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Gov 2.0 and Next Generation Participation:

Perspectives on Local Governments Using New Media
as a Public Engagement Tool for Adults Aged 18 to 40

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Abstract

Gov 2.0 refers to the idea of using technology to improve government functions, particularly in the area of communication and public engagement. As social media tools become more prevalent, it becomes more important for local governments to understand how people are using these tools to communicate and possibly engage in local issues. Previous literature suggests that the social nature of the internet and the ubiquitous use of technology, particularly among adults aged 18 to 40, presents an ideal launch pad for evolving public participation into a more technological realm. Through the use of an online survey targeting civic-minded adults aged 18 to 40; this exploratory study endeavours to answer the following question: how can Gov 2.0 support young adults' ideas of participation and provide more opportunities for civic engagement? 43 completed surveys were collected in March 2012. The survey and findings focus on three main areas of significance: how do participants define civic participation, are they interested in using the internet and social media to participate in local issues, and which online tools do they prefer to use for this purpose. The results clearly suggest that participants define public participation as an action-based, two-way communication. They are willing and interested in using technology to participate, but prefer to use online tools that they are already familiar with.

Introduction

Winston (1998) suggests that as new communication technologies emerge a tension exists as the process of diffusion and adoption is framed within a series of accelerators and brakes. The accelerators are often of a social nature, with the technology being seen as addressing a societal need of some kind. Counteracting this push is a subtle, and sometimes unseen, brake that is present to absorb the disruptive effects that a sweeping change may have on society's institutions. If the social need persists and the tension eases, the technology emerges to critical mass. Winston argues that every communication technology from the printing press to the telegraph and telephone have followed this pattern.

With internet use having reached mass proliferation, it too is following this pattern and changing the way people connect. The emergent open, social nature of the internet, dubbed by many as "web 2.0," has created numerous opportunities for online communication. The list of web 2.0 tools is extensive and continues to grow as many of these tools are being reinvented as mobile applications for use on cell phones. Examples include social networking, social media, virtual worlds, collaboration software, blogs, microblogs, wikis, discussion boards, and photo sharing – just to name a few.

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, as of April 2012, 97 per cent of adults aged 18 to 29 and 91 per cent of adults aged 30 to 49 use the internet; while 87 per cent and 86 per cent respectively go online every day (Zickuhr and Madden, 2012). Young adults are by far the most connected age group among adults. Given this level of internet adoption, it is no wonder that the internet is changing not only how people communicate with each other, but how they communicate with organizations.

For local governments, the internet presents unique, new opportunities to share information and engage stakeholders of this generation. There is an exciting new concept emerging called "Gov 2.0" that seeks to incorporate the open, collaborative elements of the internet into government operations and communications. Tools such as social media, mobile applications, open data catalogues and policy wikis have great potential for governments to engage residents and build social capital.

In short, the way people connect is changing and these changes include the way that people and their government communicate with each other. New media not only holds a lot of promise for government communication initiatives, but it also carries an expectation by the public that the options be provided. Much of the current literature points to the idea of Gov 2.0 being a chance for governments to increase transparency, communication, and collaboration with citizens, thus increasing public engagement and participation in civic matters.

As social media tools become more prevalent, it becomes more important for local governments to understand how people are using these tools to communicate and possibly engage in local issues. Through the use of qualitative research methods, this exploratory study will endeavour to answer the following question: how can Gov 2.0 support young adults' ideas of participation and provide more opportunities for civic engagement?

Literature Review

In order to establish the potential for the use of new media and Gov 2.0 tools to increase civic participation, the literature review will endeavour to accomplish three things. First, it will provide definition to the terms used in the research question. Second, it will describe why new communication technologies emerge through a further exploration of the Winston (1998) model of technology adoption. That will lead into the final piece, which is a discussion on the

"accelerators" or the potential for technology to increase political participation, and the "brakes" which are the challenges that are now present or could possibly develop.

Unpacking the Research Question

Age Demographic

In order to narrow the scope of this study in a way that provides an interesting and cohesive perspective, a choice was made to focus on the next generation of community leaders, adults aged 18 to 40. The motivation to focus on this age group is mainly out of personal interest of the researcher. But it also is a large demographic group that many local governments are interested in targeting. The City of Edmonton developed the NextGen Committee in 2005, to provide input on various policy areas and build a relationship between young Edmontonians, aged 18 to 40, and the Edmonton City Council.

Throughout this paper, the studied age group will be referred to as young adults, as well as their generational titles, older members of the Millenial or Generation Y, born 1982 – 1999, and younger members of Generation X, born 1965 to 1981 (Wikipedia, 2012). This is done in an attempt to remain consistent with much of the literature, while still representing the studied age group that happens to overlap the two generations.

Participation/Engagement

In order to establish a definition of these concepts, Dahlgren (2009) suggests a need to differentiate between the two often synonymous terms. He refers to engagement as "a mobilized, focused attention on some subject" (p. 80). While participation does require a certain amount of engagement, it also involves activity, "which can take many forms but often involves acts of communication" (p. 81). Participation can have many degrees and forms, but in its purest form, Arnstein (1969) simply refers to civic participation as "a categorical term for citizen power,"

where power within the political process is redistributed to give a voice to those typically not included (p. 216).

To establish the importance of political engagement, Galston (2005) reflects on the ramifications of civic disengagement, particularly among young people. First, political engagement is necessary to political effectiveness. Put simply, if you want your voice to be heard, you have to speak up. Secondly, he suggests that every citizen has a moral obligation to contribute to the public processes that prop up our society. And finally, it builds character, in the sense that "political engagement helps develop capacities that are intrinsically important" (p. 25-26).

In 2007, the International Association for Public Participation developed a spectrum of public participation to guide public sector and non-profit efforts to engage the public. The spectrum includes the following activities, which can be applied to a variety of issues and efforts:

- *informing* the public to educate and keep them apprised of the issues,

- *consulting* with the public to gather feedback,

- *involving* the public to work directly in the process,

- *collaborating* with the public to seek solutions, and

- *empowering* the public to make the final decision

Gov 2.0: New media and political communication

In 2001, Fountain wrote a book about how the internet would reinvent government. She describes electronic government as "leveraging the potential of information technology (IT) to enhance the capacity of government" (p. 19). This definition is how many governments utilize new media, as a tool to support more business-oriented priorities of improving customer service and disseminating information. According to Smith (2009), although these uses increase

transparency, governments are lagging behind in using technology to inspire participation.

Providing information is not the same as providing an opportunity to interact and as such, he

feels that there should be a distinction made between *e-government* and *e-democracy* (p. 143).

It is within the perspective of e-democracy that perhaps the best definition or explanation

of Gov 2.0 exists. O'Reilly (2010) describes Gov 2.0 as the concept of government as a platform.

In accordance with the notion of government as "a mechanism for collective action," he states

that, "government 2.0 is the use of technology – especially collaborative technologies at the heart

of web 2.0 – to better solve collective problems at a city, state, national, or international level"

(p. 12). Foundational elements of the concept include: allowing citizens to see and share in the

deliberations of government and creating a new level of transparency; information produced on

and behalf of citizens should be treated by government as a national asset; and trying to

counteract the reputation of "vending machine government" (ie: taxpayer dollars in, services out)

which limits participation to protest (p. 12-13).

The Winston Model

As stated earlier, Winston (1998) explains that each communication technology evolves

through a similar pattern from ideation through to invention and beyond to mass adoption. It is

the supervening social necessity, or the public acceptance and adoption, which drives a

technology through each stage. There is no limitation on the forces that can act as a supervening

social necessity; the needs can range from objective to subjective.

Adding to the complexity of the model is the notion that society applies a system of

accelerators (ie: the supervening social necessity) and brakes (referred to as the 'law' of the

suppression of radical potential) to the diffusion of a technology. As Winston states,

"understanding the interaction of the positive effects of supervening necessity and the brake of

the 'law' of the suppression of radical potential is crucial to a proper overview of how communications technologies develop" (1998, p. 11).

The Winston model provides an ideal backdrop to explain the literature surrounding the issue of Gov 2.0 technologies and user acceptance and adoption. The accelerators include the rapid adoption of the internet, benefits of an engaged citizenry, the potential to increase participation, and how technology is already being used to gather civic information. Each of these represents how the social need is driving the technology forward. The brakes, on the other hand, include the challenges around access, uptake, and bureaucratic controls – all of which stem from institutional limitations that classically embody the 'law' of the suppression of radical potential.

Accelerators: Using technology to increase participation and engagement

The internet is an innovation that provides so many opportunities for increased participation and is rapidly changing the very nature of how we communicate. But why is this? At the very core of why this shift is taking place is Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory. One element of this comprehensive explanation of how an innovation is adopted among a social system is the key features of the innovation. "The characteristics of an innovation, as perceived by the members of a social system, determine its rate of adoption. The five attributes of an innovation are: (1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5) observability" (Rogers, 2003, p. 36). In the case of this study, the innovation is Gov 2.0, the social system is the local government and its residents, and how the attributes of Gov 2.0 are perceived is going to determine whether or not it will be adopted.

At the centre of Gov 2.0 is a shift in political communications from broadcasting to engagement, which echoes a bigger, societal shift that is happening right now called web 2.0.

The transformation of the web into a social tool, together with the rapid diffusion of internet use by the general population, is the main accelerator for using technology for civic participation. Many theorists point to the easy, accessible nature of the social web, as being the great opportunity to change how people connect and create change.

In his book, *Here Comes Everybody*, Shirky (2009) suggests that what makes the internet such a tool of possibility is a mixture of social and technological factors, which he succinctly refers to as the three rules – "promise, tool, and bargain" (p. 260). The promise explains why someone would want to participate, followed by the selection of the most appropriate tool, and the bargain represents the culture of the group transaction. The successful combining of the three rules leads to increased participation with meaningful outcomes. The internet is a platform or tool and "tools that provide simple ways of creating groups lead to new groups, lots of new groups, and not just more groups but more kinds of groups" (p. 20).

Duval (2010) echoes this sentiment and suggests that the millennial generation, strengthened by their interest in social issues and their natural aptitude at communicating via technology, is perfectly poised to usher in this new culture of civic engagement. As he states,

> Creating meaningful and lasting change in the twenty-first century will require avenues of participation for more and more people, at a scale and of a diversity that no one organization's membership roll will ever be able to capture. In short, the networked model is better suited to the problems we now face and is also more appealing to those who increasingly want to help solve them. (2010, p. 113-114)

'Millenials,' as he calls them, have a distinguished set of traits and values that help explain their worldview on civic participation and technology. Some of these values and traits include:

- desire open avenues for participation;

- demand transparency;

- favour cooperative, collaborative approaches;

- are empowered by a familiarity and ease of use with using digital communications tools and other technologies;

- prefer a more active and collaborative government; and

- are politically active, with high volunteerism rates (Duval, 2010, p. 121)

He likens this portrait of Millenials to mirroring the open source movement and the motivation and subsequent shift towards the open, social web (p. 122). It is not simply a comfort with technology that is important to clarify, but the specific preferences around tools and online activities are important to note. Millenials prefer tools that allow for mobility and socializing.

In terms of practical applications, Mergel, Schweick, and Fountain (2009) suggest that once the tools are available and widely used, that becomes an expected way for government to provide services. Figure 1, below, highlights the online activities of this study's age group. Searching for information, social networking, getting news, and visiting government websites are all within the upper third, having an uptake of 60 per cent or higher.
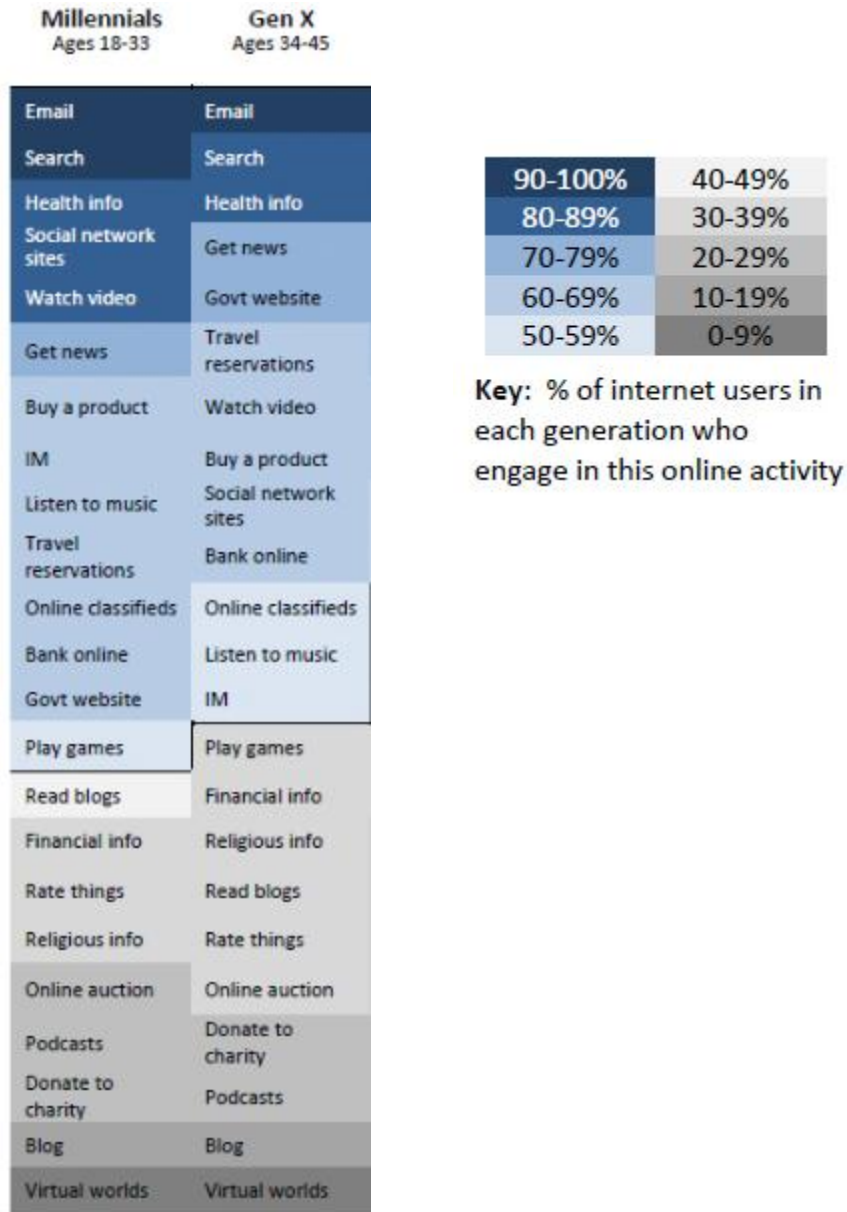
Millennials Ages 18-33	Gen X Ages 34-45
Email	Email
Search	Search
Health info	Health info
Social network sites	Get news
Watch video	Govt website
Get news	Travel reservations
Buy a product	Watch video
IM	Buy a product
Listen to music	Social network sites
Travel reservations	Bank online
Online classifieds	Online classifieds
Bank online	Listen to music
Govt website	IM
Play games	Play games
Read blogs	Financial info
Financial info	Religious info
Rate things	Read blogs
Religious info	Rate things
Online auction	Online auction
Podcasts	Donate to charity
Donate to charity	Podcasts
Blog	Blog
Virtual worlds	Virtual worlds

90-100%	40-49%
80-89%	30-39%
70-79%	20-29%
60-69%	10-19%
50-59%	0-9%

Key: % of internet users in each generation who engage in this online activity

Figure 1: What Different Generations Do Online (Zickuhr, 2010, p.13)

How people utilize the internet for civic purposes is highlighted in a recent survey of American online government users done by the Pew Research Center. According to the study, the vast majority use online tools to deal with their local governments, as opposed to state and federal governments. The most common online activities include visiting the official government websites to look up information regarding public policy, services, statistics, recreational opportunities, and paying fines and purchasing various licenses (Smith, 2010). This suggests that

local governments have an excellent opportunity to leverage their web traffic into opportunities to collaborate, empower, and engage with their residents.

However, obtaining information via social media tools is becoming more common. Nearly one third of those surveyed use digital tools other than websites to get information. The most common sources being video, email alerts, and blogs at 15 per cent each, with social networking sites, text messages, and Twitter following at three to five per cent. Interestingly, although the platform for gaining information is in a social setting, most online government users who used these tools still used them primarily for gathering information, not interacting and directly communicating. Only two per cent said they commented on a government blog post. However, while the direct communication is minimal, nearly one quarter of users did admit to posting political content in other non-official online spaces (Smith, 2010). It is important to establish why certain channels are used more than others, so that local governments can build that knowledge into their communication plans and utilize the appropriate tools.

Noveck (2009) suggests that modern government communications can and should take the shape of collaborative participation. Collaboration should be seen as a "distinct form of democratic participation" (p. 18). This builds on the concept of the wisdom of crowds, whereby "when given the opportunity to come together on a network or in a group, [people] can be effective at solving problems" (p. 19). Social media provides an ideal environment for local governments to achieve this collaborative relationship, but so far the use of social media has not outgrown being a simple broadcast tool.

According to Smith, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2009), there are three reasons why the internet is seen as having the potential to raise civic participation. First, many forms of political activity (ie: contacting government, group forming, registering to vote, etc.) are easier to

conduct over the internet. Second, the ability to obtain a lot of data quickly and efficiently makes it easier to gain political knowledge. And finally, the internet can span space and time to connect people at little to no cost thereby increasing the abilities of groups to mobilize (p. 14-15).

The expectation and availability of new media tools in government, compliments a study cited in Qvortrup (2007). The findings suggest that it is possible to have strong views on political issues but feel alienated by the concept of "politics" (p. 55). This implies that people do have a natural inclination towards political participation but are dissatisfied with, or uninspired by, the current processes that are available. Smith (2009) suggests that the simple difference of virtual participation, as opposed to face-to-face, may empower engagement by people who often feel excluded from traditional forms of participation (p. 149).

These findings are strengthened by a final thought offered by Roy (2006). He suggests that "one should never underestimate the public capacity to both understand the need for and embrace change, particularly in a system as fundamental as democracy and one where there is widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo"(p. 235).

Brakes: Potential pitfalls and challenges

Mergel, Schweick, and Fountain (2009) warn that social web tools present a paradox for the public sector. The very open nature of the web and its call for transparency and collaboration from the innovations that hold the most potential are also subject to the hampering, regulatory controls that exist within bureaucracies to protect privacy and information (p. 2-3). This tension is referred to by Zittrain (2007) as the dilemma of generativity: "the openness that has catapulted the PC and internet to prominence has also made them vulnerable" (p. 50).

To provide a Canadian context, Roy (2006) cites four main challenges of pursuing e-government in Canada: service, security, transparency, and trust. Canadian adoption of e-

government from a service perspective has mainly sought to replicate e-commerce business models, which produced security concerns. The challenge is now shifting towards trying to keep up with people's expectations, perceptions, and trends in online use (p. xii).

Van Dijk (2006) explores whether or not more e-government enhances participation. People are certainly better informed thanks to new media, but he suggests that while government is more approachable, it is not necessarily more accessible. This idea represents the difference between informing and collaborating. "Contrary to popular expectations in the 1990s, the internet is not drawing more people into the political process. However, it does provide a platform for additional forms of political activity that are more difficult to realize in the offline world" (p. 106-107). The potential exists for the internet to provide collaborative opportunities, but because they aren't being offered, the participatory possibilities of the tool cannot be achieved.

Furthermore, in her book, *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*, Fine (2008) suggests that "the gravest barrier to participation in the Connected Age is the ongoing threat to our security and privacy caused by the aggregation, and in some cases outright theft, of our personal information" (p. 175). She implores that this factor not be overlooked as it could severely damage the potential "of broad participation and the use of social media to effect social change" (p. 175). To address these challenges, Harfoush (2009) states that participation must be voluntary and personal information must be kept private to protect the integrity of the relationship between an organization and its members.

A more significant challenge lies in a suggestion in Entman and Bennett (2001) by Dahl that highlights the "control of information by political elites" (p. 469) as the main obstacle in attaining higher participation rates in advanced democratic systems. "His recommendation is for

the design of independent communication and information systems tailored to citizens' abilities and needs" (p. 469). He also suggests that these political information systems include deliberative exercises that encourage engagement at all levels of decision-making. This is what it means to empower citizens to participate.

Hindman (2007) echoes this analysis. While e-government and Gov 2.0 tools should produce "organizational transparency and large-scale collaboration" (p. 192), three patterns exist: investment dollars in the internet still comes from the traditional players, the internet produces winner-take-all patterns, and the tools are mainly utilized by elite professionals. So while new media can facilitate broad participation, at this time, these patterns remain in place.

Objectives of the Study

Smith's (2009) analysis of technology-enabled participation opportunities have yet to fulfill the promise of e-democracy. While the idea of Gov 2.0 as a tool to create high levels of civic participation through citizen engagement is relatively new, it is still at an impasse. The tension between the accelerators and brakes of its mass adoption suggests that there is still a gap between what people want and what governments are prepared to deliver. Given the theoretical potential for Gov 2.0 tools to provide an open, convenient environment that could increase civic engagement and participation and establish a platform for broad citizen participation, many organizations are feeling pressure to keep up with the idea of Gov 2.0 and implement social media efforts without knowing which tools may be the most effective and which ones users are most apt to use.

Thus, the primary objective of the study is to establish whether or not the social expectation matches the theoretical potential. How do people want to participate in local government and what tools do they want to be able to access? How can Gov 2.0 provide more

opportunities for people to engage in civic matters? This information will be able to provide

municipal governments with some clear direction on how best to incorporate social media into

their current communication plans. Moreover, by establishing whether or not people want to

pursue these opportunities, this study may offer some legitimacy to the argument of why local

governments should be making social media a priority.

Study Framework: Research Design and Theoretical Context

As De Vaus (2001) suggests, "the function of a research design is to ensure that the

evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible" (p. 9).

The research design for this project follows a constructionist model, as it seeks to build meaning,

not discover it, by intentionally digging into and studying the "interaction between subject and

object" (Crotty, 1998, p.45). In this case, as the subject is participation and the object is

preferences around Gov 2.0 tools, this study will build meaning about how young adults want to

participate and by what technologically assisted means.

The philosophical worldview is participatory, because as Creswell (2009) notes, this

worldview "holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political

agenda" (p. 9). While this topic does not specifically deal with the notion of disenfranchisement

or marginalization, this worldview does provide the most appropriate lens as it is used to

construct a picture of issues, people, and necessary changes (p. 9).

Establishing a Theoretical Context

Establishing a theoretical context provides a framework for further understanding and

discussion of the findings. Cresswell (2010) suggests that theory can be used at the beginning of

a study to establish the tone and orient the study and its findings. It can also be used at the end,

where it is part of "an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a

generalized model or theory" (Cresswell, 2010, p. 63). A few key ideas and theories were used at

the outset, to assist in developing the questions and to refine the scope of the research question,

but after examining the data, other prominent ideas clearly surfaced.

As per the Winston Model of overcoming the tension between the invention/innovation

of Gov 2.0, and the social aspects of its use, in this case young adults' perceptions of using it to

increase civic participation, this study was developed along the themes of the social factors of

participation, as well as the technological factors of the internet as a tool for engagement. To best

support the research question, the theoretical framework highlights the spectrum of public

participation (IAP2, 2007) and how governments can use technology to support that (O'Reilly,

2010), particularly when trying to engage young adults (Duval, 2010), and identify why

technology appeals to users (Rogers, 2003). Shirky's (2008) idea of 'promise, tool, bargain'

provides a significant lens through which to discuss the social element of the qualitative data.

The theoretical framework serves as a way to summarize the key findings of this study, as

well as identify practical strategies for how local governments can use online tools to increase

participation. Figure 2, below, shows an overall picture of how theory has informed this study.
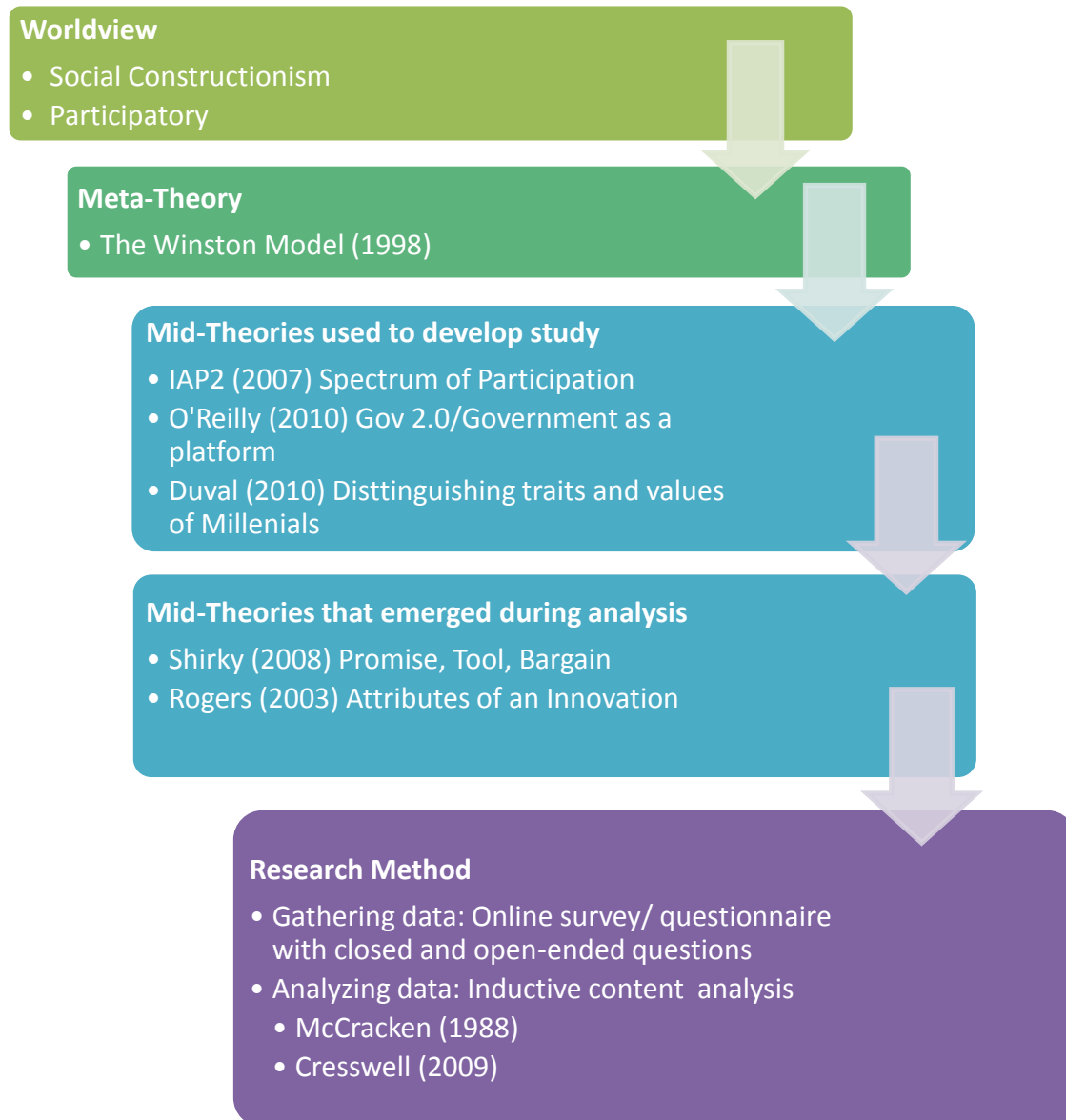
Worldview

- Social Constructionism
- Participatory

Meta-Theory

- The Winston Model (1998)

Mid-Theories used to develop study

- IAP2 (2007) Spectrum of Participation
- O'Reilly (2010) Gov 2.0/Government as a platform
- Duval (2010) Disttinguishing traits and values of Millenials

Mid-Theories that emerged during analysis

- Shirky (2008) Promise, Tool, Bargain
- Rogers (2003) Attributes of an Innovation

Research Method

- Gathering data: Online survey/ questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions
- Analyzing data: Inductive content analysis
  - McCracken (1988)
  - Cresswell (2009)

Figure 2: Study Framework - Overview of Research Design and Theoretical Context

Methodology

Based on past experience and the literature review, this exploratory and inductive study used the qualitative data gathered through an online survey to develop a theoretical framework to answer the research question: how can Gov 2.0 support young adults' ideas of participation and provide more opportunities for civic engagement?

Sources of Data

According to Ritchie and Spencer (1994), qualitative research methods are increasingly being used in applied social policy research. By exploring and understanding social and public policy issues, such as those addressed in this study, research can be used "to meet specific information needs" and potentially provide "for actionable outcomes" (p. 306).

To undertake this type of research, this study utilized a qualitative interview-based methodology. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) assert that "interviews are particularly well suited to understand the social actor's experience and perspective" (p. 173). They also suggest that participants are selected based on their specific experience in relation to the research question. In order to fully explore these experiences and opinions as they relate to civic participation and the use of Gov 2.0 tools, the primary method to collect data for this study was through an online survey of open and closed-ended questions. After much research, FluidSurveys was chosen as the online survey tool that would be used. The survey was live online for the month of March 2012 and 43 completed surveys were collected.

Two lines of questioning were present on the survey. The first involved identifying and measuring the desire to participate. The second line assisted in gathering information as to what particular types of internet-based Gov 2.0 tools respondents hope to access to achieve that desired level of participation. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B. Many questions

began with a 'yes/no' type of question which led into an open-ended request for further

clarification. In total, 27 questions appeared on the survey; of which, ten provided qualitative

data in the manner of personal commentary. The survey questions were developed based on a

question format by Fowler and Cosenza (2009). They outline the four basic characteristics of a

good question that will contribute to collecting quality data:

1. Questions need to be consistently understood.

2. Respondents need to have access to the information required to answer the question.

3. The way in which respondents are asked to answer the question must provide an
   appropriate way to report what they have to say.

4. Respondents must be willing to provide the answers called for in the question. (p.376)

At the beginning of the survey, there was a brief summary of the project, as well as

definitions for civic participation, social media, and Gov 2.0. Prior to the section on

participation, an overview on the IAP2's spectrum of participation was included, as the questions

were framed using that specific terminology.

Prior to going live, the survey was tested by ten individuals. They were asked to comment

on their comprehension of the questions and the general flow of the survey. Much of the

feedback garnered through the testing phase was incorporated into the final survey.

Benefits of the chosen method

- An online survey compliments the nature of the study, ie: using the internet to
  increase participation.

- An online survey facilitates immediate electronic data entry, thereby eliminating the
  need for results to be transcribed.

- The online survey tool used, FluidSurveys, provides analytics and automatic reporting of close-ended questions.

- The survey was designed to branch in different directions based on responses.

Drawbacks of the chosen method

- Researcher is not present to prod participants into providing more comprehensive answers.

Sample

This study utilized purposive or nonprobability sampling, which "requires an explicit definition of the kinds of data sources that are of interest" (Morgan, 2008, p. 799). To illustrate the benefits of a nonprobability sample, Henry (2009) suggests the following:

A nonprobability sample is used to guide data collection about the specific experiences of some members of the study population, to explore a perceived social problem or issue, or to develop theories that are grounded in the actual experiences of some actual members of the study population. (p. 79)

This study constructs meaning around the actual experiences of people regarding their willingness to participate in local civic issues, thus a nonprobability sample is a good fit.

Sampling Frame

Because the results of this study are for a specific purpose, to explore young adults' perspectives on using social media for civic participation, a sampling frame, or set of qualifiers, was used to narrow the participant pool. The sampling frame included the following characteristics:

- Participants must have access to the internet and a basic knowledge and/or willingness to learn social media and web 2.0 tools;

- Participants must be between the ages of 18 and 40; and

- Participants must consider themselves 'civic-minded' (examples included voting, volunteering, and participating in local events)

Survey respondents had to answer "yes" to each of the above prerequisites in order for the survey to begin.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected with the informed consent of participants. The first page of the online survey was a copy of the information letter that was approved by the University of Alberta's ethics board. A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix A. After reading through the provided information on the study, participants were prompted to click a check box indicating that by participating in the survey, they were providing their consent to being a part of the study.

The survey was completely anonymous. The only mandatory personal information that was asked was whether or not the participant fit into the age range of 18 to 40 years old. There was an option at the end of the survey to provide contact information and be part of a follow-up interview, should it be necessary, and that was completely voluntary.

Also in accordance with the study's ethics approval, the survey link was forwarded to individuals through an intermediary. The researcher did not directly recruit participants.

Methods of Analysis

The data analysis encompassed a content analysis of the questionnaire results. According to Julien (2008), content analysis is a method for reducing data to derive meaning. It is commonly used to analyze a variety of textual data, including that from interview transcripts and responses to open-ended questionnaires. The goal of qualitative content analysis is to "seek trustworthiness and credibility by conducting iterative analyses, seeking negative or

contradictory examples, seeking confirmatory data through methodological triangulation and providing supportive examples for conclusions drawn" (Julien, 2008, p. 121).

As with any qualitative study, the information collected was largely unstructured and required a comprehensive framework for analysis. To accomplish this, the methods of analysis came from a few different sources. The general, inductive analysis framework for this study came from McCracken's (1988) five stages of analysis, as shown below in Figure 3. In addition, several of Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) types of codes were utilized as a guide to coding. The in vivo method of using the actual language of the participants (Cresswell, 2009, p. 186) was used to create the specific codes. No predetermined codes were used, as per Cresswell's notion that "the traditional approach in the social sciences is to allow the codes to emerge during data analysis" (2009, p.187).
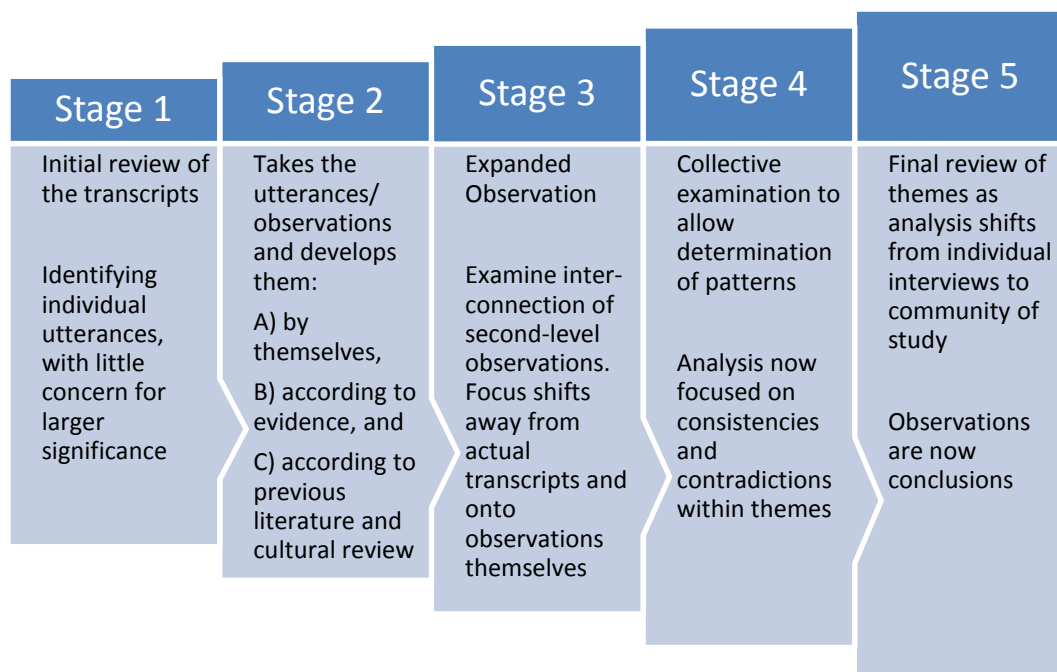
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Initial review of the transcripts

Identifying individual utterances, with little concern for larger significance | Takes the utterances/ observations and develops them:

A) by themselves,

B) according to evidence, and

C) according to previous literature and cultural review | Expanded Observation

Examine inter-connection of second-level observations. Focus shifts away from actual transcripts and onto observations themselves | Collective examination to allow determination of patterns

Analysis now focused on consistencies and contradictions within themes | Final review of themes as analysis shifts from individual interviews to community of study

Observations are now conclusions |

Figure 3: McCracken's (1998) Five Stages of Analysis (p. 41-46)

For more specific direction on coding, the list of types of codes by Bogden and Biklen (1992) were used (Creswell, 2009, p. 187; Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 61). They include the following:

- Setting and context codes - general information on surroundings

- Perspectives held by subjects - their definition of the situation

- Subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects - perspectives

- Process codes - sequence of events, turning points - action words

- Activity codes - regularly occurring kinds of behaviour

- Strategy codes - ways of accomplishing things

- Relationship and social structure codes - unofficially defined codes

This combined approach was used to code and analyze the data in relation to the dual themes of participation and technology that the research question presents. As previously mentioned some ideas were used as a basis to the study and therefore readily informed categories and themes during the analysis. This was the case regarding the IAP2 (2007) Spectrum of Participation, O'Reilly's (2010) definition of Gov 2.0, and Duval's (2010) distinguishing traits of Millenials. But as per the inductive process of relating the data to existing literature, two more theoretical ideas emerged during the analysis stage. Rogers' (2003) attributes of an innovation and Shirky's (2008) promise, tool, bargain were very clearly visible in the data, and thus added to the theoretical framework of the study.

An overview of the themes and codes that were derived in the analysis stage can be found in Appendix C. The overview also includes related examples taken straight from the survey responses.

Findings

The survey was live online through the month of March 2012 and 43 surveys were completed. The survey took, on average, just under 25 minutes to complete. The survey was completely anonymous, and as per the sampling frame, all of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 40; use, or are willing to use, the internet and social media; and consider themselves to be civic-minded. Also as previously mentioned, to reflect the dual themes of participation and technology, the survey was divided into two sections – Civic Participation and Technology Enabled Participation. Survey respondents were provided with an overview of the project, as well as definitions of the terms used. The survey was a mixture of closed and open ended questions.

Civic Participation

The goal of these questions is to establish a framework of personal ideas and perceptions on civic participation, as well as gauge awareness of current participatory opportunities. The IAP2 (2007) Spectrum of Participation was used as a model and was explained in the overview preceding the questions.

Establishing a baseline

In order to adequately determine how Gov 2.0 can work for increasing participation among young adults, it is important to confirm whether or not they even want to participate. The survey's prerequisites confirm an interest in the community, as each participant does consider themselves to be civic-minded, but does that interest translate into action? I wanted to know more about the perceptions and motivation behind participating. When asked if participants thought that they have a civic responsibility to participate in local issues, the overwhelming response, at 95 per cent, was 'yes.'

Of the two respondents who said 'no,' they did agree that people should participate if they are interested or concerned, and perhaps they themselves would at some time; they simply do not feel any pressure or obligation to participate. Given the comments associated with the response, it is safe to say that all of the survey respondents are of the opinion that one should participate in civic matters that interest or concern them.

The qualitative element to this question was aimed at discovering the motivation behind civic participation. Why do people think they should participate? There were three very clear categories of responses. The first category reflects a personal motivation. Many participants referred to wanting a chance to have a voice or have their say on issues. There were also several references to "my community," showcasing a feeling of ownership. Having a voice in matters affecting their own community, was the most common motivation for civic participation. As one respondent put it, "decisions made at the local level affect the lives of my family and friends. Participation helps me ensure the best for my community."

Following close behind was the idea of contributing to the decision-making process by informing leadership. In some cases, there was a positive tone to this sentiment, for example, "it is important to help leaders make informed decisions." There was also a distinctly negative tone present. Many participants felt that they needed to participate, because if people did not, too much power would be in the hands of a few. There was also a reference to participating as a means of counteracting the power of special interest groups.

The final category of comments on this issue pertains to the notion of citizenship and participation as a duty or right that is afforded to members of a democracy. As one participant stated, "democracy requires citizen participation." Another respondent suggests, "[w]ith the

rights we are given as Canadians come certain responsibilities, one of which is to participate in decision-making and get involved."

The participants were also asked about their previous experience in the area of civic participation. Aside from voting, what engagement activities had they participated in? 81 per cent said that they had participated in a local engagement activity and for the most part, responses suggested that civic participation is very issue-specific. Engagement activities mentioned included volunteering for non-profits or on municipal committees, attending community events, attending public meetings (municipal, as well as school board and community league), and signing petitions. More often than not, activities were of an active nature that involved being out in the community, but some participants preferred a more passive approach through petitions and email campaigns. The overall tone was very positive. More people referred to activities that were positive in nature, than negative. They were part of building and creating, as opposed to protesting and stopping, which was also present, but to a much lesser degree. There was also a neutral group in the middle who simply participated as a way of gathering information.

Of the 19 per cent who said that they had not participated in a local issue, the reasons given were that they were too busy, not aware of opportunities, it was inconvenient, or they did not feel strongly enough about an issue to participate.

The preceding information allows us to establish a baseline and draw the following conclusion: the survey participants all agree that they should participate in issues that interest or concern them, and for the most part they want to use their time in a positive way to create change or be a part of their community.

Defining civic participation

As mentioned previously, the IAP2 (2007) spectrum of participation was used as a model for this question. An overview of the spectrum, with a definition for each of the terms was given and participants were asked to choose which word best fit with their definition of civic participation. The results are in below in Figure 4.

Inform		23%
Consult		14%
Involve		33%
Collaborate		23%
Empower		7%

Figure 4: Defining Civic Participation

Participants were asked in a follow-up question to explain why they chose the word that they did. The most popular reason was that their chosen word implied action, or a deeper level or participation. Some participants took a more practical approach to their choice, and reasoned that it was the option that provided the most value for their time. For example, "collaboration describes the level of involvement and activity I am willing to invest in an issue I am concerned about." As well, some suggested that more complex levels of participation are ideal, but simply not feasible given the associated time constraints and cost implications.

The theme of participation involving two-way communication was very clear throughout the responses. Of the five stages of the spectrum, only 'inform' is of a one-way, broadcasting nature. The rest of the words clearly concern two-way communication and action from both sides, while in an increasing manner along the spectrum. Figure 4 shows that 77 per cent of participants felt that a two-way communication word best fit their definition of civic participation. However, that doesn't mean that the 23 per cent of respondents who chose 'inform' agree that simply being provided information is their definition of participation. Certainly some

people who chose 'inform' do feel that way. But interestingly, at least half of the people who selected it clarified their choice as being the base on which more active forms of participation where built, in other words, it is the gateway to the other forms of participation. In the words of one participant, "if you're not informed, you can't really consult, involve, collaborate or empower."

The data very clearly shows that participants define civic participation as a two-way communication that involves action, and a deeper level of engagement.

Knowledge and opinions of current opportunities

Almost all of the survey participants think that their local government has a responsibility to provide opportunities for the community to participate in civic issues. While just over half of respondents, 56 per cent, feel that their local government actually provides those opportunities. When asked to provide examples of opportunities that they are aware of, the list included town hall meetings, volunteer opportunities at events, planning open houses, public information sessions, and council meetings. If people did not directly mention an example, they either suggested that there were not any opportunities or that they did not know of any.

Only 10 per cent of participants felt that the current opportunities inspire broad participation, and only 41 per cent feel that the current opportunities allow their voice to be heard. When asked how local government could provide more opportunities for participation, the most common theme among the responses was to use technology in some manner. Some examples of technology use that were provided include: email surveys, videos, web casts, message boards. Some participants also suggested to increase advertising efforts to promote opportunities.

A surprising theme, both in regards to its presence at all and then the frequency of it, is that instead of answering how more opportunities could be provided, several participants took the opportunity to share their ideas on how the current opportunities could be improved. Throughout these responses is a tone of disconnect, as well as a hint of cynicism. They want the opportunities to be genuine, not simply an exercise in futility; they want to know that they are really being listened to. They also want transparency in the process and for opportunities to be available on a broad scale, not just "certain groups of people."

In regards to knowledge and opinions on participatory opportunities, the survey participants are clear that local governments should provide opportunities to participate, and that the current opportunities do not inspire broad participation. Moreover, less than half of respondents feel that there voice is being heard, and suggest in addition to the use of technology as a way to provide more opportunities, the opportunity itself needs to be genuine and reflect a level of transparency and trust that people's feedback will be used.

Question	Yes	No
Do you think that you have a civic responsibility to participate in local issues that interest or concern you?	95%	5%
Aside from voting, have you ever participated in a community engagement activity on a local issue that interested or concerned you?	81%	19%
Do you think that your local government has a responsibility to provide opportunities for the community to participate in civic issues?	98%	2%
Do you feel as though your local government provides opportunities for you to participate in local issues?	56%	44%
Do you think the current opportunities inspire broad participation?	10%	90%

Do you think the current opportunities allow your voice to be heard?	41%	59%

Figure 5: Summary of Quantitative Data on Civic Participation

Technology-Enabled Participation

This second set of questions was developed to establish people's interest and willingness to use the internet to participate in civic matters, and explore preferences of currently existing new media tools.

Perceptions on using technology for civic engagement

When asked if they think communication technologies, such as the internet and social media, should be used to provide participatory opportunities, 98 per cent agree that they should. Three key themes emerged as the reason for this. The most popular theme was that participation via technology would increase capacity, whether that is because it is more accessible or that it increases communication. The key words "convenient," "accessible," and "easy," were present in over half of the responses.

Another common theme was the idea that governments using technology is a logical evolution and that they should be leveraging the opportunities that the technology allows. As one participant states, "the internet has been woven into our culture – we should leverage it."

The third theme pertains to the fact that so many people are using the internet to communicate. "Everyone is on the internet and social media websites, what better way to get people involved?" says one participant.

The one person who did not think that the internet and social media should be used for engagement opportunities suggested that the "anonymity that can be associated with the internet and social media make for a difficult participation process." This participant was not the only

person to bring up the issue of anonymity; another person suggested that it was a way to increase participation, as some people may be too shy or unwilling to share an unpopular opinion.

It has been determined that participants think the opportunity to participate via technology should be available, but would they themselves actually use it? Yes, 93 per cent said that they would be interested in participating this way. Again the reasons for wanting to participate this way are very similar to the more general question above – it's convenient, easy and accessible. There is also a very personal tone to the comments, for example:

- "on my own time"

- "fits into my life"

- "how I want to"

- "on my own terms"

- "allow me to determine"

- "convenient for me"

- "fits my schedule"

These comments highlight the idea that when time and location constraints can be mitigated, such as when providing participatory opportunities online, more people are willing to participate. This sentiment also emerged in an interesting category of comments relating to the widespread use of mobile phones for accessing the internet. There were also many referrals to accessing online tools via mobile phone, in fact one person said that they were completing the survey on their smartphone. Wireless internet environments are becoming common place in urban areas, and providing civic opportunties online is a natural extension of that.

Interestingly, 100 per cent of the participants who thought that the current opportunities did not allow their voice to be heard did think that the internet and social media should be used

to provide opportunities to participate and 98 per cent said that they are personally interested in participating via the internet. This group provided the same reasons for wanting to use technology as the general group of participants, such as it being easy and convenient, but slightly more of this group want to use technology for civic purposes because they are already using it for other things.

Regarding perceptions of using technology for civic participation, the survey participants think that the internet and social media should be used to provide opportunities to participate and the vast majority of them are themselves interested in participating this way.

Preferences regarding online tools

To explore participants preferences regarding online tools, several approaches were taken. First, they were given a list of known new media tools, and asked to check off all of the ones that they would be willing to use to participate in local issues. Figure 6, below, highlights the results. Using social networking websites such as Facebook, was the clear frontrunner, followed by blogs, video, and mobile media such as text messaging and mobile applications. Participants showed the least amount of interest in online games and virtual reality.

Social networking (ie: Facebook)		86%
Blogs		62%
Videos (ie: You Tube)		57%
SMS/Text messaging		52%
Mobile applications		50%
Microblogs (ie: Twitter)		48%
Discussion forums		48%
Photo sharing (ie: Flickr, Pinterest, Dropbox)		33%
Wikis		31%
Open data and Developer challenges		19%
Online games		7%
Virtual reality (ie: Second Life)		5%

Figure 6: Preferred online tools for civic participation

The follow-up questions tried to dig deeper and pinpoint what respondents liked and did not like about some of the tools that they selected.

The primary reason why participants chose the tools that they did is because they are already using them. That was by far the top answer, with people explaining that they already know how to use them and are already registered. As one participant stated, "they each have the capacity to allow me to participate in ways that I'm comfortable with." Another common, but not as popular, reason was that certain tools allow for easy information sharing. Interacting with others, through dialogue or sharing information, is a very important element of participation to many of the respondents.

The main reasons why people would not use some online tools is because they are either unfamiliar with it, or have no interest. Some people did not see the value in certain options, such as online gaming and virtual reality. In many cases, it was out of ignorance, as opposed to outright rejection. For the most part, people simply do not know enough about them or can't imagine how they could be used for civic participation. There is however a growing body of research in the area of gaming and social change, particularily by Jane McGonigal. As such, it would be worth at least investigating the potential of these options before disregarding them. When trying to engage teens and young adults, do not dismiss gaming as an engagement strategy.

The tool that seemed to spark the strongest response was microblogs, the most popular one of which is Twitter. Participants either love it or hate it. They like it because it is a fast and easy way to keep up on news, share information and connect with other similar-minded people. As one participant mentioned,

Twitter has been an effective way to get the pulse on my city because of the active users – citizens debate issues, city councillors tweet from council meetings, even our mayor tweets. The medium presents a useful, live view of what's happening in our city. Participation is easy and convenient and requires minimal time and effort. (Anonymous)

On the other hand, participants who did not like it, explained that it was limiting and impersonal. One participant wonders, "how much can really be said in 144 characters?" Roughly half of participants were interested in using microblogs for civic participation. They are a great way to make initial connections and maintain an online presence, so worth the effort to incorporate into social media strategies, but should not be the only tool used.

There were some interesting insights into a few of the online tools that seemed to be 'middle of the road' for many participants. The use of discussion forums was not nearly as interesting to most respondents as reading and commenting on blogs. Photo-sharing was seen as an entertaining way of getting people involved, perhaps through contests. Open data appealed to several participants who saw it as a cost effective way of making applications available to the community and the potential for applications that could assist transit and libraries. The only mention of wikis, was to say that it seemed "too cumbersome for most." Wikis certainly have a their place in web 2.0 and could have a lot of potential in the area of colloborative policy development.

When asked to provide suggestions for online tools that were not previously listed, the responses included email, online surveys, LinkedIn, Skype, and live meeting software.

Regarding preferences among participants of which online tools they would like to use for civic participation, the top five online tools are: social networking sites (ie: Facebook), blogs, video, SMS/text messaging, and mobile applications. The least popular choices are online games

and virtual reality. Participants would like to use online tools for participatory purposes that they are already using in their everyday life, they are already registered and familiar with these tools, and many are not interested in trying something new simply for civic engagement.

Awareness and opinions on application of online tools for civic participation

To explore participants' awareness of current online civic participation practices, they were asked whether or not they were aware of their local government using the internet and social media to engage residents. Just over half of the participants were aware of such efforts and listed Twitter and Facebook as the most commonly known social media initiatives. There was also significant mention of the municipal website and mass email systems.

Regarding opinions on the use of online tools for civic participation, 95 per cent of participants agree that online tools should be used for more than simply sharing information. They also overwhelmingly agree that social media could provide more opportunities to participate than what is currently offered. Moreover, it is the personal opinion of 93 per cent of the survey participants that using social media for civic participation is more in line with how they and their peers want to participate.

Question	Yes	No
Do you think communication technologies, such as the internet and social media, should be used to provide participatory opportunities?	98%	2%
Are you interested in having the opportunity to participate in local issues via the internet?	93%	7%
Are you aware if your local government uses social media or the internet to engage residents?	53%	47%
Do you think that online tools should be used to do more than simply share	95%	5%

information between a local government and its residents?		
Do you think that social media could provide more participatory opportunities for you than what is traditionally offered (for example: telephone surveys, open houses, public meetings, email and information on website?	98%	2%
In your opinion, is using social media for civic participation more in line with how you and your peers want to participate?	93%	7%

Figure 7: Summary of Quantitative Data on Technology-Enabled Participation

Discussion/Conclusion

This study was developed to explore how Gov 2.0 can support young adults' ideas of participation and provide more opportunities for civic engagement. Was the study successful in providing a clear answer to the research question? Below is a summary of the findings, and a discussion of how the findings relate to the theoretical context of the study, as well as concluding comments.

Summary of Findings

The survey participants all agree that they should participate in issues that interest or concern them, and for the most part they want to use their time in a positive way to create change or be a part of their community.
Participants define civic participation as a two-way communication that involves action, and a deeper level of engagement.
The survey participants feel that local governments should provide opportunities to participate, and that the current opportunities do not inspire broad participation. Less than half of respondents feel that their voice is being heard.
Many participants suggested that the participatory opportunity needs to be genuine and reflect a level of transparency and trust that people's feedback will be used.

The survey participants think that the internet and social media should be used to provide opportunities to participate and the vast majority are themselves interested in participating this way.

100 per cent of the participants who thought that the current opportunities did not allow their voice to be heard do think that the internet and social media should be used to provide opportunities to participate.

The top five choices for online tools that participants would use for civic participation are: social networking sites (ie: Facebook), blogs, video, SMS/text messaging, and mobile applications. The least popular choices are online games and virtual reality.

Participants would like to use online tools for participatory purposes that they are already using in their everyday life, many are not interested in trying something new simply for civic engagement.

The majority of participants agree that: online tools should be used for more than simply sharing information; social media could provide them with more participatory opportunities; and participating via technology is more in line with how they and their peers want to be involved.

Figure 8: Summary of the Study's Findings

Discussion

As per the Winston Model of overcoming the tension between the invention/innovation of Gov 2.0, and the social aspects of its use, in this case young adults' perceptions of using it to increase civic participation, this study was developed along the themes of the social factors of participation, as well as the technological factors of the internet as a tool for engagement. To best support the research question, the theoretical framework highlights the spectrum of public participation (IAP2, 2007) and how governments can use technology to support that (O'Reilly, 2010), particularly when trying to engage young adults (Duval, 2010), and identify why technology appeals to users (Rogers, 2003). Shirky's (2008) idea of 'promise, tool, bargain' provides a significant lens through which to discuss the social element of the qualitative data.

IAP2's (2007) Spectrum of participation

The spectrum of participation establishes a practical guide to the increasing levels and steps of public participation. The five levels of participation are: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The basic level is a "promise to the public" to keep them informed (IAP2, 2007). As the levels of participation increase, the level of organizational control over the process decreases. Decision-making becomes a group effort and the interaction is a two-way system. The majority of survey participants felt that two-way communication was essential to public participation. They also felt that a critical component of participation was action, to really be a part of the process and have their voices heard. Of the 23 per cent of respondents who selected 'inform,' half of them chose that because they felt it was a gateway to the rest of the levels. It was not that they only wanted to be informed of the issues, they wanted to be educated so that their participation was more meaningful. The participants provide clear direction that, to them, participation means moving beyond the simple provision of information.

O'Reilly's (2010) Gov 2.0 - Government as a platform

O'Reilly (2010) describes Gov 2.0 as the concept of government as a platform. In accordance with the notion of government as "a mechanism for collective action," he states that, "government 2.0 is the use of technology – especially collaborative technologies at the heart of web 2.0 – to better solve collective problems at a city, state, national, or international level" (p. 12). Foundational elements of the concept include: allowing citizens to see and share in the deliberations of government by creating a new level of transparency; and information produced on and behalf of citizens should be treated by government as a national asset (p. 12-13).

The study findings are very much in line with these sentiments. Participants clearly feel that as citizens of a democracy, they should be involved in the decision-making on issues that

they care about. They also feel that opportunities should be transparent and that their opinions

and feedback matters. There is a clear stream of thought throughout the data that articulates the

benefits of governments using the internet and social media to create a two way communication

with residents that promotes action-based participation.

Duval's (2010) Distinguishing traits and values of Millenials

Duval suggests that there is a series of distinguishing traits and values that help explain

his idea that the millennial generation is poised to adapt the culture of web 2.0 to social change.

Networked communication is the millenials preferred mode and they have a profound interest in

playing "a more direct and active role in helping solve public problems and creating positive

social change, in partnership" with government (Duval, 2010, p. 119). Moreover, he quotes a

2008 Pew Research Center study that suggests that one third of US millenials express an interest

in "internet-based collaboration with government" (p. 119). Duval paints a picture of millenials

as a politically active group with high rates of volunteerism and a preference for a more active

and collaborative government.

This study's findings pointedly echo these thoughts. Citizenship, having a say in their

communities, and contributing to the decision-making process were major themes as 95 per cent

of the study participants agree that they have a civic responsibility to participate in local issues

that interest or concern them. The majority of participants have participated in an engagement

activity, most often of a positive nature. They also overwhelmingly agree that technology

provides a much more efficient and effective method of engagement to increase civic

participation. Using technology, specifically the internet and social media, and often via their

mobile phones, is how they prefer to participate. A significant proportion of the participants felt

that the traditional opportunities for civic participation did not allow their voice to be heard, and

that same group did agree that technology should be used for civic engagement purposes and that they themselves would like to participate that way.

Rogers' (2003) Attributes of an innovation

Rogers' (2003) theory on the diffusion of innovations provides a breakdown of the attributes of an innovation that contribute to their rate of adoption. The attributes include: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (p. 223). The survey questions pertaining to technology were initially analyzed using the in vivo method of creating codes based on the actual language of the participants. The in vivo codes were then placed into categories and themes and it became clear that Rogers' attributes were a visible link. Studying these attributes in relation to why people want to participate using technology helps to provide a theoretical basis for establishing why, and why not, a person would choose a certain tool over another thus providing rationale for matching Gov 2.0 tools with specific participation and communication goals.

The study clearly shows that people want to use online tools that improve their capacity to communicate, because of wide spread accessibility and ease of use. They want to use tools that they are familiar with and are already using; they are not interested in trying something new for the purposes of civic engagement. And they want to be able to share information with other people, and engage in a reciprocal dialogue with government and their peers.

Shirky's (2008) Promise, tool, bargain

Shirky convincingly suggests that every successful use of social tools to create a group transaction with a meaningful outcome has shared the effective combining of three rules: promise, tool, and bargain.

The promise is the basic 'why' for anyone to join or contribute to a group. The tool helps with the 'how'…And the bargain sets the rules of the road: if you are interested in the promise and adopt the tools, what can you expect, and what can be expected of you? (Shirky, 2008, p. 260)

Relating to this study, what is the promise? Why would people want to participate in civic matters? What is the value for them? Participants have said that it is because they feel an obligation to express their opinions and be a part of the decision-making process in their communities. The promise of Gov 2.0 is that by participating in civic matters, people have a voice. They can play an active role in the process, and have an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback.

The tools are an obvious choice – the internet and social media. Participants have suggested that their top choices for online tools to use for civic participation are Facebook, blogs, video, SMS/text messaging, and mobile applications. They have said that they prefer tools that that are easy, and accessible, and that they are already using. Choosing the appropriate tool should be based on how you can go about achieving the aforementioned promise in the most efficient and effective way.

And what is the bargain? What are people on both sides expecting from this process? For the local government, they are expecting that people provide honest, thoughtful, and pertinent feedback on important issues. For people, as made evident in this study, they want a transparent process that ensures what they say matters. If the opportunity is not genuine, that will break the trust of the group and whatever gains that were made in evolving the public participation process will be lost.

In order to further highlight the theoretical context in relation to the study findings,

Figure 9 below provides key elements of the above theories and the corresponding raw data.

Theoretical Context	Study Findings
IAP2's (2007) Spectrum of participation	
Inform	"We elect representatives to make decisions for us but I want to be informed" "I feel that 'inform' is the base from which all the other verbs are built"
Consult	"Consult provides the most value for the time invested" "Government in my opinion generally needs to generate input while keeping decision making control within so it can make educated decisions with the input of experts"
Involve	"At the involve step it becomes more of a two-way street" "I think that involving the public throughout the process is the minimum a gov't should be expected to do"
Collaborate	"Collaboration describes the level of involvement and activity I am willing to invest in an issue I am concerned about" "Collaboration is, I believe a potentially slower but albeit more effective method of governing"
Empower	"This would be ideal, to return power to the people" "While collaboration and empowerment are the more ideal goals of public involvement, in reality its often difficult to manage this on complex issues"
O'Reilly's (2010) Gov 2.0 - Government as a platform	
Government as a mechanism of collective action	"Participating would provide the decision makers with more information to make their decisions with" "Democracy works best when people are involved"
	"It is a great tool to participate in discussions regarding civic

Using technology to better solve problems	activities" "New technologies are exceptional at providing information, and allowing feedback"
Allowing citizens to see and share in government deliberations	"If a local issue interests or concerns me, then I should be a part of what is making it" "I have a right to have a voice in issues that affect me" "Have genuine opportunities to participate and make a difference"
Information produced by citizens treated as an asset	"I expect that my municipal government would seek my involvement and opinions" "I think that people will always talk about wanting to be involved but believe that their voice won't be heard"

Duval's (2010) Distinguishing traits and values of Millenials	
Desire open avenues for participation; demand transparency	"We are based on a democratic society, as such, public should have opportunity to participate in decision-making" "Decisions should incorporate ideas of all members of a community, not just the majority" "Provide a greater level of transparency of how each step of the process works"
Favour cooperative, collaborative approaches	"A collaborative relationship provides a deeper level of engagement and, I believe, a more effective outcome" "I feel like there needs to be more sharing of information" "I would appreciate being able to weigh in on issues that are important to me but I feel somewhat disconnected"
Empowered by a familiarity and ease of use with using digital communications tools and other technologies	"I love the use of social media to inspire discussion and garner perspectives" "If you think about the younger generation, social media is the predominant way they get involved" "Our generation uses the computer and smartphones more"
Prefer a more active and collaborative government	"I think as a contributing member of society, it is our duty to uphold the democratic practices that are a privilege many are not as fortunate enough to have"

	"Participation involves action"
Politically active, with high volunteerism rates	"I volunteer with the Canadian Diabetes Association, Cross Cancer Institute. I have helped local candidates at a provincial and a federal level" "I participate on a city working group addressing the issue of alternative energy" "I helped coach community basketball" "Made a website for a friend who is running for MLA" "Attended west LRT expansion info session"

Rogers' (2003) Attributes of an innovation

Relative Advantage	Improves capacity and communication: "It is a relatively easy and effective way for 2-way communication between government and citizens. There is the capacity to reach a broader audience and better gauge public opinion" "Technology is a great tool to allow us to still have a voice on the public stage without physically having to be present for a specific date and time"
Compatibility	People already using it; convenient: "It is how everyone communicates now" "I'm typing this on my smartphone; I can carry the internet in my pocket and use it as a tool to be informed, communicate" "Everyone is on the internet and social media websites, what better way to get people involved?" "I don't have time to go to meetings on issues and debate them, but I could find time throughout the day to participate via the internet somehow"
Complexity	Easy; fast: "The internet is a logical choice due to its ease of use" "It's easy to access and does not take much time (especially for busy people/parents who also work)"

Trialability	People don't want to try something new; they would try participating using tools they already use: "My choices are non-intrusive and are things I already use on a daily basis" "I currently use these methods for other things" "I would not go on a new platform just for civic participatory reasons"
Observability	Sharing information; feedback/2-way interaction: "Perhaps if a social issue discussion became intertwined within a social conversation it could begin to engage those that are not usually part of the conversation" "Easy to share and receive feedback from others"
Shirky's (2008) Promise, tool, bargain	
Promise	Giving people a voice: "As citizens, we have the ability to shape the communities and cities we live in by supporting efforts that create positive change and by letting our elected officials know our views" "It's my community so it would be great to have a say in what matters" "If you participate your opinion is heard and you can make a difference"
Tool	Internet and social media: "Social media is the easiest way for people to participate" "I believe these are easy ways to get participation – so many people have access to the internet and social media everywhere that they go" "I already use all of the things I checked as my main forms of information sharing"
Bargain	Providing real opportunities for input: "Provides a venue for conversation that doesn't necessarily force people to move too far outside of their comfort zone if

	they don't want to"
	"Convenience and confirmation that my opinions are being tracked and recorded"
	"the first step is for the government to gain our trust – our trust that if/when they do ask for our involvement¸ that they actually care about our opinions and if the majority voices a change (or no change) that goes against the agenda of the government, that the public voice and opinion will be honoured – not put aside and ignored because it doesn't align with the government's proposal"

Figure 9: Relating Findings to Theoretical Context

Conclusion

Based on the existing literature and the theoretical framework that shows Gov 2.0 with such promise, the main goal of this study was to determine if the theoretical potential of Gov 2.0 to increase civic engagement among young adults was a practical expectation. The findings of this study can confirm that is the case, Gov 2.0 can support young adults' ideas of participation and increase civic engagement. In order to conclude how this can be done, it is important to revisit Winston. Does this new data contribute to using the internet and social media for civic participation as a brake or an accelerator?

Given the positive nature of the opinions and perspectives shared by the participants, it is an accelerator. Young adults want to actively participate in local issues, and they want to participate via online tools. But key to the Winston model is the push-pull effect of the "law' of the suppression of the radical potential," and at this point what is going to be the biggest accelerator or brake is local governments rising up to meet this challenge. The theory and literature is promising, the people are willing to try it, and it is now up to the public sector to properly implement what is so clearly the future direction of public engagement. Their ability to

provide meaningful participatory opportunities that utilize the tools that people are most apt to use is what is going to determine the diffusion of Gov 2.0.

The results of this research study will hopefully provide some clarity to local governments around the issue of incorporating social media tools into communication plans by addressing what social media tools people want to use and what they are willing to try, in addition to identifying the reasons why certain tools are preferred over others. Providing this information will allow local governments to carefully select which social media tools to utilize in the wide range of circumstances where engagement and participation are the goals of the communication effort.

Study Deficiencies

This study may have turned out differently if a larger or different sample would have been used, or if the data collection had been done in person through interviews or a focus group. A sample size of 43 is a relatively small study and does not provide substantial data to make generalizations regarding the age group studied. However, many questions received sweeping support one way or another, and as such provide adequate data to move forward with the results that were uncovered.

Ideas for Further Work in this Area

This study has clearly determined that there is resounding interest from young adults that participatory opportunities be provided via the internet and social media. My observations and recommendations on where to go from here are rooted in my past experience in local government strategic planning, policy and communications, and pertain to the practical application of moving forward in this area of technology enabled participation.

Understanding the value of public participation.

In my local government experience, the true value of public participation is often lost among municipal employees as they struggle to meet the many day-to-day demands of servicing a municipality. Here in Alberta, the Municipal Government Act mandates that public input be sought on certain issues and participatory opportunities are subsequently organized and executed. Public input becomes another item on the project check list, as opposed to being the starting point and successive framework for the entire initiative. The web 2.0 terms "wisdom of the crowds" and "crowdsourcing" and O'Reilly's (2010) "government as a platform" are each a great way of looking at modern civic participation. By harnessing the power of many, you ensure that the ideas that are generated are not only representative of the community, but truly comprehensive in their scope. The local government opens up to be a facilitator, as opposed to simply a service provider.

Policy.

A key step in moving forward with technology enabled participation is to go back and review current policies regarding public participation and the use of social media. In many cases, these policies may not exist, and the organization must develop a framework that reflects their own culture of participation and use of social media. IAP2 is an excellent resource on the practical aspects of participation. Social media policies should take into account internal and external use and should be considered in relation to the organization's larger communication plans and strategies. As well, efforts should be made to coordinate the two policies, in order to manage where the two overlap on participatory efforts that utilize technology.

Pilot project.

If you are just starting out on the social media and public engagement journey, a small

pilot project is an excellent way to test the waters. Ideas for a small pilot project can be as simple

as posting a question on the municipalities' Facebook page, or inviting residents to submit a

guest blog for the corporate website. When developing a participatory exercise, keep in mind

Shirky's three rules – promise, tool, bargain. What are you trying to achieve? Which is the best

tool for the job? What are we expecting from the community and what are they expecting of us?

Long term vision.

Key to this whole process is having a firm understanding that the idea of using

technology to increase participation, and the subsequent use of the information gathered, is a

long term investment in your community. This is how the next generation of business owners

and leaders wants to be involved, so don't give up on the process. Review and update the

policies and initiatives as necessary, until you find the formula that works for your community.

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Appendix A: Introduction Letter/Informed Consent

Study Title: Exploring the Citizen's View of Gov 2.0: Perceptions of New Media for Public Engagement

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
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Background
- You are being asked to participate in this study to help understand how online communication technologies and new media can be used to increase participation in civic issues.
- The results of this study will be used in support of my final project in the University of Alberta's Master of Arts in Communication and Technology program.

Purpose
- The purpose of this research project is to explore how citizens feel about participating in civic issues through the use of online communication tools such as social media, mobile apps, discussion forums, etc.
- The study will explore how people want to participate in local government and what online tools they want to be able to access. This information will be able to provide municipal governments with some clear direction on how best to incorporate social media into their current communication plans.

Study Procedures
- The primary research method will be an online survey. There are approximately 15 questions in the survey and it will take about 15 – 30 minutes to complete. The participant is responsible for providing honest answers to each of the questions and then submitting the completed survey through the online software program.
- I would like to conduct a small number of follow-up interviews. If you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview, please contact me.
- The data I will be collecting will include:
    - Surveys / at least 20 completed online surveys
    - Interviews / 4 – 6 follow up interviews with interested participants. Interviews can take place in person or via telephone or video chat, and will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes.
- Transcripts of the interviews will be made available to participants, at their request.

Benefits
- The primary benefit would be the positive feeling of helping someone, and forwarding new research. There is also a learning opportunity to become a more informed citizen, as the

study is exploring how people can better engage with their local governments. Participants may find some useful information on civic participation.

- I hope that the information gathered during this study will help local governments incorporate social media and online communication opportunities in their current communication plans, and create real prospects for citizens to participate in their local issues.
- There are no costs involved in this research project.
- The participant will not receive any compensation for their participation.

Risk

- There is a possibility of cultural or social risk in the sense that participants may feel judged, or perceived in a negative manner, about their preference and opinions regarding civic participation. However, the survey is completely anonymous and I will make every attempt to ensure that they are comfortable in providing their honest opinions on the subject matter.

Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary.
- Even if you agree to be in the study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. In the event of opting out, your incomplete survey will simply be deleted from the survey program. If you choose to withdraw from the study after you have completed the survey, you have one week from the time of completion to notify me about your desire to withdraw.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- The main use of this research will be to assist me in completing the requirements of the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology program at the University of Alberta. As I do work as a consultant for local governments, the research may also be used in future projects, when appropriate.
- The data will always remain anonymous and participants will not be personally identified in any of these activities.
- The data will be kept confidential, only myself and the project supervisor will have access to the data.
- Data will be kept in a secure place, and password protected, for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the research project, as per the University of Alberta guidelines.
- Participants may receive a copy of a report of the research findings if they are interested. Simply email me your contact information and I will supply an electronic copy when the project is completed.
- I may use the data obtained from this study in future research, but this must first be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Further Information
- The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Participant Consent
- By completing the online survey, you are giving your consent to being a part of this study.

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Participant Consent

☐   I agree that by completing this survey I am giving my consent to being a part of this study.

Survey Prerequisites

Please answer the following three questions to determine whether or not you fit into the study's sample frame.

Are you between 18 and 40 years of age?

○   Yes

○   No

Do you consider yourself civic-minded? (For example: do you care about your community enough to vote or volunteer or participate in local events or pay attention to local issues?)

○   Yes

○   No

Do you have access to the internet and a willingness to use or learn to use social media?

○   Yes

○   No

About this survey

This survey was developed to gather information on young people's willingness to use social media to connect with their municipal government and participate in local issues. Over the last few years, as the internet has become more popular, some governments have been trying to incorporate the use of technology in their outreach efforts. I would like to find out if this is a way that young adults would like to participate in local issues and explore whether or not it could increase participation. There are two sections of questions. The first group of questions all concern your thoughts and ideas on civic participation. The second group of questions are focused on your interest in and willingness to try technology-enabled participatory opportunities.

Defining Terms

Civic Participation

For the purposes of this project, "civic participation" is a general term to include the following elements:

- Local, in your community

- Municipal level of government, not provincial or federal

- Could also involve participation in or volunteering with community leagues, local charities, and schools

According to the International Association of Public Participation, there are five levels of participation. They are listed below along with a brief description.

- Inform – provide information to the public to educate and inform on an issue

- Consult – gather feedback on certain aspects of an issue decision making

- Involve – work directly with the public throughout the decision making process

- Collaborate – partnering with the public on all aspects of decision making

- Empower – place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Social media and Gov 2.0

The emergent open, social nature of the internet, dubbed by many as "web 2.0," has created countless opportunities for online communication. The list of web 2.0 tools is extensive and continues to grow as many of these tools are being reinvented as mobile applications for use on cell phones. Examples include social networking, social media, virtual worlds, collaboration software, blogs, microblogs, wikis, discussion boards, and photo sharing – just to name a few.

For local governments, the internet presents unique, new opportunities to share information and engage stakeholders. There is an exciting new concept emerging called "Gov 2.0" that seeks to incorporate the open, collaborative elements of the internet into government operations and communications. Tools such as social media, mobile applications, open data catalogues and policy wikis have great potential for governments to engage residents and invite them to participate in many community processes.

With the internet, the way people communicate is changing and these changes can include the way that people and their government communicate with each other. New media not only holds a lot of promise for government communication initiatives, but it also carries an expectation by the public that the options be provided. Much of the current literature points to the idea of Gov 2.0 being a chance for governments to increase transparency, communication, and collaboration with citizens, thus increasing public engagement and participation in civic matters.

Questions on Civic Participation

The first nine questions of the survey are about your personal ideas and definitions of civic participation and awareness of your local participatory opportunities.

Question 1 - Do you think that you have a civic responsibility to participate in local issues that interest or concern you?

○   Yes

○   No

1A. Please explain why you think you should, or should not, participate.

Question 2 - Aside from voting, have you ever participated in a community engagement activity on a local issue that interested or concerned you?

○   Yes

○   No

2A. If so, please explain what you did. And if not, why haven't you?

IAP2's spectrum of public participation

According to the International Association of Public Participation, there are five aspects of participation. They are listed below, along with a brief description.

- Inform – provide information to the public to educate and inform on an issue (Example: information posted on a website or in a newsletter)

- Consult – gather feedback on certain aspects of an issue to assist in decision making (Example: conducting a survey or focus group)

- Involve – work directly with the public throughout the decision making process (Example: holding a workshop event)

- Collaborate – partnering with the public on all aspects of decision making (Example: citizen advisory committees)

- Empower – place final decision-making in the hands of the public (Example: referendum)

Question 3 - After reviewing the terms above, which of the following words best fits with your definition of civic participation?

○   Inform

○   Consult

○   Involve

○   Collaborate

○ Empower

3A. Please explain why you chose that word.

3B. Do any of the other words fit your definition of civic participation? (Please check all that apply.)

☐ Inform

☐ Consult

☐ Involve

☐ Collaborate

☐ Empower

3C. Please explain your choices.

Question 4 - Do you think that your local government has a responsibility to provide opportunities for the community to participate in civic issues?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 5 - Do you feel as though your local government provides opportunities for you to participate in local issues?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 6 - What kinds of participatory opportunities are you aware of?

Question 7 - Do you think the current opportunities inspire broad participation?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 8 - Do you think the current opportunities allow your voice to be heard?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 9 - Do you have any suggestions for how your local government could provide more opportunities for participation?

Questions on Technology Enabled Participation

The second half of the survey is set to establish your interest in and willingness to use technology to participate in civic matters.

Question 10 - Do you think communication technologies, such as the internet and social media, should be used to provide participatory opportunities?

○ Yes

○ No

10a. Please explain why you do or do not think technology, such as the internet and social media, should be used for civic participation.

Question 11 - Are you interested in having the opportunity to participate in local issues via the internet?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 12 - Which of the following tools would you be willing to use to participate in local issues?

☐ Social networking (ie: Facebook)

☐ Blogs

☐ Microblogs (ie: Twitter)

☐ Virtual reality (ie: Second Life)

☐ Discussion forums

☐ Mobile applications

☐ SMS/Text messaging

☐ Wikis

☐ Open data and Developer challenges

☐ Online games

☐ Videos (ie: You Tube)

☐ Photo sharing (ie: Flickr, Pinterest, Dropbox)

12a. Please choose one (or more) of the tools that you selected and explain why you would like to use it for civic participation.

12b. Please choose one (or more) of the tools that you DID NOT select and explain why you would not use it.

12c. Do you have any other suggestions for tools that were not listed?

Question 13 - Are you aware if your local government uses social media or the internet to engage residents?

○   Yes

○   No

13a. If you answered yes to the above question, which online tools are being used that you are aware of?

Question 14 - Do you think that online tools should be used to do more than simply share information between a local government and its residents?

○   Yes

○   No

Question 15 - Do you think that social media could provide more participatory opportunities for you than what is traditionally offered (for example: telephone surveys, open houses, public meetings, email, information on website)?

○   Yes

○   No

Question 16 - In your opinion, is using social media for civic participation more in line with how you and your peers want to participate?

○   Yes

○   No

Demographics
Which age group do you fit within?

○   18 - 29 years old

○   30 - 40 years old

Follow-Up Interview
Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview on this topic?

○   Yes

○   No

If yes, thank you and please provide your contact information in the space provided.

Appendix C: Overview of Themes, Codes, and Examples Used in Data Analysis

The following table highlights examples of the themes and codes that were discovered in the data analysis stage. As stated in the Methodology section, the coding practice followed an inductive structure (McCracken, 1998; Cresswell, 2009). The first stage comprised of in-vivo coding individual utterances, followed by categorizing and theming the codes as per the theoretical framework. The table showcases some of the themes and corresponding raw data in which it was derived.

Theme, Codes		Example
Participation: Motivation		
A	Responsibility/Duty	"it's my duty to"
	Democracy	"Democracy works best when people are involved"
	Citizenship	Example
B	"My community"	"as a member of my community"
	Voice/Say	"In order for a voice to be heard, it has to say something"
C	Decision-making (positive)	"help leaders make informed decisions"
	Decision-making (negative)	"decision making in the hands of very few"
Participation: Past Experience		
Yes	Volunteer	"fundraising group" "CKUA" "Canadian Diabetes Association" "I'm an active Rotarian"
	Petitions	"signed various petitions"
	Events	"attended community events"
	Public Meetings	"attended info session"
	Protest	"Protested a law"
No	Too busy	"Little time to dedicate"
	Not aware	"I was unaware of the event"
	Inconvenient	"It's inconvenient"
	Not interested	"There has not been anything that I consider important enough yet to get involved with"
Participation: Suggestions for improvement		
T	Use technology	"Provide easier access via online tools"
Q	Quality of interaction	"Have genuine opportunities to participate"
A	More advertising	"Do a better job of promoting what is available and making it more appealing to the average population"
Technology: General Perspectives on using technology for civic participation		
CAP	Increases capacity	"The use of social media gets more people involved and provides opportunities"
COMM	Improves communication	"It empowers communication on topics that people care about"

	Theme, Codes	Example
EV	Evolution of technology	"seems like a natural evolution"
USE	People are using it	"Technology is all around us"
Technology: Personal Perspectives on using technology for civic participation		
A	Accessible	"Ability to access from anywhere. At our own time."
C	Convenient	"The internet provides a convenient, accessible and 24/7 means of taking part"
E	Easy	"Makes it easier for more people to get involved if they want to"
Technology: Preference of Tools – Like		
A	Already using	"I already use all of the things I checked"
I	Information sharing	"I like information sharing"
SP	Smartphone	"fast and convenient via smartphone"
FB	Facebook	"its use is widespread and most users check it daily"
Twi	Twitter	"it's the most flexible tool"
Bl	Blogs	"a great way to post our thoughts"
Vid	Video	"easily accessible and entertaining to watch"
Mob	Mobile applications	"flexibility and convenience of using my phone anywhere, anytime"
Txt	Text/SMS	"least amount of commercial influence"
OD	Open data	"a really neat idea"
PS	Photo sharing	"neat way to engage the public, perhaps for contests"
Technology: Preference of Tools – Dislike		
Un	Unfamiliar	"I just don't know them"
NI	Not interested	"The ones I didn't choose just don't interest me"
FB	Facebook	"due to commercial influence"
Twi	Twitter	"it's like junkmail"
OG	Online Games	"I'm not into games"
VR	Virtual Reality	"I think it has severely limited reach"
Txt	Text/SMS	"a bit too personal"