

# **PUBLIC OPINION: HOW STRONG IS THE PUBLIC VOICE IN SOCIETY TODAY?**

## **Honors Thesis**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Bachelor of Geography**

In the College of Arts and Sciences  
at Salem State University

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Commonwealth Honors Program

Salem State University

2015

### *Abstract*

Many scholars of the present day have various questions about prominent aspects of the “democratic citizen’s” role in the democratic process. These questions include: (1) Should ill-informed citizens have the right to voice their opinion in the public sphere? (2) Does the “everyday citizen” really have the capability to place the “good of the many” over their “own individual desires”? (3) Do only those of the “civic mind” who are “well-off” financially have the ability for their voice to be heard over the voice of the many? and, (4) What actually constitutes the “democratic process.”

In the present day, all American citizens have the right to vote, if they should so choose. In order for the process of democracy to be fully utilized, though, it is pertinent that these democratic citizens make it a point to educate themselves before voicing their opinions in the public sphere. Without the basis of a proper education, “ill-informed” citizens, given enough resources, have the opportunity to voice their “ill-informed” views to the public.

Many historic politicians have suggested that those citizens who are “well-off” financially, often have the proper basis of an education to be accurately involved in the process of democracy. These democratic individuals will also have the means for their voice to dominate the public sphere; thus, overshadowing and influencing the “everyday citizen’s” voice in society. This monopoly of public opinion tends to sway the process of democracy in favor of those citizens who are “powerful” enough to make their opinions heard throughout the fabrics of society; regardless of whether or not these “powerful” opinions fully coincide with the opinions of the general public.

This research utilizes a case study on casino location choices to explore the actual strength of the public voice in society, today.

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### *Acknowledgements*

First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Lorri Krebs of the Salem State University Department of Geography for her aid in the completion of this research. Without her guidance, knowledge, and support, this research would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank the faculty of the Department of Geography at Salem State University for their support in my research, and travel to the American Association of Geography Conference of 2015 in Chicago, IL. I have taken many courses in the field of geography throughout my time spent as an undergraduate student at Salem State University. Each and every one of these courses were instructed by superior scholars with a clear love for the field of geography. Had I not had the chance to be taught by such wonderful professors, my love for geography would not have had the opportunity to flourish as it has. Thank you for the time and dedication spent to the education of the next generation of geographic scholars.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Salem State University chapter of Commonwealth Honors Program of Massachusetts. Being surrounded by fellow students with a drive and desire to always learn has bettered my undergraduate experience, and molded me into a life-long learner.

## *Introduction*

“As Benjamin Franklin was leaving the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, he was asked by a woman in the crowd ‘What kind of government do we have?’ Franklin responded ‘A republic, if you can keep it.’ Two hundred plus years have proved Franklin right – that no democratic government is an engine unto itself. For a democracy to thrive, it must be fueled, and re-fueled, by active citizens who understand how it works, and to hold it to its promise through participation in civic life” (Annenberg Learner – *Citizenship: Making Government Work*, 2014). Historically, the idea of democracy as a concept is fascinating, yet puzzling. According to author and scholar David Held, there are two primary historical facts that stand out in regards to democracy: “first, political leaders of extraordinarily diverse views profess to be democrats” (Held, pp. 1, 2006). And, “second, while many states today may be democratic, the history of their political institutions reveals the fragility and vulnerability of democratic arrangements” (Held, pp. 1, 2006).

Bragaw and Hartoonian, contributors to the essay *Democracy as a Civic Challenge*, have defined the concept of democracy as “more than merely a political or economic process of development. It involves historical memory resulting from both experience and formal learning, and often demands that citizens freely use that information to take sides, or assume positions relative to issues involved in their daily personal/public, political, economic, social and global lives. It is a system of on-going conversations that demands a civil relationship between citizens” (Bragaw and Hartoonian, pp. 179, 2003).

Scholars today question various aspects of the democratic citizen's role in the democratic process. These questions include: (1) Should ill-informed citizens have the right to voice their opinion in the public sphere? (2) Does the "everyday citizen" really have the capability to place the "good of the many" over their "own individual desires"? (3) Do only those of the "civic mind" who are "well-off" financially have the ability for their voice to be heard over the voice of the man, and, (4) What actually constitutes the "democratic process."

Many historic politicians have suggested that those citizens who are "well-off" financially, often have the proper basis of an education to be accurately involved in the process of democracy. These same individuals will also have the means for their voice to dominate the public sphere; thus, overshadowing and influencing the "everyday citizen's" voice in society. This monopoly of public opinion tends to sway the process of democracy in favor of those citizens who are "powerful" enough to make their opinions heard throughout the fabrics of society; regardless of whether or not these "powerful" opinions fully coincide with the opinions of the general public.

For the purposes of this research, a case study will be conducted on the turndown of the once proposed establishment of a Foxwoods Casino gaming facility in the town of Milford, Massachusetts. The perceptions, or opinions, of Milford residents in regards to gambling and the establishment of a casino in their local community are surveyed to explore the democratic process. It is known that in November 2013 a vote was conducted within the town on the establishment of the Foxwoods Casino, and the casino was ultimately turned down. Since this vote was open to the local public residents of Milford, Massachusetts, their voice can be seen in the policies of the local community. It is the

negative perceptions of the public and their views about casinos that influenced their votes against the establishment of the casino, and stopped the establishment of the actual facility within the confines of the town itself.

### *Literature Review*

In discussing the role public opinion plays in the democratic process, it is pertinent to begin by addressing the historical significance democracy has played in the thoughts and actions of renowned historic leaders. Alexander Hamilton, for example, believed that “all communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born; the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second...” (Frisch, pp. 108, 1985).

Scholar and Professor at the University of Delaware, H. T Reynolds, extends upon Hamilton’s ideas by suggesting that “countless others have shared Hamilton's skepticism [of the role of the general public in the democratic process]. Although these skeptics have not always been as biting, they too have expressed reservations about putting government in the hands of the common people. Walter Lippmann, one of the foremost journalists of the twentieth century, worried that democracies inevitably decay. The reason? Unrestrained public opinion” (Reynolds, 2011). Why, then, has democracy persisted in the American Republic for hundreds of years?

Thomas Jefferson, yet another American historical figure, “wrote to a friend in 1816: ‘We both consider the people as our children. But you love them as infants whom you are afraid to trust without nurses; and I as adults whom I freely leave to self-government’ (Padover, pp. 56, 1939). Scholars that support Jefferson’s ideas of democracy, have often tended to question where the fault with the potential decay of democracy lies. Is it truly the fault of the public, due to their uneducated opinions and the ability for these opinions to be reflected in policy? Or is it, primarily, the fault of national leaders and the decisions that they have made?

*H. T. Reynolds looks to the nation’s leaders for reasoning, noting that: “...democracies decay, if they do, not because of the cupidity of the masses, but because of the stupidity and self-seeking of leadership echelons. Politicians often make of the public a scapegoat for their own shortcomings; their actions, they say, are a necessity for survival given the state of public opinion. Yet the opinion itself results from the preachings of the influentials, of this generation and of several past generations” (Key, Jr., pp. 557, 1964).*

Based on these findings, H. T. Reynolds has developed two schools of thought, in regards to the democratic process: the skeptics, and the optimists. “One, the skeptics, maintain that human frailties make mass participation in politics both impractical and undesirable. Ordinary people simply lack the requisite knowledge, skills, and motivations to act responsibly” (Schumpeter, pp. 260, 1975). They place immediate gratification of wants ahead of the long-run interests of the commonwealth. “Conceding that the populace is the ultimate source of political authority, these doubters nevertheless believe that the affairs of state are best left to trained, experienced, and dispassionate public servants” (Reynolds, 2011).

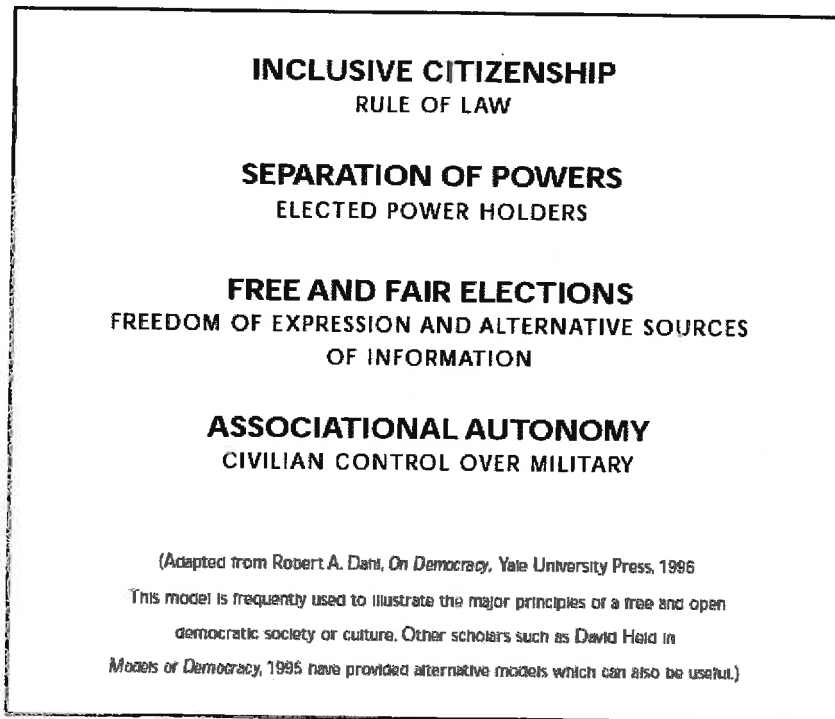
On the other hand, the skeptics' rivals, the optimists, recognize the public's many shortcomings but still insist that most citizens have more intelligence and decency than

critics realize. “Furthermore, the common people's flaws result not from inborn weaknesses but from defective social and political institutions that limit information and discourage participation. The body politic can govern itself responsibly if given the chance, and therefore ‘average’ men and women should become more, not less, involved in public affairs” (Reynolds, 2011).

This disagreement, then, begs the question of when, and how, “regular” citizens have the right to be involved in the democratic process. Should “regular” citizens report their thoughts and ideas to local politicians, who will then report these overall concerns to state government officials, who will then take the general consensus to the nation level? David Held, author of *Models of Democracy*, examines the general “prerequisites” or “pre-qualifications” for a local government to be, successfully, “ruled by the people.” “Do the people have, for instance, need to be literate before becoming democrats? Is a certain level of social wealth necessary for the maintenance of a democracy? Can democracies be maintained during times of national emergency or war? These and a host of other issues have ensured that the meaning of democracy has remained, and probably always will remain, unsettled” (Held, pp. 2, 2006).

Bragaw and Hartooninan (2003), who contributed to the essay *Democracy as a Civic Challenge*, have further drawn upon the ideas of Robert A. Dahl, a political theorist and previous Professor of Political Science at Yale University. From their research, the basis for our democratic model is show in Figure 1:

*Figure 1: Democratic Model*



(image obtained from *Democracy as a Civic Challenge* by Bragaw and Hartoonian, 2003)

Robert Y. Shapiro, a professor of political science at Columbia University elaborated on the concept of American democracy, and the role that public opinion plays in policymaking at both a local level, as well as at a national level. Burnstein, another scholar of democracy, “offers a balanced summary: Overall the finding that opinion influences policy is amazingly robust—most studies show opinion affecting policy regardless of how opinion, policy, and the relationship between them is measured” (Burnstein, pp. 72, 1978). Shapiro adds that “the relative visibility and importance of these [political opinion] issues makes a difference as well. The repeated finding of greater or more frequent effects of opinion on more salient policies fits directly with the expectation that political leaders and candidates would be most concerned with matters that are of greatest visibility to (potential) voters. If, however, the dominant finding had

been one of little or no opinion–policy relationship, this would have shown that the political system was not responsive to public opinion” (Shapiro, pp. 986, 2011).

So how then can society ensure that the general public’s opinions are fairly and accurately represented in policymaking? According to *Democratic Challenges*, there are five primary indicators of a democratic society: inclusion, final control, effective participation, equal vote, and an enlightened understanding (Democratic Challenges, 2014). The idea of inclusion represents the universal right to vote as a full and equal citizen (Democratic Challenges, 2014), while final control “calls for free and impartial elections. If elections or electoral districts are rigged, those who win – and are likely to have a different policy – will not be the ones whom the citizens would prefer to be represented by. Freedom of association, freedom of expression and alternative sources of information also needed so that citizens’ opinions about what government should be about can be expressed in party platforms and election campaigns” (Democratic Challenges, 2014).

Further, the effective democratic process requires that all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status and resources available, are able to effectively participate in democratic voting process. This factor does not bring into play the legal status of a residents’ citizenship, nor their legal ability to participate in a public vote. “Participation will be more effective if political parties manage to activate large numbers of people in the political process; otherwise, interest groups that are not equally open for everyone will exert a greater influence” (Democratic Challenges, 2014). This factor further plays a role in the democratic factor of an equal vote, where all citizens are meant to have an equal influence in any given election.

It is most important to dictate, though, that even with effective and equal participation, a proper and adequate democratic process can be adversely impacted if those citizens who participate are not adequately informed. “Reliable information calls for *freedom of association* and *freedom of expression*. Political leaders with a monopoly of information are not particularly credible. A fair number of independent organizations that can express themselves freely are also needed as *alternative sources of information*. These institutionalized rights have paved the way for a powerful media industry. Citizens are exposed to a huge amount of information. Matters that are important and relevant for understanding the democratic process, for instance, tend to drown in the media’s torrential flow” (Democratic Challenges, 2014). Provided with an equal understanding of all given sides of a situation, citizens have the capability of making enlightened decisions; thus, these enlightened decisions, coupled with citizens’ opinions, aid in the proper development of policies through the democratic process of the citizen.

One manner in which the opinion-policy relationship of the public has been documented is through the implementation and establishment of gaming facilities in local communities. Boger et al. (2002), for example, conducted a study that examines locals’ attitudes towards the development of Native American Gaming in the State of Kansas, using the locals’ proximity to these gaming establishments and how often they frequent them as guidelines. Since many rural community leaders, such as those in Kansas, have realized the importance of tourism for the local economy, the need for an assessment of local resident support for tourism was needed.

From an economic, cultural, social, and environmental standpoint, Boger et al. (2002) found that, using surveys, on average, the respondents who visited Native

American Gaming establishments more frequently believed the local economy to be increased by the casino establishment. It is clear that the number of trips the local residents make to these Native American Gaming establishments make a difference in their overall perception of how casinos affect local policy and geography. Those individuals who frequent gambling establishments more often are likely to have a more positive overall perception of casinos, and support the establishment of a casino in the local community; thus, influencing local policymaking as a result of public opinion.

In comparing the views of Kansas residents and the residents of Milford, Massachusetts, in regards to gambling facilities, it is revealed that the overall perceptions of these two communities conflict. The residents of this Kansas community view the establishment of a casino, or gaming facility, as a facet to bring in more revenue for the local community and surrounding areas. They perceive this as an asset to their local community, and a way to attract more tourists to the areas. Given this perception, it is plausible for these Kansas residents to engage in their democratic right to voice their positive opinions regarding gaming establishments to local policymakers. With these positive opinions, these democratic individuals have the ability to have their voice heard in society, by promoting the establishment of a gaming facility in their local community.

As such, researchers have begun exploring the actually perceived impacts casinos have on various communities throughout the United States (Stitt et al, 2005). In recent years, casinos and other gambling establishments have been sought by communities as a means to increase tourism, and collect additional tax revenue (Stitt et al, 2005). Studies have shown that residents fear an increase in serious crimes, as well as crimes such as drinking in public, vandalism and prostitution, once casinos are located in their

communities (Stitt et al, 2005). Other studies have found perceived increases or decreases in physical degeneration of the communities, and concerns of litter on streets and sidewalks, homelessness, traffic congestion, and prevalence of divorce, suicide and bankruptcy among residents (Stitt et al., 2005). Findings tend to vary significantly by community, by type of negative influence, and by whether the respondents were gamblers or non-gamblers.

The democratic Americans interviewed in this study voiced their negative perceptions, regarding casino development in local communities within the United States. Relating to the democratic process, these individuals have the ability to engage in their “civic duty,” and voice these negative perceptions to local policymakers. If enough democratic individuals in a given community share a similar opinion, this opinion has the ability to flourish and expand, as well as spread into the decision-making of local policymakers. Given the fact that all American citizens have the right to freedom of speech and to have their voice heard in society through the evolution of policymaking, the democratic process is heavily influenced by the voice of the “average” American citizen.

This democratic process can even be examined on a local level, regarding the establishment of a Foxwoods Casino within the small community of Milford, Massachusetts. John Seaver and Steve Trettel, both born and raised in the town of Milford, Massachusetts, are active members of the local politics of the town of Milford. Strong opponents to the establishment of a Foxwoods Casino within the borders of Milford, together they made a popular website to inform local public residents of the hazards of having a casino in the town of Milford. These perceptions, largely, coincide

with the opinions of the other residents of Milford, Massachusetts. “Casino-Free Milford,” as the propaganda is called, is a website for the local Milford, Massachusetts community focused on gaining support against the establishment of the Foxwoods Casino in the town.

Relatively speaking, these Milford residents are passively protesting against the establishment of a casino in their local community by developing this digital propaganda; and, making this propaganda that opposes the establishment of a casino known to the general public, as well as local policymakers. It includes locals’ opinions/perceptions about what a casino is, and how gambling could affect a small local community, for the residents’ perspectives. Since it depicts some public residents’ perceptions towards gaming establishments, it helps to lament how their struggle against the Foxwoods Corporation hopes to influence local policy to turn down the casino bid; which a public vote, ultimately, accomplished in 2013.

### *Framework*

In this research, how the public opinions of residents of a given community have the ability to influence local policy was examined. In regards to a conceptual framework, it is said that the perceptions of the public and their opinions regarding a given topic have the ability to influence the local policies of the local government. For this research, the relationship between residents’ perceptions of casinos and whether or not a casino is constructed in a given the residents’ local community is considered.

In researching this topic, a survey was electronically distributed to residents of Milford, Massachusetts, and only this community. Since issues such as these are often put

to a vote, the public has the ability to express their negative perceptions to the public by voting against the establishment, or express their positive perceptions by voting “yes” to the establishment of a casino in the local community. Because of this notion, the collected survey responses will only be factored into the overall research and analysis of this topic if the respondents are registered to vote in the town of Milford, Massachusetts.

Regardless of whether or not the respondents chose to participate in the November 2013 vote on the Foxwoods Casino bid, is a result of each individual’s own discretion. If a resident is registered to vote and chose not to participate in the vote in regards to the Foxwoods Casino, they made the conscious choice to not have their individual opinions voiced to the local community, and heard by the local policy makers. Of the 73 survey responses collected, only 41 responses were utilized for analysis, due to this variable. The overall perceptions of the community, by majority, will be voiced in the results of the community vote.

In this research, the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of the public and how they have the ability to influence the laws, regulations and development of a local government and community was also examined. Did residents who have negative opinion about casinos vote against the establishment of a local casino? And, did this vote influence the local government to adjust their plans and policies to suit the opinions of local residents? Just how “strong” does the voice of the democratic public need to be in order for their opinions to be truly heard; and, for the necessary democratic steps taken to alleviate these opinions?

### *Research Variables*

The primary variables factored into analysis are of historic, socio-economic and socio-demographic nature. First, the perceptions of Milford, Massachusetts of the Foxwoods Casino case study were collected. This refers to the overall opinions and perspectives Milford residents have of casinos, and the effects casinos can have on the local community in which they are established. From the “Casino-Free Milford” survey conducted for this research, respondents identified their perceptions by voicing whether or not they voted in the November 2013 election on the establishment of the Foxwoods Casino, whether or not they enjoy gambling, currently frequent gambling establishments, and if they would prefer to have a casino in their local community.

These resident perception research variables, also, were taken from peer-reviewed pieces of literature regarding the historic context of democracy, the manner in which public opinion factors into the democratic process, the establishment of casinos in small communities, and the tourism industry in varying contexts. First, the historic process of democracy is examined. Next, the data collected from the survey was used in comparison to published data about general resident perceptions on similar matters. In regards to the socio-economic variables included in this research, respondents of the “Casino-Free Milford” survey identified their employment status and annual household income. On the socio-demographic spectrum of research variables, respondents identified their age, gender, race/ethnicity, marriage status, number of children, and their status as both a resident of Milford, Massachusetts, and whether or not they are eligible to vote within the town of Milford, Massachusetts.

### *Hypotheses*

If individual's positive or negative perceptions are voiced to the local community, and are largely supported by this community, then these opinions have the ability to impact the local democratic process; meaning, local policymakers will be forced to take the opinions of these democratic citizens into account in the establishment, or rejection, of local policies. By actively engaging in their civic duties as citizens of a democratic society, residents' preconceived negative perceptions of casinos, and the negative effects these gambling establishments have on the immediate area, influence local policy makers to reject any corporations' bid for the establishment of a casino in the local community.

### *Sample*

For the purposes of this research, a case study regarding the turndown of the Foxwoods Casino in Milford, Massachusetts is utilized. To obtain data, an electronic and paper survey was conducted of the residential population of Milford, Massachusetts. This survey was sent to the local residents of Milford, Massachusetts who, then, further distributed the survey to other local residents of the town. While 73 responses were collected, only the individuals that were registered to vote in the Town of Milford were analyzed. Due to this distinction, 41 survey responses were utilized for data analysis.

Obtaining an adequate number of responses for this case study using solely electronic and online methods was not thoroughly successful. As a result, paper-based versions of the same survey were circulated throughout the local Milford community in order to gain responses. These data for these responses, then, were manually entered into the online survey generator *SurveyMonkey* for further analysis.

Short informal personal interviews, which include interacting with the individual residents being studied when collecting the survey response, were conducted as well. These methods of data collection are valid, as a local survey and personal resident interviews directly measure the opinions/perceptions of casinos, as associated with these residents. If a different sample population were collected, the results may vary depending on the socio-economic, socio-demographic, and overall perceptions these varying residents may have.

Of the 41 respondents, 21 individuals were identified as being 56 years-of-age, or older. 28 of the 41 respondents identified as female, 33 of the 41 respondents identified as White, 32 of the respondents are currently married with the majority having between 1 and 3 children, and an overwhelming 66% of the respondents identified as having an annual household income of at least \$60,000.

The demographics of this sample population can be considered just that – a sample population. Those individuals utilized in this case study cannot be considered a “representative population” of Milford, Massachusetts, as the collected data is biased towards “White women, with children, over the age of 56 with a minimum annual household income of at least \$60,000.” As will be discussed in the “Data Analysis” of this research, this socio-demographic norm of the sample population is not the socio-demographic of the entire population of Milford, Massachusetts.

Further, informal interviews were conducted by this researcher with current Milford, Massachusetts residents. Amongst these individuals, the establishment of a local gaming facility was discussed. Also discussed were the opinions of these residents in regards to the local demographics of the town – specifically, the large population of

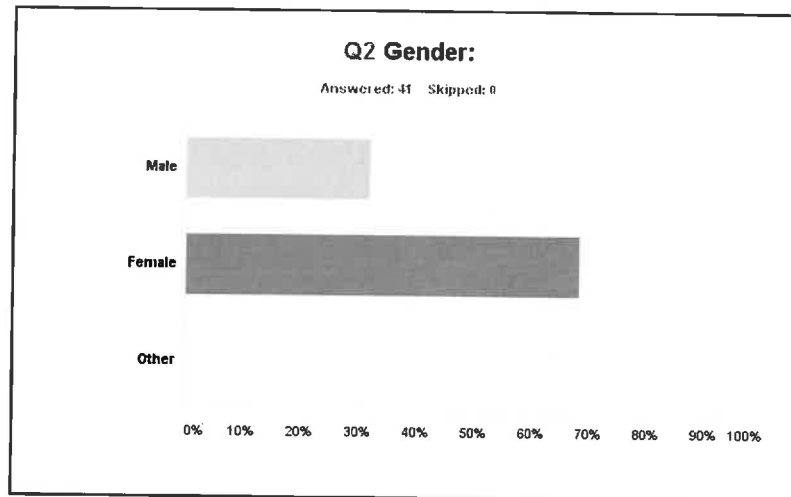
undocumented workers that are largely assumed to reside within the borders of the town. Residents were also asked to discuss their opinions on other important democratic issues that have been important within Milford, Massachusetts within the last ten years, respectively. For the purposes of this case study, though, the data collected is reliable. If the same residents were to participate in the same survey or interview, the same results would, very likely, be yielded.

### *Data Analysis*

From the data collected, it is clear that the population of the town of Milford, Massachusetts was not fully represented. While the data collected can still be analyzed and give validity to the overarching hypothesis that “by actively engaging in their civic duties as citizens of a democratic society, residents’ preconceived negative perceptions of casinos, and the negative effects these gambling establishments have on the immediate area, influence local policy makers to reject any corporations’ bid for the establishment of a casino in the local community,” further data needs to be collected for future research into this topic.

In regards to the socio-demographics of the Milford, Massachusetts population, the distribution gender can be compared. As shown in Figure 2, 67% of the individuals surveyed and interviewed, respectively, identified as female, while only 33% of the participating individuals identified as male:

Figure 2: Gender of Respondents



(This image was taken from the “Casino-Free Milford” survey developed by Lindsey Fleury, and implemented through *SurveyMonkey*.)

This data does not entirely coincide with the census data of Milford, Massachusetts as a whole; due to the fact that as of 2013, 50.3% of Milford residents identified as female (United States Census Bureau). Clearly, as pictured, the opinions of females are more heavily represented in the survey over their resident male counterparts. Women, especially those that are married and have children, are more likely to have negative perceptions of casinos and gambling because of the effects this type of environment has on family values and local school systems.

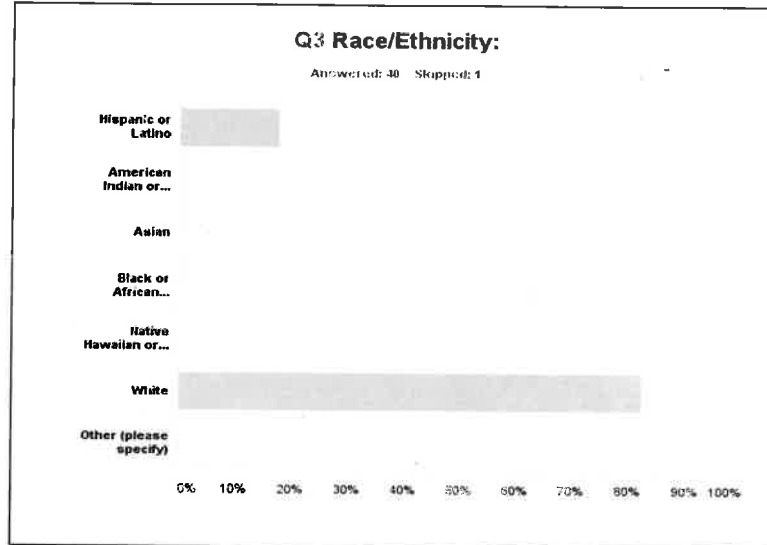
In analyzing the collected data of Milford, Massachusetts, it is important to include a comparison of the breakdown in race/ethnicity of the total Milford, Massachusetts population, and the breakdown in race/ethnicity of the respondents of the case study survey. Taken from the United States Census Bureau, as of 2010 Milford, Massachusetts residents identified their race/ethnicities in the following compilation:

- White alone, percent: 86.3%
- Black or African American alone, percent: 2.3%
- American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent: 0.3%

- Asian alone, percent: 2.3%
- Two or more races, percent: 2.9%
- Hispanic or Latino, percent: 9.0%
- White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent: 81.4%

It is suggested that almost 87% of the Milford, Massachusetts population are White in ethnicity, while only 9% of the population are suggested to be Hispanic or Latino in origin. However, for those that are familiar with the Milford, Massachusetts area, it is evident that large quantities of Guatemalan, Brazilian, Ecuadorian, and Portuguese (who identify as White) are dominantly present within the town at a higher percentage than what is reported in the 2010 Census. Figure 3 illustrates the demographics were recorded of participants:

*Figure 3: Demographics*



(This image was taken from the "Casino-Free Milford" survey developed by Lindsey Fleury, and implemented through *SurveyMonkey*.)

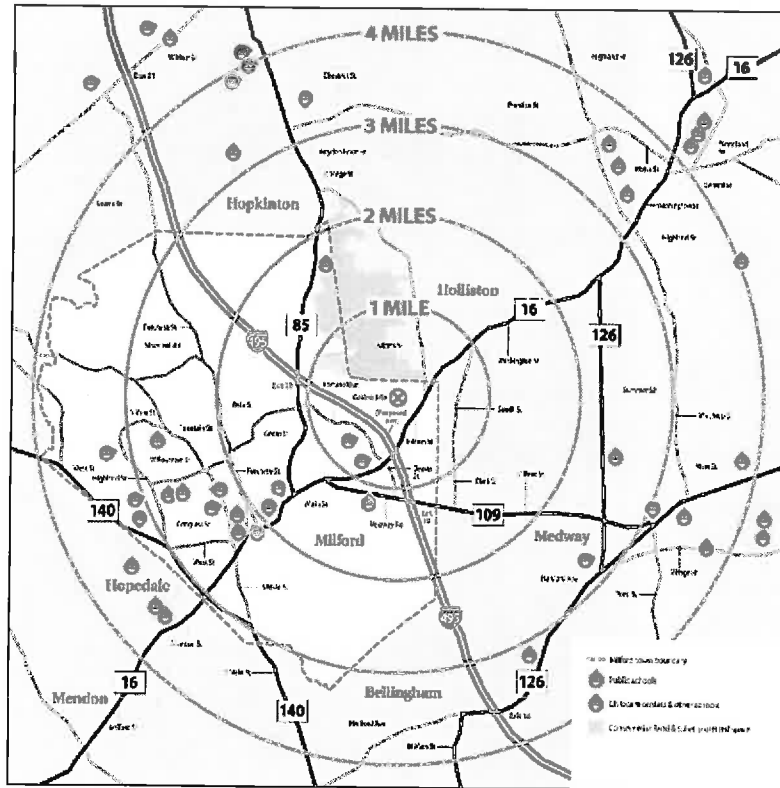
Given the discrepancy between the reported Census data and the obtained research data, questions arise in regards to the democratic processes within the town: Are the actual

residents of Milford, Massachusetts, both documented and undocumented, accurately represented in the public voice?

This, further, begs the question of why these populations are not accurately represented in the demographics of the town; since, their perceptions of town issues, such as the establishment of a casino, are voiced in the case study survey. This suggests that even though the population of Milford has a vastly large segment of lower-class Hispanic/Latino immigrant residents, their opinions perceptions are not being accurately voiced within the town policies. The perceptions of the White residents of Milford, Massachusetts serve as the most notable in town issues.

As “White women with children” are the largest segment of the Milford, Massachusetts population represented in this research, the local public education of children has proven to be a major proponent of why a casino is not good for the local economy. It is suggested that the local community surrounding a casino site tends to have a higher dropout rate and student turnover, high reduced and free lunch eligibility, and a stronger desire for specialized instruction. Keeping classroom relatively small, so that students are able to receive a quality education is important for parents in the Milford, Massachusetts area. Figure 4, depicting the proposed casino site, and the schools and childcare facilities within a 4-mile radius:

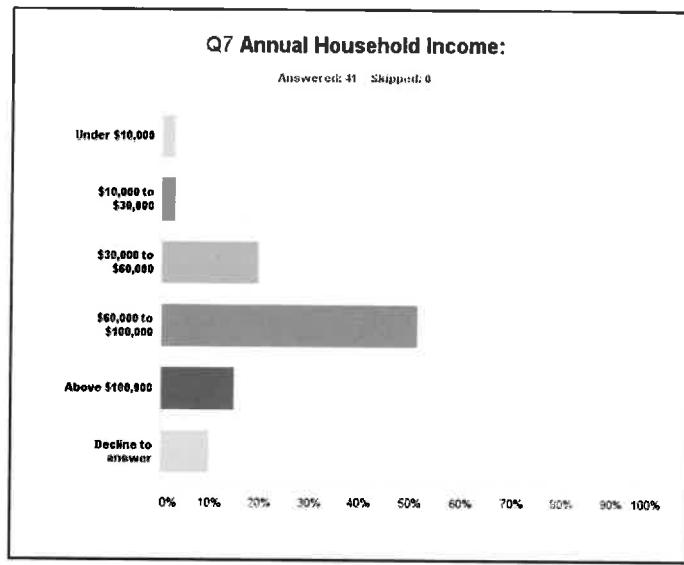
Figure 4: Proposed Casino Site



(This image was obtained from <http://casinofreemilford.com/>)

A further important aspect of this case study survey that should be analyzed in comparison to the overall Milford, Massachusetts population is the average annual household income. According to the United States Census Bureau, the median household income between 2009 and 2013 was \$62,352 (United States Census Bureau). This statistic coincides for the findings of the case study, the majority of the respondents identified themselves as having an annual household income of no less than \$60,000 per year:

Figure 5: Household Income

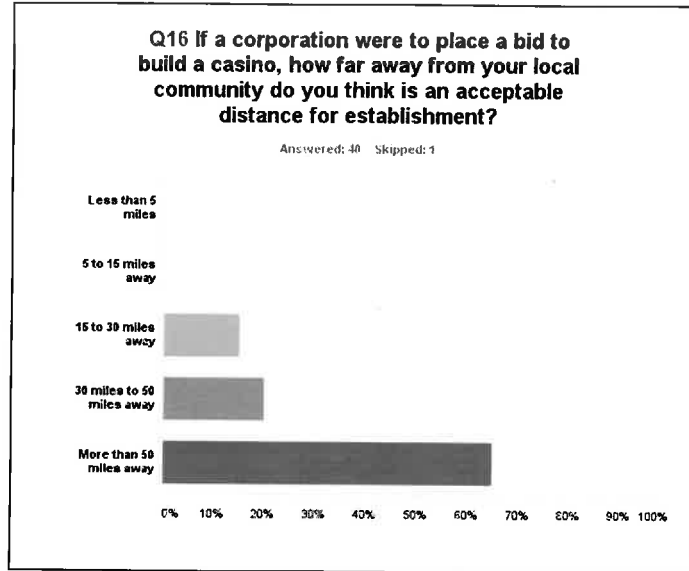


(This image was taken from the “Casino-Free Milford” survey developed by Lindsey Fleury, and implemented through *SurveyMonkey*.)

However, it is important to note that while the collected income data may coincide with the data collect by the 2013 Census, the actual statistics have the chance of being “off-par,” due to the large population of undocumented workers that are known to exist with the town of Milford, Massachusetts. This potential differentiation in annual household income suggests that the respondents of the survey in this case study are members of the “elite,” or “wealthy” sector of the Milford, Massachusetts population; which, is considered the minority in the grand scheme. This, further, suggests that while the majority of the Milford population is “normal,” or within the average range of annual income, the perceptions majorly voiced in the town politics are those of the more wealthy members of the town; who, because of their status, likely, have more power and resources to gain support for their individual opinions.

Survey respondents further, overwhelmingly, wish to have a casino established no closer than 15 miles from their local community, as suggested in Figure 6:

Figure 6:



(This image was taken from the “Casino-Free Milford” survey developed by Lindsey Fleury, and implemented through *SurveyMonkey*.)

From the data collected during the case study survey for this research, one overlying concept was clear: Milford, Massachusetts residents have extremely negative perceptions of casinos, and the influence casinos have on the local community. This perception, thus, resulted in the turndown of the Foxwoods Casino’s bid to establish a gambling luxury resort casino within the confines of the Milford, Massachusetts borders.

### *Interpretation and Discussion of Findings*

Based on the data obtained, it can be interpreted that, if a certain segment of a population has the proper resources, it is possible to use these individual perceptions to influence local policy decision. As suggested in the data analysis, the dominant population that participated in the November 2013 vote on the bid for a Foxwoods Casino in Milford, Massachusetts were “White women, with children, over the age of 56 with a minimum annual household income of at least \$60,000.” This status in the community,

coupled with a comfortable annual income, suggests that these members of the Milford population made their perceptions about casinos and gambling well-known to the entire community; and, gained enough support behind their standpoint to influence the turndown of the casino bid in their favor.

While the participants in Boger et al.'s (2002) case study perceive a casino establishment as an asset to their local community, and a way to attract more tourists to the areas, Milford, Massachusetts residents, instead, view the establishment of a casino in their local community to be a hindrance to the overall future development of the town. Casinos, in this small Massachusetts town, are perceived extremely negatively by the local residents. Suggesting that any revenue taken in by the Foxwoods Casino will be absorbed by the facility itself and not by the local community businesses, Milford residents firmly do not want a casino in their local community. Thus, the positive perceptions of a Native American Gaming facility in Kansas can help to influence local policy to vote for the establishment of a gaming facility in the local community; while the negative perceptions of the Foxwoods gaming facility by local residents in the Milford, Massachusetts community influenced local policy by voting against the establishment of a gambling facility in the local community.

Those residents that tend to frequent casino establishments perceived casino presence in the community as a positive attribute, not commenting on as many negative attributes as non-gamblers, as suggested in the study conducted by Stitt et al. (2005). Non-gambling residents of the communities, especially those with children, tend to perceive the presence of a gambling establishment in the local community to be an

overall nuisance, as well as disruptive to the local area; especially, the school system and quality of education received by young students.

The results of this analysis, which is based on United States communities, differ from the perceptions of Milford, Massachusetts residents. While residents of this study, overall, did not perceive a casino presence to have a negative influence on the community, Milford residents believe that a casino presence will have a negative influence on the community. This, certainly, can be attributed to the fact that the overwhelming majority of Milford residents are married with young children; and, these children are enrolled in the local public education system. Residents of this study that have children have similar perceptions of casinos and the effects they can have on a small local community. Family values play a major role in residents' perceptions towards casinos, and the extents they are willing to go to in order to have their views voiced.

Now, do these findings coincide with the ideas David Held, author of *Models of Democracy*? Held had examined the general “prerequisites” or “pre-qualifications” for a local government to be, successfully, “ruled by the people,” and begged the following questions: “Do the people have, for instance, need to be literate before becoming democrats? Is a certain level of social wealth necessary for the maintenance of a democracy? Can democracies be maintained during times of national emergency or war? These and a host of other issues have ensured that the meaning of democracy has remained, and probably always will remain, unsettled” (Held, pp. 2, 2006).

Through the conducted case study, it is obvious that the views of the many, meaning the views of the “everyday citizen,” were largely influenced by the propaganda of the “well-off” citizens of the local community. Given the fact that many “well-off”

individuals often have a proper education supporting their opinions, it can be suggested that the views of the many was influenced by a proper education – one of the most important aspects of the civic duties of the democratic citizen.

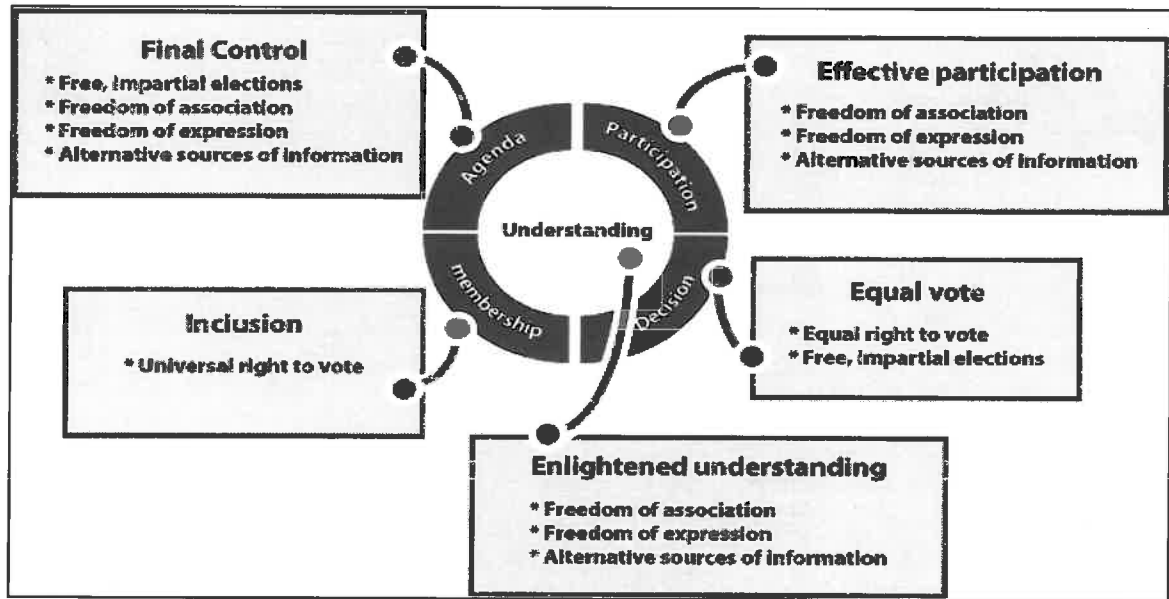
Robert Y. Shapiro, a professor of political science at Columbia University, brought in the concept of American democracy, and the role that public opinion plays in policymaking at not only a local level, but a national level, as well. Given the fact that the voice of the general public is represented by the voice of the “well-off” individuals of the public, it can further be interpreted that the voice of these “well-off” individuals is, further, represented by the voice of public officials.

As evidenced in the case study, the “voice of the public” was heard by local politicians who, then, took these opinions to public officials – resulting in the turndown of the casino bid. This concept is supported by Shapiro, in his belief that “the relative visibility and importance of these [political opinion] issues makes a difference as well. The repeated finding of greater or more frequent effects of opinion on more salient policies fits directly with the expectation that political leaders and candidates would be most concerned with matters that are of greatest visibility to (potential) voters. If, however, the dominant finding had been one of little or no opinion–policy relationship, this would have shown that the political system was not responsive to public opinion” (Shapiro, pp. 986, 2011).

“When a country is identified as a democracy, it is generally the above characteristics that people have in mind. However, ‘democracy’ is a loaded word and usage varies; other labels are *liberal* and *western* democracy. An alternative proposed by Robert A. Dahl is *polyarchy*” (Democratic Challenges, 2014). Those who interpret Dahl’s

model of democracy tend to think of societies with this form of public opinion to be *fairly democratic countries*. Figure 7 is an interpretation of what a “fairly democratic country’s” political system includes:

Figure 7:



(image obtained from <http://www.democracy.sc/en03/a-fairly-democratic-country>, 2015)

This illustrates “the decision-making process for a term of government in a democratic country. It is surrounded by the democratic institutions that are necessary – but not sufficient – to satisfy each of the criteria for democracy. *Elected political leaders* and the *right to stand for election* are not included; these two institutions guarantee that the system is representative rather than democratic” (Democratic Challenges, 2014). Based on the findings of the case study in conjunction with this political model, it can be interpreted that the results of the casino vote appear to be more “representative,” rather than “democratic” in nature – the public opinion of the many is voiced in a “fairly democratic” society through a “representative” voice of the “well-off” and “well-educated.”

### *Conclusions and Implications for Future Research*

It has been shown that there are certain pre-established factors that indicate a democratic society: inclusion, final control, effective participation, equal vote, and an enlightened understanding (Democratic Challenges, 2014). This means that in order for effective citizen participation, all citizens must be able to voice their opinions through a public vote, all citizens must have unimpeded and equal access to information, and these citizens must use this unimpeded access to become enlightened; for, without a proper basis and understanding of knowledge, these democratic citizens have the ability to base their personal opinions in an inaccurate manner. If all of the above factors are met, then a given society can be considered democratic; thus, the included citizens can be considered democratic citizens. With this base of knowledge and effective participation, the public voice can be strongly heard in society.

However, the idea of a democracy, the democratic process, and a democratic citizen all include an additional pertinent factor – these individuals are citizens. Meaning, that these individuals are legally considered to be inhabitants, or citizens, of their given country; which is, in this study, the United States. Without the legal status of citizenship, individuals that reside within a certain community are not capable of registering to vote; thus, even though these individuals are residents of a community, their perceptions and opinions are not heard in the public voice.

In the case of Milford, Massachusetts, there is a vast population of “undocumented workers” that reside within the community. These “undocumented workers,” relatively speaking, are considered to be “illegal residents” of the United States because they were not born within the United States. These resident workers were,

largely, born in other nations, and migrated to the United States outside of the “legal process of citizenship.” These individuals, even though they are residents of Milford, Massachusetts, are not legally capable of voting in a public democratic election.

Because of this impedance, the voice of the public community of Milford, Massachusetts was not fully, or accurately, represented in the community vote of the establishment of the Foxwoods’ Casino. The primary voice that was represented in the community was the voice of White women, with children, over the age of 56 with a minimum annual household income of at least \$60,000. These “well-off” individuals have a monopoly on resources, including both information and money. Because these women strongly opposed the casino development, they were able to use their dominant monetary position to publicize their negative opinions through the use of propaganda. The monopoly of information, coupled with the resources for this information to be widely presented to the community, aided in the turndown of the proposed Foxwoods’ casino resort and gaming facility.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the democratic process, ultimately, failed in the community of Milford, Massachusetts, as the opinions of all Milford, Massachusetts residents were not taken into account. This misrepresentation was based upon the distinction in economic status between residents – those residents with more available resources have more control over the spread of information; as well as the distinction between having legal citizenship within the United States, and being classified as an “undocumented worker,” or “illegal citizen.” Even though individuals living within a given community are considered “residents” of the community, their involvement

within the democratic sphere of society is limited, based on the “legal status of citizenship.”

Given this evident distinction, how can a public vote within a community truly be considered to be “democratic,” if the opinions of all residents within the community are not taken into account? Should all residents, regardless of their status of citizenship, be able to express their opinions in the public sphere? Is it a truly democratic process to exclude residents, ultimately dismissing their views, because they are not considered to be “legal?” How does the “legal” status of an individuals’ residency impact their opinions of public matters? It is these questions that need to be further addressed in future research conducted on the process of democracy. The democratic process, historically, is meant to include the opinions of the everyday individuals, yet certain individuals today are legally excluded from having their opinions appropriately voiced in society. This lends to the realization that while society is built upon the public voice, the public voice is only as strong as the perceptions and opinions of “legal” citizens.

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***Supplementary Materials***

**“Casino-Free” Milford, Massachusetts Survey**  
*Distributed online per “SurveyMonkey”*

**1. Age:**

- I. 18-25 years old
- II. 26-35 years old
- III. 36-45 years old
- IV. 46-55 years old
- V. 56-65 years old
- VI. 65 years or older

**2. Gender:**

- I. Male
- II. Female
- III. Other

**3. Race/Ethnicity:**

- I. Hispanic or Latino
- II. American Indian or Alaska Native
- III. Asian
- IV. Black or African American
- V. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- VI. White
- VII. Other

**4. Are you married?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**5. Do you have any children? If so, how many?**

- I. 1
- II. 2
- III. 3
- IV. 4
- V. 5 or more
- VI. No, I do not have any children.

**6. Employment Status:**

- I. Employed for wages

- II. Self-employed
- III. Out of work and looking for work
- IV. Out of work and not looking for work
- V. A homemaker
- VI. A student
- VII. Retired
- VIII. Unable to work

**7. Annual Household Income:**

- I. \$10,000 or under
- II. \$11,000 to \$30,000
- III. \$31,000 to \$60,000
- IV. \$61,000 to \$100,000
- V. Above \$100,000
- VI. Decline to answer

**8. Are you a resident of Milford, Massachusetts?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**9. Are you registered to vote in the town of Milford, Massachusetts?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**10. In November 2013, did you place a vote on the establishment of a Foxwoods Casino in Milford, Massachusetts?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**11. Do you enjoy gambling?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**12. Do you currently frequent any gaming establishments, such as a casino?**

- I. Yes
- II. No

**13. If you answered yes to the previous question, how often, on average, do you frequent gaming establishments?**

- I. Once or twice a month

- II. Once every few months
- III. Twice a year
- IV. Once a year
- V. Once every few years
- VI. I do not frequent casinos

**14. Which gaming establishment, if any, do you currently attend?**

- I. Mohegan
- II. Foxwoods
- III. Twin River
- IV. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- V. I do not currently attend any casinos

**15. I would like to have a casino in my local community.**

- I. Strongly Agree
- II. Agree
- III. Neutral
- IV. Disagree
- V. Strongly Disagree

**16. If a corporation were to place a bid to build a casino, how far away from your local community do you think is an acceptable distance for establishment?**

- I. Less than 5 miles
- II. 5 to 15 miles away
- III. 16 to 30 miles away
- IV. 31 miles to 50 miles away
- V. More than 50 miles away