oed-com./view/Entry/149295

Pansiri, J. (2005) Pragmatism: A methodological approach to researching strategic alliances in tourism. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, *2*(3), 191–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530500399333

Parliament of Canada. (2021). *Our country, our parliament: An introduction to how Canada's parliament works*. Library of Parliament. https://lop.parl.ca/About/Parliament/Education/ourcountryourparliament/pdfs/Booklet-e.pdf

Palmer, P. J. (2011). *Healing the heart of democracy: The courage to create a politics worthy of the human spirit.* Jossey-Boss.

Pardales, M. J., & Girod, M. (2006). Community of inquiry: Its past and present future. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *38*(3), 299–309. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2006.00196.x

Parks Canada. (2022, October 14). *About national parks*. https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np

Patten, S. (2000). Democratizing the institutions of policy making: Democratic consultation and participatory administration. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *35*(4), 221–239. https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.35.4.221

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.

Pearson, A. T. (1992) Teacher education in a democracy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *24*(1), 82–92. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.1992.tb00221.x

Phillips, S. D., & Orsini, M. (2002). *Mapping the links: Citizen involvement in policy processes* (CPRN Discussion Paper No. F21). Canadian Policy Research Networks. https://archive.org/download/ERIC_ED474711/ERIC_ED474711.pdf

Phillips-Pula, L., Strunk, J. & Pickler, R. H. (2011). Understanding phenomenological approaches to data analysis. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, *25*, 67–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2010.09.004

Piliavin, J. A., & Charng, H. (1990). Altruism: A review of recent theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *16*, 27–65.

Pocklington, T. C. (1994). *Representative democracy: An introduction to politics and government.* Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (8th ed.). Wolters Kluwer Health; Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.

Post, R. C. (2006). Democracy and equality. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *603*, 24–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716205282954

Post, S. G. (2002). The tradition of agape. In S. G. Post, L. G. Underwood, J. P. Schloss, & W. B. Hurlbut (Eds.), *Altruism and altruistic love: Science, philosophy, and religion in dialogue* (pp. 51–64). Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195143584.001.0001

Pratchett, L. (2004). Local autonomy, local democracy and the 'new localism.' *Political Studies*, *52*, 358–375.

Prugh, T., Costanza, R., & Daly, H. E. (1999). *The local politics of global sustainability*. Island Press.

Pykett, J., Saward, M., & Schaefer, A. (2010). Framing the good citizen. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *12*, 523–538. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00424.x

Quintelier, E., & Van Deth, J. W. (2014). Supporting democracy: Political participation and political attitudes. Exploring causality using panel data. *Political Studies*, 62(S1), 153–171. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12097

Reich, R. B. (2018). *The common good.* Alfred A. Knopf.

Rowe, B. G., & Frewer, L. J. (2005). A typology of public engagement mechanisms. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 30(2), 251–290. https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243904271724

Royce, J., & Kernan, F. (2018). Charles Sanders Peirce. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, *13*(26), 701–709. (Original work published 1916)

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*, 54–67.

Ryder, J., & Wegmarshaus, G. (Eds.). (2007). *Education for a democratic society: Central European Pragmatist Forum* (Vol. III). Brill.

Sandelowski, K. (1986). The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *8*(3), 27–37. https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-198604000-00005

Samuelson, R. J. (1992, March 1). How our American dream unraveled. *Newsweek.* https://www.newsweek.com/how-our-american-dream-unraveled-195900

Saward, M. (2003). Representative and direct democracy. In R. Axtmann (Ed.), *Understanding democratic politics: An introduction* (pp. 52–60). Sage.

Schreiber, J. B. (2016). *Motivation 101*. Springer.

Schugurensky, D. (2004). The tango of citizenship learning and participatory democracy. In K. Mündel & D. Schugurensky (Eds.), *Lifelong citizenship learning, participatory democracy and social change* (Vol. II, pp. 324–332). Transformative Learning Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social construction. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 189–213). Sage Publications.

Scott, N., & Seglow, J. (2007). *Altruism.* Open University Press.

Seamon, D. (2000). A way of seeing people and place: Phenomenology in environment-behavior research. In S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, & H. Minomi (Eds.), *Theoretical perspectives in environmental-behavior research: Underlying assumptions, research problems, and methodologies* (pp. 157–178). Springer.

Sellers, M. N. S. (2003). *Republican legal theory.* Macmillan.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63–75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Shields, P. M. (1999, March 23–25). *The community of inquiry: Insights for public administration from Jane Addams, John Dewey and Charles S. Peirce* [Paper presentation]. Public Administration Theory Network, Portland, OR, United States. https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/3979

Sikolia, D., Biros, D., Mason, M., & Weiser, M. (2013). Trustworthiness of grounded theory methodology research in information systems. *MWAIS 2013 Proceedings*, *16*. https://aisel.aisnet.org/mwais2013/16

Simhony, A. (2005). A liberalism of the common good: Some recent studies of t. h. green's moral and political theory. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *7*(1), 126–144. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2005.00170.x

Singleton, R. A., Jr., & Straits, B. C. (2010). *Approaches to social research* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Sirianni, C. (2009). *Investing in democracy: Engaging citizens in collaborative governance*. Brookings Institution Press.

Statistics Canada. (2017, November 29). *Education in Canada: Key results from the 2016 census*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/dq171129a-eng.htm

Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *44*(1), 26–28.

Steyaert, J. (2000). Local governments online and the role of the resident: Government shop versus electronic community. *Social Science Computer Review*, *18*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/089443930001800101

Stivers, C. (1990). The public agency as *polis*: Active citizenship in the administrative state. *Administration & Society*, *22*(1), 86–105. https://doi.org/10.1177/009539979002200105

Stoker, G. (1996). Redefining local democracy. In L. Pratchett & D. Wilson (Eds.), *Local democracy and local government* (pp. 188–209). Macmillan Press.

Strathcona County. (n.d.-a). *Census 2022: My household counts! Strathcona County 2022 municipal census. Results summary.* https://strathconacablob.blob.core.windows.net/files/files/lls-municipal-census-results-summary-2022.pdf

Strathcona County. (n.d.-b). *Public engagement reports*. https://www.strathcona.ca/council-county/public-engagement/completed-consultations/

Strathcona County. (2019, September 10). *Public engagement policy*. https://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/lls-mph-gov-002-025-public-engagement.pdf

Strombach, T., Strang, S., Park, S. Q., & Kenning, P. (2016). Common and distinctive approaches to motivation in different disciplines. *Progress in Brain Research*, *229*, 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.pbr.2016.06.007

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage Publications.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). Epilogue: Current developments and emerging trends in integrated research methodology. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed., pp. 803–826). Sage.

Tocqueville, A. (2000a). *Democracy in America, Volume 1* (H. C. Mansfield & D. Winthrop, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1835)

Tocqueville, A. (2000b). *Democracy in America, Volume 2.* (H. C. Mansfield & D. Winthrop, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1840)

Tocqueville, A. (2002a). *Democracy in America, Volume 1* (H. Reeves, Trans.). Pennsylvania State University. http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/LojkoMiklos/Alexis-de-Tocqueville-Democracy-in-America.pdf (Original work published 1835)

Tocqueville, A. (2002b). *Democracy in America, Volume 2* (H. Reeves, Trans.). Pennsylvania State University. http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/LojkoMiklos/Alexis-de-Tocqueville-Democracy-in-America.pdf (Original work published 1840)

Torres, M. N. (2010). Challenges in engaging communities in bottom-up literacies for democratic citizenship. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, *5*(3), 191–205. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197910382258

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

van Manen, M. (2007). Phenomenology of practice. In *Phenomenology & practice* (Vol. 1, pp. 11–30). Thompson Rivers University.

Vearrier L. (2020). Enlightened self-interest in altruism (ESIA). *HEC Forum*, *32*(2), 147–161. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10730-020-09406-8

Velasquez, M., Andre, C., Shanks, T., Meyer, M. J., & Meyer, M. J. (1992). The common good. *Issues in Ethics*, *5*(2), 45–60.

Verba, S., & Nie, N. H. (1972). *Participation in America.* University of Chicago Press.

Warner, D. (2012). Citizenship. In R. Chadwick (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied ethics* (2nd ed., pp. 445–452). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-373932-2.00248-9

Warren, M. E. (1993). Can participatory democracy produce better selves? Psychological dimensions of Habermas's discursive model of democracy. *Political Psychology*, *14*(2), 209–234. https://doi.org/10.2307/3791409

Yankelovich, D. (2004, October 15). *Across the red-blue divide: How to start a conversation*. The Christian Science Monitor. https://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1015/p10s02-coop.html

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. Where do you live? (choose only one)
   - Sherwood Park
   - In one of the other hamlets in Strathcona County
   - In rural Strathcona County
   - I don't live in Strathcona County (terminate)

2. Please indicate which in-person public engagement session(s) organized by Strathcona County that you took part in? (Check all that apply)

   - Centre in the Park Redevelopment Phase 3 (Feb 2019)
   - Bremner Area Project Phase 3 (Feb 2019)
   - Diversity and Inclusion (May–June 2019)
   - Heritage Hills Community Traffic Safety Review (May–June 2019)
   - Youth Needs and Asset Assessment (May–Aug 2019)
   - South Cooking Lake Residential Water Fill Station (July 2019)
   - Community Cemetery (Oct 2019)
   - South Strathcona County Functional Planning Study (Oct 2019)
   - Tourism Strategy (Nov 2019)
   - Sustainable Rural Roads Master Plan (Nov–Dec 2019)
   - Ardrossan Skatepark (Feb 2020)
   - I didn't attend any public engagement sessions (Terminate)

   If yes, please indicate which session(s) you attended.
   If no, terminate.

3. Why did you participate in the in-person public engagement session(s) you attended? Select all that apply.
   a. The issue was important to me.
   b. I wanted to contribute to municipal decision making.
   c. It is important to voice my opinion about issues that matter to me.
   d. My life would be positively/negatively affected by the outcome of the decision being made.
   e. Someone invited me to attend.
   f. I wanted to learn more about the issue.
   g. Participating in municipal decision making contributes to a strong democracy.
   h. I believed that I could make a difference in my community by participating in the in-person public engagement session.
   i. I have a duty to contribute to municipal decision making.
   j. Other—Please indicate _____

4. Please rank the answer(s) you chose above in order of importance, with one being the most important.

5. How important was it for you to have the opportunity to express your opinion regarding this matter to Strathcona County for any of the in-person sessions you attended?
   Not at all important to extremely important

6. Do you believe that by attending the in-person public engagement session, you contributed to the democratic process? Yes/No

7. Why did you feel this way?

8. Please use the space below to indicate other reasons that the researcher should further examine regarding participation in one or more of Strathcona County's in-person public engagement sessions.

9. Please indicate your age range.
   a. 18–34
   b. 35–54
   c. 55–74
   d. 75 years and older
   e. I prefer not to answer

10. What is the highest level of schooling you have?
    a. Some schooling below high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Some college/technical school
    d. Complete college/technical school
    e. Some university
    f. University undergraduate degree
    g. Some post-graduate education
    h. Post-graduate degree
    i. I prefer not to answer

Thank you for completing this survey. There are two other parts to this research process: 4–6 individual interviews and a focus group made up of those who were individually interviewed. Each of these sessions will take about an hour and will be completed via Zoom or Google Hangout. You will receive a $5 contactless e-gift card of your choice from Walmart, Tim Horton's, Chapters, or McDonalds for each session you participate in.

If you are interested in participating in these two sessions, please send an email to Dawn Green, at [email address], who is the graduate student doing the research, to express your interest.

Appendix B: Informed Consent

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

Study Title: Participation in Public Engagement Meetings: Exploring the Motivations of Strathcona County Citizens

Research Investigator:
Dawn Green
Graduate Student, Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta
[email address]

Supervisor:
Dr. Kyle Whitfield
Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
[email address]
[telephone number]

Background
You are invited to take part in this research study because:

- you live in Strathcona County
- you are at least 18 years old
- you participated in an in-person public engagement session organized by a Strathcona County department since 2015. Click here to see the list.

You contacted me because you read it on Facebook or Twitter. You may also have received an email from someone you know.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to understand why Strathcona County citizens choose to take part in in-person public engagement processes.

Study Procedures
The interview, which will take about an hour will be video recorded if the interview takes place using Zoom or Google Hangout. If you do not have computer access, the interview can take place on the telephone and will be audio recorded. You will be asked for your verbal consent to participate.

Dawn Green will ask you questions about why you took part in the public engagement session. There are no right or wrong answers. All interviews will be transcribed verbatim. You will be sent the transcribed interview document via email. You have one week from the time you receive the transcript to decide if you wish to withdraw your data or make any changes. If you do not respond within one week from the day the email was sent by the researcher, the researcher will

assume that the transcript can be used as is.

You will also be asked to participate in a focus group session with the other people (4–6) who have been interviewed for Dawn Green's research project to discuss your reactions to her research findings. The focus group will take about an hour. If a focus group cannot be scheduled, a second individual interview with you will be arranged. Participants will receive a $5 contactless e-gift card of your choice from Walmart, Tim Horton's, Chapters, or McDonalds for each session they attend.

Benefits
You will not benefit from being in this study. The information obtained from this study will help people who organize public engagement sessions for municipalities.

Risk
There are almost no risks to the those who take part in this study.

Voluntary Participation
You decide if you want to take part. You do not need to answer any questions during the interview if you don't want to. You can change your mind about being involved at any time by hanging up the phone or closing your web browser.

Confidentiality & Anonymity
The information gathered during the interviews and focus group will be used only for this research. The data collected from this research will be kept confidential. Only Dawn Green and her graduate supervisor, Dr. Kyle Whitfield, will see the transcripts. Your name will not be used. It will be replaced with something like Participant 1 when the researcher presents her work.

The interview data will be stored in a digital format on external hard drive that will be encrypted and password protected in my University of Alberta Google drive. Any hand-written notes of other paper copies will be stored in locked file cabinets in my home. All information will be kept a minimum of five years. The digital and handwritten data will be destroyed after 5 years. Raw data will not be sent to others for use in their research.

If the interview is digitally recorded on Zoom, it is important to note that Zoom is an online platform located in the United States. This means that the recording of the interview might be available to authorities in the United States to access.

If Dawn Green chooses to use a quotation that you provide during the focus group, your identity will be kept anonymous. The information that you provide maybe used at professional conferences or published in academic journals. The video data will only be used for research and transcription purposes. It will not be used in any reports or presentations.

Participants will be able to review Dawn Green's thesis by searching the Education and Research Archives (ERA) at once it is published. You can also send her an email at [email address] to receive a copy.

Contact Information
If you have further questions regarding this study, please contact Dr. Kyle Whitfield at [telephone number] or at [email address].

This research plan has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

Appendix C: Individual Interview Questions

Participation in Public Engagement Meetings: Exploring the Motivations of Strathcona County Citizens

Individual Interview Questions

Time: Date: Interviewee:

___ Consent form review ___ Get verbal or thumbs up approval

___ Making notes during the interview ___ Focused on municipal government

___ I want your honest feedback

1. What Strathcona County in-person public engagement did you attend? Please tell me a bit about it.

2. Why did you attend the in the in-person public engagement session? (Use prompts from the survey questions if necessary)

    a. The issue was important to me.
    b. I wanted to contribute to municipal decision-making.
    c. It is important to voice my opinion about issues that matter to me.
    d. My life would be positively/negatively affected by the outcome of the decision being made.
    e. Someone invited me to attend.
    f. I wanted to learn more about the issue.
    g. Participating in municipal decision-making contributes to a strong democracy.
    h. I believed that I could make a difference in my community by participating in the in-person public engagement session.
    i. I have a duty to contribute to municipal decision-making.

3. Did you feel that your knowledge of the subject matter increased as a result of attending the public engagement session? If so, tell me what you learned.

Did that give you a sense of accomplishment or pride? If not, why not?

4. How will (or, how did) the outcome of the final decision of the issue affect you?
How does it make you feel that you had an impact on the outcome of the public engagement process?

5. Do you feel that your attendance made a difference to the potential outcome of the meeting? How does that make you feel?

6. Did you see your participation as political (small “p” political) in any way? Please tell me more.

7. Did you feel a democratic duty to attend the meeting? If yes, please tell me more.

8. What does democracy mean to you?

9. How important is it for you that you live in a democracy? Why?

10. What do you think the responsibilities of being a citizen in a democratic society are?

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience in a public engagement meeting?

12. What is the highest level of education you have?
    a. Some schooling below high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Some college/technical school
    d. Complete college/technical school
    e. Some university
    f. University undergraduate degree
    g. Some post-graduate education
    h. Post-graduate degree

13. Do you have any other comments or questions for me before we wrap up?

Thank you so much.

Follow up:

___ A transcript for you to review within a week. Please check it for accuracy. If there is anything you would like to have changed, please let me know.

____ Invitation to focus group will be sent once I have completed my analysis of the survey and the individual interviews. I will present my findings and I will ask the group for their reaction.

____ I will send you a $5.00 e-gift card to your choice of:

Walmart MacDonald’s Tim Horton’s Chapters

What is the best email address to send this to? _____

Appendix D: Facebook Recruitment Post

Participants needed

Participation in Public Engagement Meetings: Exploring the Motivations of Strathcona County Citizens

The researcher, a student in the Master of Arts Community Engagement (Faculty of Extension), is interested in why people attend Strathcona County organized in-person public engagement meetings.

Who can participate?
Citizens of Strathcona County who are at least 18 years of age and who have participated in a Strathcona County organized in-person public engagement session since 2015.

What will you be asked to do?

1. Complete in a short survey (2–3 minutes long) and/or
2. Agree to be interviewed individually **and** to participate in a focus group. Each session will take about one hour and will take place using Zoom, Google Hangout, or via the telephone. The researcher needs to interview 4–6 people.

Complete the survey at [survey link]

If you have questions or are interested in participating, please contact Dawn Green at [email address]

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: Participation in Public Engagement Meetings: Exploring the Motivations of Strathcona County Citizens

I, [Transcriptionist Name], the project assistant, will

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (such as disks, electronic file, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, electronic files, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, electronic files, transcripts) to Dawn Green when I have completed the research tasks.

4. after consulting with Dawn Green, the researcher, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to her such as information stored on computer hard drive.

5. other (specify).

Project assistant:

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Signature	Date

Researcher:

_____	_____	_____
Dawn Green	Signature	Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. This research is being supervised by Dr. Kyle Whitfield, [email address] or [telephone number].

Appendix F: Focus Group Questions

1. Introductions

2. Explain consent process
    a. Purpose
    b. Your participation
    c. Your rights
    d. Video recording
    e. Anonymity
    f. Freedom to withdraw
    g. Confidentiality
    h. Obtain consent

3. Review Strathcona County's public engagement definition

4. Review survey results
    a. 36 people replied
    b. Go through the graphs and the pie chart
    c. What are your observations?
    d. Do these results reflect your public engagement experience? Why? Why not?

5. Review interview results
    a. What do you think of the themes that emerged from the seven individual interviews? What about the themes interested you? Surprised you? Please tell me more.
    b. Did they align with your experience? What about it rang true? What didn't align with your experiences. Tell me more about that.
    c. Did I miss anything that you might have brought up in your individual interview that is important for me to note here?

6. In the individual interviews, some people expressed surprise when I asked if you thought about how public engagement contributes to democracy. The interviews took place a few weeks ago. Have you had any other thoughts about that? Do you have any other insights about democracy and public engagement to share with me now?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?
    a. Thank you.
    b. I will follow up with everyone regarding their e-gift card preferences.