The Forgotten in Democracy: Homelessness and Voting in Toronto

by

Anna Kopec

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Political Science

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Anna Kopec, April 2017
ABSTRACT

THE FORGOTTEN IN DEMOCRACY: HOMELESSNESS AND VOTING IN TORONTO

Anna Kopec
University of Guelph, 2017

Advisor: Professor Byron Sheldrick

This thesis is an investigation of the political participation of the homeless in Toronto, Canada. Whether or not the homeless in Toronto vote, the factors that influence their decision to vote, and the societal and structural impediments that exist to their participation are specifically examined. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the homeless, service providers, politicians, and election agencies in Toronto. This research revealed the interest and knowledge of politics among the homeless and the vital role that service providers and institutions serving the homeless play in the political engagement and process of voting for homeless citizens. An apparent disjunction between election agencies, politicians, and service providers also acted as an impediment to voting for the homeless. The barriers found in this research contribute to the literature on political participation that often disregards the homeless, and exhibit the systemic impediments that the homeless face to practicing their democratic right to vote.
Acknowledgements

There are several individuals that I would like to express my sincere appreciation to for their contribution to this thesis. It is through their endless support, knowledge and inspiration that I was able to complete my work.

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Byron Sheldrick of the University of Guelph. Dr. Sheldrick offered his full support not only throughout the planning and writing stages of my thesis, but throughout my time in the field. I am gratefully indebted to the time he took to read countless drafts, answer my desperate emails, offer words of encouragement, and meet with me to offer much needed advice. His encouragement was not only vital to my research, but to my experience as a whole.

I would also like to acknowledge Professor William O’Grady of the University of Guelph as the second reader of this thesis. Professor O’Grady offered the expertise I needed to ensure that my research was conducted in a manner that put my participants first, and the strict guidance I needed to justify and defend my findings.

I would also like to thank Dr. Janine Clark of the University of Guelph for serving as my final committee member, and for being on this journey with me since the very first day I started this project. Dr. Clark pushed me to find my research question, and once I did, offered limitless support and direction.

I would like to acknowledge with deep appreciation the contributions of the agencies that offered guidance, advice and assistance with participants. These agencies included: the Vanauley Street YMCA, the St. Felix Centre, Justice for Children and Youth, A Way Home, TDIN, PARC, and the Meeting Place.

The results of this research, my meaningful experiences during my fieldwork, and this thesis would not be possible without each and every one of my participants. I would, therefore, also like to acknowledge the contributions of all of my research respondents.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my family, friends and members of the University of Guelph community. I have been overwhelmingly blessed to have the support of so many. To my family, thank you for always pushing me to reach my fullest potential. I would like to thank my colleagues, specifically Kerry-Ann Cornwall and Amanda Komljenovic, for their advice, encouragement, patience and friendship. As well, I would also like to express my gratitude to the faculty of Political Science at the University of Guelph for creating an environment that encouraged my interdisciplinary research project and for offering several opportunities for growth and development.
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................... vii - xiii

Chapter 1 .............................................................................................................. 1 - 20

   Literature Review

   Democratic Participation ............................................................................. 2 - 3
   Inequalities of Political Participation ..................................................... 3 - 6
   Political Participation of Specific Populations ..................................... 6 - 10
   The SES Model and the Homeless ......................................................... 10 - 13
   SES, Political Institutions and the Homeless ........................................ 13 - 15
   Homelessness .......................................................................................... 15 - 16
   Social Exclusion and Political Alienation ............................................. 16 - 18
   Conclusion ............................................................................................... 19 - 20

Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................ 21 - 44

   Methodology

   Introduction ............................................................................................... 22 - 24
   Case Study ............................................................................................... 24 - 26
   Definition ................................................................................................. 26 - 27
   Why Voting .............................................................................................. 27 - 28
   Sampling .................................................................................................. 28 - 39
   Coding ...................................................................................................... 39 - 42
   Limitations ............................................................................................... 42 - 44
   Conclusion ................................................................................................ 44

Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................ 45 - 54
Context

The Charter and the Canada Elections Act.........................46 - 48
Fair Elections Act.................................................................48 - 49
Ontario Elections Act and the Municipal Elections Act..........49 - 50
Existing Processes for Voting without a Permanent Address......50 - 52
Conclusion.............................................................................52 - 54

Chapter 4.................................................................................55 - 104

Results and Analysis

4.1: Voting Behaviour of Homeless Participants..................57 - 61
4.2: Political Interest and Accessibility of Information..........62 - 73
4.3: Knowledge on the Process of Voting for
those Without a Permanent Address.................................74 - 81
4.4: Institutional Initiatives and Role of Service Providers.....82 - 91
4.5: A Disjunction: Politicians and Election Agencies...........92 - 104

Chapter 5.................................................................................105 - 118

Conclusion

Introduction.............................................................................106 - 108
5.1: Contributions and Direction for Policy Innovation........109 - 114
5.2: Limitations and Areas for Further Research................115 - 118

Works Cited.............................................................................119 - 127

Appendices.............................................................................128 - 151

Appendix A: REB Certification.................................................128
Appendix B-D: Consent Forms.................................................129 - 136
Appendix E-G: Interview Questions.............................137 - 142
Appendix H: Municipal Voter’s List Amendment Application.............143 - 146
Appendix I: Provincial Certification of Identity and Residence.............147 - 149
Appendix J: Federal Letter of Confirmation of Residence...................150 - 151
Introduction
Election data often aims to identify those who vote and those who do not. These data may help inform policies surrounding how elections are conducted, how election officials reach out to vulnerable communities, and how political parties shape and structure their election campaigns. More broadly, data can shed light on the health of our democracy by elucidating the potential disenfranchisement of sections of the population. Therefore, having reliable data about when and why people vote is important. Despite past empirical investigations of elections, little is known about whether or not the homeless vote. Although homeless individuals are often entitled to vote, there is little research regarding their voting tendencies, how electoral processes affect their ability to vote, and their specific political experiences. Common perceptions assume that the homeless are not interested in politics and do not vote. This project examines the validity of this conclusion by investigating if homeless people vote in Toronto, the factors that influence their decision-making, and what societal and structural impediments exist to their electoral participation. Although a small n study, this study suggests that common assumptions are invalid and the political participation of the homeless needs to be further examined.

While there is no doubt that homelessness is a significant problem in Canada, and policies need to be developed to house those who are currently homeless, this study seeks to examine the degree to which the homeless are politically engaged. The health of our democracy is predicated upon the inclusion of all groups of people. If policy is to be reflective of the needs of the most vulnerable in society, it is essential that their voices are heard and included in the production and implementation of public policy. As citizens of Canada with the same electoral rights as all other groups and individuals, the voter participation of homeless people needs to be explored by social scientists. By identifying the barriers and impediments to their participation, we can gain insights into the marginalization of the homeless as well as possible vehicles to
reduce that marginalization and improve their overall quality of life. Increasing the political engagement of homeless people may also lead to greater political attention to the problem of homelessness and an increased political willingness to develop policies that address this vulnerable group. As a first step however, we must begin by examining the political participation of this population.

The recent October 2015 federal election in Canada makes this research particularly timely. This election had a relatively high voter turnout among vulnerable groups such as youth and Indigenous peoples (Harris, 2015; Puxley, 2015; Marcoux, 2016). With the voting behaviour of certain vulnerable groups investigated, people who experience homelessness need to be added to this research particularly since processes are in place to assist vulnerable populations with voting. Elections Canada, for example, considers encouraging and supporting broad electoral accessibility a foremost priority. Elections Canada claims to offer easy to follow steps for anyone wanting to vote and designates the homeless as a sub-population that faces obstacles to voting and requires special attention (Elections Canada, 2015). Preliminary research has indicated that while there is an outreach program of sorts offered by Elections Canada, it is limited in scale and is not specifically tailored towards the homeless population. According to Elections Canada a comprehensive booklet is provided to homeless shelters during elections, although there is a lack of empirical evidence that addresses whether or not the information is disseminated to the homeless and if they can indeed make use of it. The literature also does not address if the homeless have access to election information or services that may ensure their presence at the polls. This study will therefore investigate the opportunities, across federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions, for the homeless to vote and the impediments they face to voting.
As such, this study addresses a significant gap in academic literature. Elections and voter participation have long been at the centre of political science research. While there is vast literature concerning democratic and political participation, there remains a substantial gap in the literature regarding the political engagement of homeless people. Existing research on the homeless discusses their many social and economic disadvantages, with little to no attention given to their political interest and participation.

To begin to fill this gap, this research project investigates the homeless population in Toronto, specifically analyzing their voting patterns and factors impeding their participation. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network definition of homelessness that was released in 2012 is utilized in this research. The definition describes homelessness as a lack of permanent and appropriate housing, as well as the inability to acquire housing due to a variety of systemic barriers (Gaetz et al, 2013). It also includes 4 typologies of homelessness, allowing for a comprehensive investigation of the homeless in Toronto. The 4 typologies include: the unsheltered, the emergency sheltered, the provisionally accommodated and those at risk of homelessness. Due to the inaccessibility of the unsheltered, the participants in this study are primarily from the latter three typologies.

To investigate existing initiatives and possible barriers that homeless people in Toronto face to voting, I employed qualitative methods. I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with three main groups; nine service providers, 28 homeless individuals, and eight policymakers including politicians and election agency representatives. Service providers working with the homeless assisted me in making initial contact with potential homeless participants. The results of this research demonstrate that the homeless in this sample vote and express political interest and opinions. Less than half of the homeless participants, however, were aware of the process of
voting for citizens without a permanent address. I found that the information regarding politics and elections that is provided to the homeless varies depending on the institution (shelter or drop-in centre) accessed by participants. Another critical finding of this study is the importance of service providers to the voting process and to encouraging the political participation of the homeless. The election agency representatives further spoke to the complexity of the process, and the politicians elucidated the lack of attention the homeless population is given during election time.

As a marginalized population, the political activity of the homeless is rarely considered. Public policies are often geared towards the most vulnerable, and as a population that is particularly impacted by such policies; their engagement in politics is vital. Furthermore, investigating the political activity of the homeless can uncover political networks and stimuli that have not yet been considered, and reveal the imperfections within our democratic processes.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is a literature review that examines the concepts of political participation and existing research on the political involvement of vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed. The socio-economic status model of voter participation is discussed, and the limits of its application to the homeless population are considered. I then examine the homeless in detail, with specific emphasis on the sociological research surrounding homelessness and the disadvantages they face. I then relate the social exclusion of the homeless to their possible political alienation, thereby highlighting the need to investigate their political participation.

Chapter 2 discusses the methodology employed in the study, including a discussion of sample selection, interview methodology, and coding protocols. The Chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this research methodology. Chapter 3 elaborates on the structure
of Canadian elections, with a particular focus on current policies and processes for voting by those without a permanent address. The details of current electoral processes are important for contextualizing the responses of homeless participants. These processes differ depending on government jurisdiction (federal, provincial, municipal) and corresponding electoral agency responsible for overseeing the electoral process. This complexity is potentially an important barrier to the voter participation of the homeless and provides context to the research.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the research results. This Chapter is divided into five sections examining the following:

- Voting behaviour
- Interest in politics and access to information
- Knowledge of the process
- Initiatives of service providers
- The lack of attention from politicians and election agencies

This project demonstrates that homeless people are knowledgeable regarding elections, and have a general interest in participating in politics and voting. There are, however, several barriers to their participation. The process of voting itself is one major barrier. A majority of participants were not aware of the process, and information that is provided is often contingent on the service providers and institutions accessed. Participants that were the most knowledgeable on the process, for example, accessed a drop-in centre that is known for its political activity and has historically been a polling station for municipal elections. A major disjunction was also identified between the election agencies and service providers, with service providers disagreeing that election agencies provide them with necessary information to encourage the
homeless to vote. It was also found that politicians do not view the homeless as a vital electorate, and do not necessarily target the population while campaigning.

The homeless in this study were revealed as a politically engaged population with a desire to participate in the political system. The barriers that have been identified have exposed the imperfections within the processes that allow the homeless to vote, processes that have often remained at the margins of empirical research. This study has also uncovered the possible networks that exist in the institutions serving the homeless, and through the voting process and nature of these agencies added vital political actors that have not been previously identified. Though the findings of this study cannot be generalized, practical suggestions can be made with regards to the existing processes and the necessity for this population to be perceived as politically active in order to dismantle the impediments that may discourage their participation.

This thesis will conclude with an investigation of the barriers found in this research project and direction for policy innovation in Chapter 5. The contributions of this research will be clearly outlined followed by areas for further research. As a preliminary investigation into the voting behaviour of the homeless, further research is encouraged in order to understand the broader political engagement of the population.
Chapter 1

Literature Review
Introduction: Democratic Participation

Prior to considering the voting behaviour of the homeless from previous research, the importance of democratic participation must be highlighted. Democratic participation as defined by Verba (1967) “refers to the processes by which citizens influence or control those who make major decisions affecting them” (pg. 54). Voting is a democratic act and the way in which the citizenry participates in governance. Whether or not the homeless have equal access to practice this right and the factors that influence their decision to do so is therefore an investigation of the vigour of a democracy. Scholars in democratic nations investigate the engagement of citizens as an evaluative measure of democracy. After all, the participation of citizens is a vital element of the democratic process. Participation provides citizens with the ability to exhibit their confidence in the political system, and leads to a more responsive and accountable government (Brennan & Lomasky, 1993; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Participation is also a fundamental component of citizenship, “the individual who has no chance to participate is, in some sense, not a full member or citizen” (Verba, p. 57, 1967). Political activity allows citizens to communicate concerns and influence public outcomes. Increased turnout and participation legitimizes outcomes and decisions, which in turn enhances political stability (Bennet & Resnick, 1990).

Democratic participation must be equal, however. After all democracy implies “equal consideration of the interests of each citizen” (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, pg. 1). Strong democracies are distinguishable from their weaker counterparts by advanced levels of political participation among the citizenry (Bennet & Resnick, 1990; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). In practice, however, there is an inequality of political participation of specific groups within the general population. Although the ideal of democracy includes the participation of all citizens, the practice of democracy does not always live up to these egalitarian ideals. Some groups are
frequently excluded from democracy; their inability to participate or be considered equally significant in the practice of democracy, leads to an inherent inequality in its exercise (Lavoie, 1999, Verba, 1967; Michels, 2011).

Citizen participation includes the ways in which the citizenry expresses preferences to the government. Therefore, the preferences that are communicated through participation do not reflect the preferences of the general population when there are groups that do not participate (Verba & Nie, 1972). The homeless population’s political participation and the barriers that the population may face to participating in democracy have not been investigated. There are studies that do allow assumptions to be made regarding the homeless and their political engagement, particularly their lack of interest, engagement, understanding and civic skills to vote (Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972; Pateman; 1974; Schlozman & Verba, 1979; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Schlozman & Tierney, 1986; Conway, 1991; Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Such assumptions, which will be clearly outlined below, have led to a lack of empirical research on homeless people and their voter participation. From the literature it can be assumed that homeless people do not vote although there is no clear mechanism that supports these assumptions, as the literature also exhibits. Moreover, if they do not vote, there is little information regarding whether they choose not to and are disinterested in politics, or if there are structural and institutional barriers that prevent them from voting. As a result, the extent to which the population communicates its preferences and participates in governance has not been considered. This study will begin to fill the gap in this literature, and may help develop policies that more effectively incorporate the homeless into the electoral system to ensure their democratic participation is considered.
The Inequalities of Political Participation

The ideal of democracy suggests that voting is an equitable practice. The homeless have the right to vote in Canada (which will be further clarified in Chapter 3), however, there is no data of how many or what proportion of the homeless population votes. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding whether or not the homeless receive necessary information regarding elections, their knowledge of the political process, or the impacts of their stigmatization on their access to political resources. Political resources are viewed as necessary to participation in elections, although little is known regarding whether or not the homeless possess such resources, or if there are other resources they do hold that have not been examined.

Political equality goes beyond simply having the right to vote, but also includes having equal opportunities to influence these decisions through voting (Warren, 2002). Although the intention of democracy is more equitable decision making, in reality the processes that are adopted to realize democracy can have numerous exclusionary practices. Not all citizens are able to participate or have access to the information and resources needed to participate (Krishna, 2006). Verba (1967) relates participation in politics to the motivation to participate and the conduciveness of the social structure lived in, but also the resources possessed. The resources the homeless possess and the impacts on their democratic participation require further examination.

Knowledge is a vital political resource and can be related to socio-economic power; knowledge is easier to obtain by the powerful (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). A politically disadvantaged population is troubling for democracy. In practice there are groups within the general population that cannot access necessary political knowledge, creating inequalities within the system. This has been particularly observed with regards to the poor in society that do not always have equitable access to information. Politics, can therefore be perceived as the
institutionalization of economic and social inequities creating a “political caste system” (Caprini & Keeter, 1996, p.155); the less affluent citizens are usually less knowledgeable since higher income is associated with education. Also, structural conditions increase the likelihood that individuals will have the motivation and ability to learn and engage with politics. Knowledge can also be associated with contact with politicians. The less affluent are contacted less by politicians and candidates, which can impact the political knowledge of vulnerable populations. Such populations, as among the least informed, are also those individuals that would gain the most from increased knowledge (Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

Whether or not the homeless have access to political knowledge needs to be examined, particularly when the political participation literature has argued that there is a direct impact of the accessibility of knowledge on participation. Accessibility of information impacts the knowledge of opportunities and the processes regarding how to participate. Analyzing the barriers the homeless face can therefore lead to policy solutions that can increase information on how to encourage them and other marginalized populations to engage in politics.

There have been some studies in Australia that examine the role homelessness can have on voting, although the resources they possess are not particularly investigated. The legal processes in Australia are outlined to describe the steps that enable homeless individuals to vote. Statistics of eligible homeless voters to those registered are provided, exhibiting that the majority of the population is not registered to vote. Observations regarding the lack of a majority of the homeless population registered to vote are offered, although few obstacles that led to this lack of registration are discussed. The intent that the homeless may have to vote is presented, and more research regarding the political participation of the homeless is encouraged (Lynch, 2002; Lynch & Cole, 2003). Mundell (2003) outlines the lack of attention the homeless in Australia receive
from the Electoral Commission of Australia, the Australian election agency, and emphasizes the need to ensure that the homeless that wish to vote can do so. Although voting laws have transformed, there is a need for the homeless to feel as if their voices matter and for an increase in their consideration by politicians. Many nations, such as Australia and Canada, have made amendments to their voting acts to enable the population to vote and register without having a permanent address (Lynch, 2002; Lynch & Cole, 2003; Mundell, 2003). It is not known, however, if these strategies have indeed removed major barriers to voting. Through qualitative interviews with the homeless regarding their experience with the electoral system, it is hoped that greater insight will be gained into those factors that prevent them from voting.

**Political Participation of Specific Populations**

This study aims to offer empirical evidence of an often-stigmatized population. In addition to the societal stigmatization of the homeless, the academic literature on political participation further assumes that the homeless lack agency or that there are structures impeding them from voting. The investigations of certain groups, and the unemployed specifically, hypothesize that the homeless lack the resources and agency to vote; however these assumptions have not been verified with empirical investigations.

There has been considerable academic study on the political participation of demographic groups and particular marginalized populations. Literature discusses groups that are historically found to have a low propensity to vote such as youth, as well as vulnerable groups such as immigrants and the poor (Silver et al, 2005; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd & Scullion, 2010; Sanders et al, 2014). Scholars examining the political participation of specific populations question the disparities in participation and examine the factors that influence certain populations’ political engagement. There are several elements considered, including individual and systemic factors.
Politically disengaged groups are often the subjects of societal misconceptions. There are, for example, many misconceptions about youth and their supposed lack of interest in politics. Young people are interested in elections and voting, even though they have been found to be distrusting and cynical of politics (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd & Scullion, 2010). Cultural minorities and immigrants have also been investigated in this context. Although political participation is generally the same across cultural lines (white versus ethnic minority groups), minorities are more strongly affected by distinct perceptions and experiences of their groups, as well as by their engagement with majority cultures (Sanders et al, 2014). Although minorities may have the same factors influencing their political views as those of the majority, there are particular experiences, such as those of discrimination, that additionally influence their political dispositions (Sanders et al, 2014).

The Canadian literature on electoral participation further discusses Indigenous people. The Indigenous population often exhibits low voter turnout during elections. Silver et al (2005) found that the urban Indigenous population in Winnipeg’s inner city voted less on average than their non-Indigenous counterparts, although they have the most electoral power in the region as the majority of the population within the city. This tendency not to vote has been associated with feelings isolation from the system and marginalization from public space, aspects relevant to the homeless population as well (Silver, Keeper & MacKenzie, 2005). The homeless may share the factors of societal misconceptions, pessimism, marginalization and discrimination, as other studied populations, however their particular perspective and experiences need to be added to such research.

The political engagement of the unemployed, an important group of economically disadvantaged citizens, has also been examined in previous research (Schlozman & Verba,
1979). Schlozman and Verba (1979) found that unemployment does not lead to enhanced participation, supporting “past studies of the unemployed [that] commonly describe a pattern of withdrawal and isolation as accompaniment to the erosion of self-confidence that the unemployed often suffer” (pg. 239). Empirical research does support these findings, with the unemployed reporting that they are less politically involved, less interested in politics and less likely to report that they voted. Such research would assume therefore that the homeless, with their jobless condition, are also disengaged from politics and disinterested in politics. It is also found that the unemployed lack access to resources that would enhance or support their political activity. They tend to lack the attitudes that motivate political activity such as efficacy, interest and adherence to civic norms (Schlozman & Verba, 1979). The unemployed, therefore, are not as politically active or aware as the employed. The unemployed, for example, lack the ability to politically organize (Walker, 1994). Although the homeless may share certain experiences with the unemployed, some factors that influence the homeless in particular can be overlooked when applying these observations to the homeless.

Moreover, although the empirical evidence supports the lower political participation rates of the unemployed, examining demographic characteristics and other social factors finds that the difference between the political activity of the employed and unemployed is a result of not simply unemployment, but rather the social characteristics of the unemployed. Although Schlozman and Verba (1979) further investigate the impact that the length of employment has on participation, they find that there is little correlation between the length of unemployment and political participation. In fact there is “no evidence of a direct impact of unemployment on [voter] turnout” (pg. 251). Their inactivity therefore, is not derived from their unemployment. Other factors such as education, age and other variables have larger impacts on voting
tendencies. Other characteristics allow for more or less political activity, exhibiting that political participation is not based on economic factors alone (Schlozman & Verba, 1979).

While the unemployed are comparably inactive in politics, the factors that contribute to their inactivity have yet to be specifically identified and are not derived “from their jobless condition” (Schlozman & Verba, pg. 254, 1979). Although some correlation between unemployment and participation has been observed, no causal relationship has been determined. On the contrary, it has been demonstrated that unemployment is characterized by a number of socio-economic factors, obstructing the causal link between unemployment and voting behaviour. As such, the assumption that the homeless do not participate in politics cannot be supported by economic factors alone, requiring particular examination of social and other characteristics exclusive to the population. Their political activity requires specific investigation, precisely since previous research has shown that the economic elements of poverty cannot directly speak to the extent of political participation.

Although the literature on marginalized groups, specifically the unemployed, does provide some insight into the voting behaviour of the homeless, there is no empirical evidence to support such claims. Despite research on the political participation of the unemployed as a group experiencing “a particularly acute form of economic deprivation” (Schlozman & Verba, 1979, p.21), the homeless, as a unique subset of the economically deprived, have not been investigated. It is true that the factors that influence whether other groups vote may be shared with the homeless. However, there are vital elements of this particular population that can be overlooked when simply applying previous research to this specific group. The voting behaviour of the homeless may in fact be impacted by factors that do not exist in other populations; indeed the barriers they face to participation may be unique to the population. Exposing the barriers that the
population may face to voting can further encourage their political activity and inclusion in the political system.

**The Socio-Economic Status Model (SES) and The Homeless**

Scholars have investigated elements of poverty, such as unemployment, and their correlation with political participation. As a result of such studies, the socio-economic status (SES) model has been developed to better understand the participation of the poor. This model, however, makes several assumptions and dismisses vital factors. According to this model the poor vote and participate less in politics than the rich (Verba & Nie, 1972).

Despite the research of the unemployed, the relationship between poverty and political participation has not been a topic of recent literature and research. Scholars do investigate the correlations between civic engagement and economic growth within urban areas, and the economic status of individuals (Tolbert, Lyson & Irwin, 1998; Amis & Grant, 2001; Wemlinger & Kropf, 2013). Few contemporary scholars, however, have examined the political participation, and specifically the voting tendencies of the poor, or the homeless in particular. Previous research examining the relationship between poverty and voter participation can be applied to the homeless to a certain extent, although it dismisses the population’s specific experiences and adversities. Investigations have determined that citizens with higher socio-economic status are more likely to vote, with the lower income population having feelings of incapability and discontent that discourage their participation (Olsen, 1969; Wang, 2013). No causation, however, can be established between poverty and political participation, as the aforementioned discussion on the unemployed also exhibited. There are several factors that influence participation other than income with some arguing that education and information can actually overcome the disabilities associated with poverty (Krishna, 2006). Furthermore, individuals in poverty may in
fact be more inclined to participate, or withdraw from the process completely, or it is possible that their economic hardships can have no effect on their likelihood of participating (Radcliff, 1992).

The model that does attempt to predict the political participation of the lower socio-economic status groups is the socio-economic status (SES) model. Similar to the research regarding the unemployed, the existing scholarly work does provide the field with various factors that could shed some light on the homeless population’s political participation. From this model, a logical conclusion would be that the homeless, therefore, being among the most poor, do not vote or participate in politics in comparison to the rest of the population. Although the SES model allows us to arrive at this assumption, it does not offer enough empirical evidence, nor does it consider the homeless specifically.

The role of socio-economic factors – education, occupation, and income – on political participation is considered in the SES model (Schlozman & Verba, 1979; Conway, 1991). According to SES, individuals of higher socio-economic status are more active in politics. People of higher SES have more civic orientations and more concern for politics with increasing feelings of efficacy. In this model, individuals with lower SES lack civic skills with little political information and interest vital to voting. Those of lower SES have low levels of political interest and efficacy, with little information on politics. Income is, therefore, positively correlated with political participation (Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972; Pateman; 1974; Schlozman & Verba, 1979; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Schlozman & Tierney, 1986; Conway, 1991; Rosenstone & Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Carpini & Keeter, 1996).
Poorer citizens are observed participating less in politics than the rich with various factors inhibiting their participation. The poor do not feel as if they have a voice in governance decisions in comparison to citizens of higher SES (Mansbridge, 1980). In addition, “people who are more effective in their everyday tasks and challenges are more likely to participate in politics” (Milbrath, 1965, pg. 59); people that like themselves and think that others like them will participate more and can do so more easily. The physiological and psychological needs of those of lower SES further influence their political behaviour. Milbrath (1965) uses Maslow’s theory of organisms completely absorbed in survival when they are in great physical need. As the homeless population is one that faces great physical need, survival and the requirement to find access to basic needs may influence their political activity. The desperately poor are preoccupied by the struggle to keep their body and soul together, which can in fact inhibit their political engagement. Although the correlation between turnout and income is not always strong, it is the strongest among the extremely poor, or those that Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) refer to as experiencing “rock-bottom poverty”. This therefore translates into the idea that there is in fact a strong correlation between the turnout of the desperately poor, the homeless falling under this category, and their voter turnout according to SES.

Although empirically powerful, the SES model has been classified as theoretically deficient, lacking a proposed mechanism connecting socio-economic status with political activity. The sources to political activity are much more complex than the model suggests (Verba & Nie, 1972). Specific structural factors that the homeless experience may in fact include factors beyond traditional SES variables. As Verba and Nie (1972) discuss, this model serves as simply a baseline for the investigation of political participation. Other characteristics need to be studied concurrently with this model to investigate the multiplicity of factors influencing participation.
Although there is a linear relationship between socio-economic status and overall participation, there are additional elements that may diminish or increase the distance between social stratifications.

The characteristics that may impact whether homeless individuals vote have not been examined. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) extend the SES model to the Civic Voluntarism Model, expanding the factors considered in the traditional model. According to this more comprehensive model, political inactivity may be due to a lack of psychological engagement, a lack of connection with recruitment networks that bring citizens into politics, or a lack of resources. The effects of political stimuli will in turn depend on the political interest, efficacy, and information the individual possesses. Political interest and information, therefore, are vital to political participation. These factors and their impacts need to be examined in the context of the homeless. The population may be disengaged and lack access to recruitment networks and resources. Little is known however if they are indeed impacted by such elements or if there are ways in which they may overcome such limitations.

In addition to socioeconomic status Verba and Nie (1972) investigate the impacts of the life cycle, race, and organizational contexts. There is no mention of factors specifically influencing the homeless. Elements of social interaction are also investigated as encouraging participation, however the institutions accessed by homeless individuals are inadequately explored.

**SES, Political Influences of Institutions and the Homeless**

Literature has argued that the poor have historically been among the most difficult groups to mobilize (Piven & Cloward, 1979), however the role that specific institutions play in the population’s political participation needs to be examined in conjunction with other SES factors.
Although the population is alienated from society, there are members of the population that do access social institutions serving the homeless. Although this is not true of all homeless individuals, there are services available particularly in Western states that serve the population. These institutions have a role to play as institutions cultivating engagement, although they have been insufficiently examined as institutions that may politically influence or mobilize this particular group. Political behaviour is understood in relation to individuals within networks and groups that determine the opportunities to exchange meaningful political information. Social institutions play an important role in encouraging and mobilizing citizens to participate in politics. After all, institutions bring citizens into discussions and politics, and can in turn act as forms of political stimuli. Informal social communication can impact participation and can lead to deeper political interest. Social interaction is therefore vital in transmitting political information and guidance (Huckfeldt, Plutzer & Sprague, 1993; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987, 1991; Knoke, 1990; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Hritzuk & Park, 2000).

Moreover, organizations create a relationship of social and political participation. Even non-political organizations can expose individuals to politically relevant information and can actually boost the activity of the lowest status group (Verba & Nie, 1972). The homeless access certain institutions and may in fact create their own political spaces.

Organizations have also been found to expose citizens to political stimuli, and in fact, encourage participation. As Milbrath (1965) argues, more political stimuli can increase the likelihood and depth of participation. Little is known, however, about the role that shelters and drop-in centres play in the political participation of the homeless.

There are certain institutions and organizations that have been found to increase the interaction of citizens with the government. As the only connection between the government and
the homeless, the institutions serving the homeless may have a vital role to play in the political participation of the population. Agencies serving the homeless have a vital role in the actual process of voting, which Chapter 3 will outline, necessitating the investigation of the role they play as political stimuli. Existing literature examines the roles of unions, recreational groups and others play to the political participation of general populations and those of lower socio-economic status (Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). The organizations that create the context of participation exclusive to the homeless need to be added to this research to better understand the population’s participation. Revealing the role that such actors may play in the political participation of the homeless can uncover political actors and stimuli that have yet to be considered in the literature and also assist in the creation of policies that can encourage the population’s political engagement.

Homelessness

Not having a home, the feelings of exclusion, and the marginalization from public space can indeed serve as impediments to voting. Such factors require empirical investigation in relation to their impact on political participation. Homelessness has been often described in sociological literature, with specific emphasis given to the physical aspects of the lack of housing, as well as the social characteristics of exclusion from society (Gaetz, 2004; Peressinni, 2007). Such literature, however, does not give any indication of whether or not this population votes or explore the factors that influence participation. The effects of multiple factors, both individual and structural, and the potential relationship between being encouraged to vote and battling these effects, need to be studied in the context of the homeless.

Although this population’s voting propensities have not been an area of research, there has been a focus on the various disadvantages the population faces. These hindrances are discussed
to emphasize what may bring people to live on the street and the circumstances that exacerbate their situation. Structural and individual issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, low income, and mental illness are examples of such disadvantages deliberated by numerous scholars (Craig & Timms, 2000; Schiff, 2007; Peressinni, 2007; Whitbeck, Crawford, & Hartshorn, 2012). Not having a home also includes not having the right to privacy and proper standard of living, as well as the lack of security and increasing risk of violence and discrimination. Therefore, being homeless brings with it the loss of many rights, which leads some scholars to argue that homelessness is indeed a human rights violation (Lynch & Cole, 2003). With the loss of rights due to homelessness, their democratic rights and the extent to which they practice them need to be explored.

The hardships that the homeless experience are intense areas of research, with certain scholars questioning the correlation between certain disadvantages and homelessness, and whether they are consequences or the origins of homelessness. Individual factors include the lack of social support that may increase psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse among the homeless (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2012). Individual factors further intersect with structural and institutional factors such as unsafe communities or transitions from the foster care system. Scholars, therefore argue that although pathways that lead to homelessness or increase the risk of homelessness include individual factors, policies need to address the structural elements that contribute to homelessness by intensifying individual factors or making it more difficult to exit a life on the streets (Piat, et al, 2015).

Social Exclusion and Political Alienation

In addition to the various detriments of the homeless population, they also experience social exclusion and immense levels of social marginalization, which may indeed influence their
willingness to participate in elections. Such factors can in turn enhance political alienation. The political alienation of the homeless, however, has not been an area of exploration. How the homeless conceive politics, and their willingness to participate, can shed light on the correlation between levels of marginalization and political alienation.

Social exclusion, in the context of this research, will be defined as “…the degree to which the personal histories of individuals intersect with certain social, political and economic conditions that restrict people’s access to spaces, institutions and practices that reduce risk” (Gaetz, pg. 428, 2004). Marginalized groups, such as the homeless, are separated from people and places that citizens can access. This exclusion can be partial or complete isolation from the various political, social, economic or cultural systems within society (Gaetz, 2004).

This social exclusion is experienced due to the marginalization from public spaces, negative public perceptions, and loneliness due to feelings of personal inadequacy (Rokach, 2004; Peressini, 2007; Taylor, 2013). The importance of public space to democracy is often discussed in the literature, with Staeheli and Thompson (1997) arguing that public spaces democratize society. Public spaces are vital democratic elements with exclusion from them inhibiting democratic participation. Citizenship is emphasized through the struggle over public space, representing a struggle to become a member of the polity. Exclusion from public space may therefore influence the political participation of the population.

Fitzpatrick, Bramley and Johnsen (2013) discuss the complexity of the experiences the homeless face ranging from the individual, community, and institutional levels. The multiple levels of social exclusion need to be recognized in relation to the political alienation that the population may feel. Such investigations are necessary since political alienation, or “…attitudes of estrangement from the political system…” (Olsen, 1969, p.288) can in turn impact political
participation. Alienation from politics can be divided into two categories. The first is discontentment and refers more to voluntary attitudes. The second category is political incapability, which has to do with the environment the individual is in, attitudes of incapability, and aspects which are out of their control, such as social statuses (Olsen, 1969); an alienation that may very well be felt by the homeless. Factors that influence political alienation of the homeless, therefore, require careful attention.

Power relations are clearly evident in the daily lives of the homeless, and these power structures also play a role in political participation, with those in the lower socio-economic strata identified as withdrawn. Political inefficacy contributes to political alienation, the feeling of apathy due to this powerlessness, as well as discontentment from being powerless, leading to a lack of trust in policymakers (Thompson & Horton, 1960). Feelings of powerlessness, Aberbach (1969) notes, may not influence the vote a particular individual may make, but rather influences their actual intentions and decision to do so. Coupled feelings of distrust and powerlessness have a strong correlation with whether or not individuals vote, and can also influence the attitudes and opinions individuals have towards political issues and problems. With a high correlation of alienation and unemployment, the levels of alienation among the homeless are most likely relatively high (Olsen, 1965). Milbrath (1965) notes that those who feel as if they are alienated from politics are less likely to be politically active. There is little empirical evidence that confirms the correlation of political alienation and participation with regards to the homeless population, however (Lynch, 2002; Mundell, 2003; Lynch & Cole, 2003). With the homeless being repeatedly excluded from society and having constant feelings of powerlessness, their probable political alienation requires specific contemplation and concurrent empirical investigation.
Conclusion

The definition of citizenship in democratic nations is predicated on political participation. The ways in which the homeless view their citizenship needs to be investigated through their partaking in elections and the barriers that may cause them to abstain from voting. This population has long been at the centre of discussions concerning their social welfare, and it is time for their political participation to be considered. Through this research there can be advancement in the understanding of the political engagement of the homeless population, as well as their motivations for engaging or withdrawing from mainstream politics.

While some of the literature may lead us to believe that it is likely that the homeless do not vote, this question requires empirical investigation. Furthermore, the homeless are functioning and voting members of society. Without any legal impediments to their voting, their participation requires specific examination. The barriers they face to voting need to be investigated in order to encourage their inclusion. The voice of the homeless is vital, particularly to the production, success and implementation of social welfare policies.

This research project, therefore, explores the voting behaviour of the homeless in Toronto. The factors and opportunities that influence the Toronto homeless population’s decision to vote, and what societal and structural impediments exist, if any, which may cause them to abstain are also specifically examined to provide a preliminary investigation of the populations political participation. The barriers to voting experienced by the population have serious practical implications, and this study begins to address a significant gap in the literature regarding this marginalized population’s political participation. As this study will exhibit, there are specific barriers that the homeless face to voting, which influence their political engagement. Although democratic processes allow for the homeless to vote there are several impediments that
contradict such intensions and discourage the population’s inclusion in the political system. This population in particular requires specific examination due to the procedures that have been implemented to encourage the homeless to vote, which will be elucidated in Chapter 3. Little is known, however, if the current processes do in fact achieve what they intend. Prior to delving into the context of this research, however, the methodology of this study will first be presented.
Chapter 2

Methodology
Introduction

In order to investigate the voting behaviour of the homeless and the barriers they face to voting, I employed qualitative research methods. Toronto was the location of my case study, and I made use of purposive, snowball and opportunistic sampling. As there has been little research on the political participation of the homeless, I not only interviewed homeless individuals but also service providers, politicians and election agency representatives. Homeless individuals provided a personal account of voting tendencies and possible impediments to voting. Service providers assisted in securing the homeless sample, and could speak to the process of voting, as well as their experiences with broader groups of clients. Politicians and election agencies, in turn, spoke to the voting processes and the outreach that is available to the population.

Qualitative data analysis can be systematically conducted and therefore considered a legitimate element of political science. Qualitative data allows for a more comprehensive view of participants through more open-ended questions. Such interviews were necessary for this project, allowing me to learn about specific barriers participants face to voting and their general interest in politics. As the political participation of the homeless has not been examined to any great extent (Lynch, 2002; Lynch & Cole, 2003; Mundell, 2003), interviews also included questions regarding the participant’s interest in politics as well as their political knowledge and awareness. The use of qualitative semi-structured interviews allowed for such open-ended questions and contextualized the information gathered. My data therefore included interview reconstructions and field notes. During an interview I took notes and immediately afterwards reviewed them and added any additional observations. Quotes were written as the participant said them, and the participant was aware when I was using direct quotes from an interview.
As a preliminary investigation into the political participation of the homeless examining the barriers they face to voting, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with homeless people, service providers, and policymakers\(^1\). The city of Toronto was the chosen case study of this research due to its dense homeless population, institutions serving the homeless and for practical reasons.

I employed a variety of sampling strategies including snowball, opportunistic and purposive sampling. In order to identify research participants, initial interviews were conducted with service providers who worked at shelters and other agencies offering assistance to the homeless. As the context chapter (Chapter 3) will highlight, the process of voting for homeless individuals is complex and requires the assistance of institutions serving the homeless (for necessary documentation and signatures), which further supported the decision to interview service providers. Furthermore, these interviews helped secure access to the homeless population and provided important insights (from the perspective of service providers) regarding the political participation of the population, the opportunities that exist to encourage participation, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current processes of voting for individuals without a permanent address.

Homeless individuals from three institutions serving the homeless population (one youth shelter and drop-in centre, one adult drop-in centre with transitional housing for women, and one other adult drop-in centre) were also interviewed with the assistance of service providers. The institutions chosen varied in the services offered and their engagement during elections. I also interviewed politicians – current and previous Members of Parliament (MP’s), Members of

---

\(^1\) Prior to conducting fieldwork I received the necessary Research Ethics Board approval for research involving human participants. The Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants can be found in Appendix A.
Provincial Parliament (MPP’s), and City Councillors and workers from election agencies at different jurisdictional levels: the Toronto City Clerk’s Office, Elections Ontario and Elections Canada. Election agency representatives and politicians were interviewed to gain more information regarding the process of voting for homeless citizens and the initiatives that exist, if any, to encourage the population’s participation during elections.

This fieldwork was completed during the course of eight weeks. I conducted a total of 45 qualitative interviews with: 28 homeless individuals, nine service providers, five politicians and three election agency representatives. As a small n study this research serves as a preliminary investigation into an under-researched topic. The barriers that the homeless face to voting may vary depending on individual and systemic factors. However, this study begins to explore these various factors and serves as a necessary examination into the process of voting for this population. The barriers that have been identified through the different perspectives in this study (homeless participants, service providers, bureaucratic administrators and politicians), can speak to some, although not all, the barriers that citizens without a permanent address in Toronto may face.

I will begin by offering a justification for the use of Toronto as my case study followed by a discussion on the definition of homelessness utilized in this research. I will then offer a justification for examining voting in particular. The three groups of participants within the larger sample will then be looked at separately in order to discuss the representativeness of each category of participant as well as possible validity threats to the project. I will then outline how I coded my interview data for analysis. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this project.
Case Study

Toronto is the specific case study of this research. As a major metropolitan area, the city of Toronto provides a wide array of institutions serving the homeless. Furthermore, the city has a large and diverse homeless population. Toronto was also chosen due to the contacts that I was able to establish with the help of a member on my committee.

The choice of Toronto reflects not only the practicality of distance and available contacts, but is also a city that has a large homeless population and therefore, has relatively well developed services available to the homeless. Toronto has the highest per capita number of shelters and shelter beds in Canada (Gaetz et al, 2013). In Toronto the total estimated homeless population, as of 2013, was 5,219 with 3,970 individuals making use of city-administered shelters (Homeless Hub Toronto, ON). There are scholars that believe the number of homeless in Toronto is growing. It is estimated that the homeless population has increased 5% since 2006, while those utilizing homeless shelters has increased by 8.7% since 2006. It is also believed that people living on Toronto’s streets experience homelessness for longer periods than the homeless in other Canadian cities (Shapcott, 2013).

The choice of Toronto as the location for the case study does create some problems. In particular, in other parts of the country Indigenous peoples constitute a high proportion of those who are homeless (Gaetz et al, 2013). This is less true of the situation in Toronto. As Belanger et al (2011) illustrate, the Toronto homeless population has among the smallest percentage of aboriginal homeless in comparison to other Canadian cities. In Toronto, the urban aboriginal homeless compose approximately 15% of the overall homeless population, whereas the urban aboriginal homeless compose upwards of 50% of the overall homeless populations in cities such as Regina, Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. As such, this study does not intend to capture other
factors such as race and indigeneity that may be more pertinent to the homeless in other parts of Canada.

Definitions

Several definitions of homelessness exist, depending on the context and area of research. The definition of homelessness used in this research is the one adopted by the Canadian Homelessness Research Network released in 2012:

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing (Gaetz et al, 2013, p.4).

This definition was chosen because it captures a broad range of homeless individuals including those accessing institutions serving the homeless. It also comprehensive in that it encompasses various typologies of homelessness:

1) Unsheltered – those living on the streets or areas that are not intended for human habitation.
2) Emergency Sheltered – those staying in emergency shelters for those who are homeless.
3) Provisionally Accommodated – individuals that are homeless whose accommodation lacks security of tenure (interim housing, temporarily with others such as couch surfing, or in institutional contexts without permanent arrangements).
4) At Risk of Homelessness – individuals are not homeless but currently in precarious economic and housing situations or do not meet public health and safety standards (Gaetz et al, 2013; Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

This comprehensive definition provides the widest possible sample, whilst also capturing the varying types of homelessness. It decreases the risk of missing certain types of homelessness, by elucidating the degrees of homelessness and the differences between them. This definition therefore, allows for a thorough analysis of the population. However, only three of the four categories could be examined in this study as no individuals in my survey fell within the category of the unsheltered. This problem was inherent to my methodology, as shelters and drop-in centres were the vehicles by which I gained access to homeless participants.

It is hard to reach homeless people because of their transient nature. For this reason, I required assistance from service providers that have frequent contact with the population, to obtain my sample of homeless participants. Consequently, my sample population was limited to those utilizing services for the homeless and did not include those who were living fully on the street and not accessing social service networks. In terms of the Canadian Homeless Research network’s typology, therefore, my sample was primarily drawn from the second, third and fourth categories of homelessness; the emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated and those at risk of homelessness.

Although I intentionally used the term homelessness to define the population, in the interviews the term was replaced with ‘the street-involved’, a term often used synonymously with ‘the homeless’. Both terms will be used interchangeably throughout the analysis.
Why Voting?

The particular method of political participation under investigation in this study is voting. This does not disregard other forms of political participation. Other forms of participation include such things as volunteering or working on campaigns, contributing financially to campaigns, protesting, and participating in social movement organizations (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Voting, however, is the most common act practiced by those of lower socio-economic status (Verba & Nie, 1972), is one of the easiest forms of participation and is legally mandated on an equal basis for all citizens. Voting is therefore among the most egalitarian acts in comparison to other forms of participation (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). This quality is particularly interesting – the equality in practice must be questioned and observed, setting the basis for the equality of other acts. If this act, which requires little initiative and allows citizens to partake with little effort (Verba & Nie, 1972), has inequalities in its practice, it speaks to the quality of our democratic life.

With regards to this study, voting was also chosen due to its systematic nature. Voting is a process and requires certain procedures to be followed. As a study examining the barriers to participation, the procedures of elections and voting serve as clear indicators of present barriers. In addition, I recognize that voting as a citizen without a permanent address is a right granted to Canadians; although the process does entail unique practices that require further examination. When referring to political participation throughout my analysis, therefore, I will be strictly referring to the act of voting. I asked participants if they voted in the last federal election, and outside of that election if they have voted in their lifetime. I further inquired into their state of homelessness at the time of voting (if they voted when housed or when homeless) – this data will be presented in Chapter 4.
Sampling

I conducted a small n study using various sampling strategies often used in qualitative research. For the purposes of triangulation samples from three main groups were interviewed: homeless individuals, service providers and policymakers (politicians and election agency representatives). The homeless provided insight into the barriers that the population faces from an individual perspective, whereas policymakers allowed for a more systematic perspective on the process of voting. Service providers permitted an investigation into the role that institutions play in not only the process of voting for clients accessing their services, but also in encouraging the population to be more engaged in politics. An array of sampling strategies was used in order to ensure that my sample was representative, capturing demographic representativeness as well as the typologies within the definition utilized. Snowball, purposive, and opportunistic sampling were the specific strategies I used to gain my sample. Snowball sampling included asking respondents (service providers and politicians) to suggest others they believe would be useful for me to interview. I also used purposive sampling, deliberately selecting individuals (homeless participants, politicians, and election agency representatives) due to the crucial information they could provide. Lastly, opportunistic or convenience sampling allowed me to access homeless participants that were conveniently available and willing to participate in my study (Halperin & Heath, pg. 242-247, 2012; Liamputtong, pg.14-19, 2013).

A member on my committee, Professor William O’Grady, has conducted many studies with homeless youth in Toronto. I was able to build on his research networks to develop initial contact with service providers. The organizations suggested by Professor O’Grady included youth shelters, and service providers that served the younger homeless population in downtown Toronto. As a young researcher, Professor O’Grady and I agreed that it might be more beneficial
for me to interview and access the younger subsection of the population. Professor O’Grady provided me with the names of organizations that I should contact, and encouraged me to use his name in the initial contact email to ensure participants were aware that he was one of the professors advising me on this project. Although these contacts served as my initial participants, my sample went beyond youth shelters. Snowball sampling provided me with access to institutions serving the adult homeless population and drop-in centres offering a broad range of services.

I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with 28 homeless people, nine service providers, five politicians, and three representatives from relevant election agencies (Toronto City Clerk’s Office and Elections Ontario, and Elections Canada). Questions were designed to gain information regarding the engagement of street-involved persons with politics from personal accounts of political activity, the process for street-involved electors to vote, the involvement of shelters and drop-in centres in the process, and the role that policymakers and bureaucratic administrators play in ensuring this process is effectively practiced (see Appendix E through G for a complete list of interview questions for each group interviewed). I will discuss the samples for each group I interviewed individually, outlining the representativeness of the sample, and method of sampling employed.

Service Providers

Service providers from a diverse range of institutions offering different services were interviewed. This was intentional in order to investigate the correlation of the services provided, groups targeted, and programming at an institution, with the information provided during elections. As necessary mediators between homeless individuals and the government when voting, service providers in institutions served as necessary participants. These participants were
initially contacted via email. I began with Professor O’Grady’s, a professor on my committee, contacts. As interviews progressed, participants provided me with contacts of their own or made suggestions, and my list of service providers grew. I sent emails to broader institutional email addresses and individual service providers from the institutions contacted me and agreed to participate in the research. At times, I found a list of individuals in executive positions at institutions through online research and used their individual email addresses for contact. If these individuals were unavailable, there were several instances where they referred me to frontline staff for interviews.

Nine service providers from seven organizations serving homeless people were interviewed. Service providers were interviewed to gain information regarding any initiatives they were aware of to encourage the homeless to vote. Service providers were also asked the extent to which their organizations had contact with election agencies and politicians, and whether their clients had expressed interest in politics or demonstrated political engagement. The service providers who were interviewed not only served as access points to other shelters and drop-in centres, but also assisted in generating a sample of homeless participants.

To begin, I compiled a list of shelters and drop-in centres that serviced street-involved youth in downtown Toronto and contacted them via email. The original sample of shelters included contacts that Professor William O’Grady, a member of my committee, had suggested. Professor O’Grady’s own research with the homeless has made him well known in the community and could therefore assist me in making my own contacts. I made it clear that Professor O’Grady was on my committee in my initial emails to service providers to ensure they were aware that my research was supported by a trained professional that has completed research in this particular field. After initial contact with the first two service providers was established, I
employed snowball sampling. Service providers provided their own thoughts on other shelters and drop-in centres I should contact, as well as sent out emails to others they believed might be interested in the project. Although my original contacts included service providers at agencies serving the younger homeless population, snowball sampling in the field opened the sample to those serving the adult homeless population as well. The sample also grew from simply shelters to drop-in centres that did not necessarily offer any form of shelter to their clients.

This sample included service providers from a legal services clinic, a youth shelter and drop-in centre, three adult drop-in centres, a networking agency, and a coalition of organizations fighting homelessness. This sample, although diverse, is not comprehensive. As a major urban area, there are numerous organizations, agencies and institutions serving the homeless in Toronto. As a small n study, my sample was limited, although still provides the necessary diversity to answer the research question of the project. The barriers that the homeless face to voting includes the access to institutions and the information offered by service providers, along with numerous other systemic impediments, further necessitating my sample of service providers.

*Homeless Participants*

A sample of 28 homeless participants was chosen from three centres and shelters with the assistance of service providers that were interviewed. Service providers from three institutions were asked if I could access the clients using their services. As such, institutions where I accessed the homeless sample were chosen based on my interviews with service providers supportive of my project and those that suggested their clients might be interested in participating in the study. For this reason I employed three different methods of sampling with the homeless participants: snowball, opportunistic and purposive. The institutions I chose were
therefore based on opportunities that presented themselves through interviews with service providers and with the help of previous participants. The institutions also varied in their engagement during elections and in politics, which was both opportunistic and purposively chosen. The method by which I contacted the participants in the sample varied depending on the institution, although a bias was present in one of the institutions where service providers physically brought participants to me for interviewing. Due to this, I adapted the methods in the following two institutions, depending less on the service providers for individual homeless participants.

I compared the representativeness of the sample based to the composition of the Canadian homeless population from two reports released in 2013 and 2016. The sample was therefore broken down into the following categories: youth (under 25 years), 25%; males, 68%; and females, 32%. A majority of the males were between the age of 25 and 60. This compares favourably with demographic data from Gaetz et al (2013), which states that almost half of the Canadian homeless population is adult men between 25 and 55 years of age. According to Gaetz et al (2016), 18.7% of the homeless population is comprised of youth and women comprise 27.3% of the homeless population, which also compares favourably to my sample (Gaetz et al 2016).

The composition of my sample may have added a validity threat to the study. The overrepresentation of males may have given rise to an interviewer effect. As a young woman in the field, male participants may have been more inclined to agree to an interview and self-report as more politically active than they are in reality. However, the political interest of participants varied, and as my research question addresses voting tendencies and the barriers to voting, not
simply the political interest and knowledge of participants, this effect did not largely impact my data.

The homeless individuals interviewed all accessed services and institutions for the homeless. As already explained, homeless individuals who lived completely on the street and did not access services were not captured by this methodology. The difficulties with gaining access to homeless persons made this unavoidable. The sample was chosen based on opportunistic and snowball sampling. Some purposive sampling was employed for the institutions that were chosen as access points for my sample and for the institutions accessed. The three centres included a youth centre with an emergency shelter and other programs, where seven participants were interviewed; an adult drop-in centre with transitional housing, where 14 participants were interviewed; and an adult drop-in centre in another part of the city, where the final seven participants were interviewed.

After I found that the first institution was very involved in elections and encouraged the population to vote, for example, the second institution was purposely chosen for its lack of initiatives during elections. The institution provided information during election time, but it was limited to notices on the location of polling stations. The final institution was also more purposely, and opportunistically, chosen after several interviews with service providers encouraged me to go to this specific adult drop-in centre. After my interview with a representative from the Toronto City Clerk’s Office, I also learned that this centre has historically been a polling station in municipal elections. For this reason the three institutions chosen for my homeless sample varied in their political engagement and the range of information provided during elections. This allowed me to investigate the possible correlation of organizational structure and the services provided by an agency, with the likelihood that a
homeless person will vote. Homeless participant interviews ranged from 15 minutes to an hour in length. Following an interview a $10 incentive was given to each homeless participant in the form of a Tim Horton’s gift card.

The first sample of homeless participants included those that use a youth shelter and drop-in centre. The service provider at the youth shelter was eager to have clients participate and served as an access point for my first group of participants. This institution, serving the younger homeless population, also assisted me in securing a more representative sample based on the age of participants. As a youth shelter and drop-in centre, all participants were under the age of 25. A total of seven participants were interviewed from this institution. I did intend to have service providers assist me in obtaining my sample of homeless participants, however the manner by which this occurred varied depending on the institution. At the first institution, service providers presented the details of the project to their clients and asked who would be interested in participating. I was not present when the service providers presented my research to their clients and am not aware of the ways in which they gathered participants. For this reason the participants could have included those that were more politically inclined and eager to discuss politics, skewing my sample to those that are politically involved and more prone to voting. I did encourage the service providers to try to interest those that do not vote as well. My sample from this institution did include three participants that had never voted, however, suggesting that I was able to achieve a degree of balance in my sample.

Based on the experience from the first shelter, I utilized a more random sampling approach at the second institution. This specific adult drop-in centre served daily lunch. Rather than depend on service providers to provide participants, I approached individuals during the lunch service. Altogether, 14 clients from this institution were interviewed over a two-week
period. After learning that the institution did not provide extensive information regarding elections from service providers, I decided on a larger sample of participants from this particular institution to allow for a closer investigation into the numerous sources of information and barriers faced (and the impact of institutions on access to information/initiatives). The sample from this institution also served as a baseline comparison to the participants at institutions that were more involved during election time. This particular centre was extremely supportive of my project, and so the large sample from this institution did have an opportunistic element. To ensure I received a range of individuals, particularly in the levels/length of homelessness, some elements of purposive sampling were also employed. I consulted service providers about which individuals had visited the centre more often, as well as who could be more or less interested in politics. As this centre offered transitional housing for the female homeless population, and to ensure I was fulfilling the elements of a representative sample (with female participants and those in transitional housing), I also asked if I could gain access to these specific clients. I provided the service providers that managed the transitional housing services with my email and an information letter, and they, in turn, provided it to various women using the service. I received two emails of interest and scheduled interviews at the centre. Again, this element of purposive sampling may have skewed my results, although it should be noted that both of these participants were not particularly politically active.

At the last adult drop-in centre, I employed a similar method as at the previous institution, and interviewed seven individuals. I approached participants during the daily lunch service and asked if they would be willing to participate in the research. Again, some participants were chosen based on the recommendation of service providers although a majority was more randomly selected. This institution was very involved during elections, and I learned that many
of its clients were well informed and politically engaged. After my interviews at this institution, I had a sample of homeless respondents with a range of political engagement. Many of my interview questions had also given rise to similar answers, saturating my data, and I was satisfied with the representativeness of my sample after completing 28 interviews with homeless individuals.

*Politicians and Election Agency Representatives*

The process of voting for homeless individuals is exclusive to the population and more complex than it is for other citizens. As such, the relationship politicians and election agencies have with the homeless needs to be explored to learn of any initiatives geared towards the population, as well as the jurisdictional specifics of the process of voting for those without a permanent address. Interviewing politicians allowed for the investigation of the ways politicians engage with the homeless. Election agency representatives further provided information regarding the process and the barriers that exist in reaching the population. These interviews also allowed for an exploration of discrepancies between how politicians and election officials view homeless, and the attitudes of the homeless themselves. Politicians and bureaucratic administrators were, therefore, chosen based on the areas they represent, or represented, and their electoral agency. Five politicians were interviewed in total: one current Member of Parliament (MP), two previous Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) and two current City Councillors. All participants represented downtown Toronto and had served areas with dense homeless populations. Three election agency representatives were contacted; one representative from: the Toronto City Clerk’s Office, Elections Ontario and Elections Canada.

Five current and past Toronto City Councillors, MPP’s, and MP’s were contacted for interviews. Each of these elected officials represented a constituency or city ward in which there
was a concentration of homeless shelters and/or drop-in centres. I used my own judgment for some of these initial interviews, employing purposive sampling. I sent out emails to the politicians I felt would be interested in the project (depending on their involvement in the community), and that I knew represented areas in downtown Toronto with dense homeless populations. Not all of the contacted officials, however, responded to my initial email. Some of the participants were therefore chosen based on snowball sampling, after interview participants offered names and emails of politicians they felt would be interested in the project.

Due to the elite nature of the participants in terms of their status and accessibility, I was only able to secure five politicians for interviews, which was a limitation to the study.\(^2\) Furthermore, all of the politicians that were members of political parties represented left wing Canadian parties – the Liberal and New Democrat Parties. No representatives of the Conservative party were contacted or interviewed. This potentially creates a bias in the research as historically these parties have a greater commitment to combatting poverty. However, as one respondent from this sample made clear, not all within these political parties are necessarily predisposed to prioritizing the homeless and poor in their campaign platforms. Preliminary research regarding recent provincial and municipal politics, however, found no Conservative representatives within the wards and districts I was examining. Furthermore, in recent history, Ontario has not had many conservative MP’s and MPP’s, and very few have represented downtown Toronto. City Councillors do not formally express party allegiance, however, so it cannot be said with certainty that no right wing politicians were interviewed. Given the high density of homeless persons in the ridings represented by the politicians interviewed, it is a

\(^2\) I had intended to interview 5-8 policymakers (politicians and election agency representatives) originally. I did meet my intended target however I did make my initial suggested sample size small because I predicted that there could be accessibility issues.
reasonable conclusion that they might have been expected to be more aware of the interests of the community, as well as the processes and policies related to voting for those without permanent addresses.

The administration of elections in Canada is the responsibility of independent agencies at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Accordingly, representatives from Elections Ontario and the Toronto Clerk’s Office were also contacted and interviewed. I sent invitations to participate in my research to the general agency email addresses and was directed to representatives I could interview via telephone. Unfortunately, a representative from Elections Canada could not be interviewed, although I was provided necessary information via email correspondence. All of the election agency representatives provided sample documentation that electors without a permanent address required in recent elections. These documents can be found in Appendices H through J.

Coding

To code my data, I used the systematic process of analyzing qualitative data in political science outlined by Wesley (2011), including the three steps of open, axial and selective coding. Open coding begins this process by ‘theming’ the data according to general patterns and recording these themes as memos. The axial step includes tagging the data according to the themes in the preceding step. This includes scanning the data and tagging specific passages. The final step, or selective coding, acts as a form of intracoder testing where the text is reviewed in order to ensure the accuracy of the tags chosen in the second step (in Archer & Berdahl, 2011, pg. 349-357).

Before I began my fieldwork, and as I conducted interviews, I provided each participant a code – homeless participants were coded H#1 through to H#28; service providers SP#1 through
SP#9; politicians PM#1 through PM#5 (policymakers); and election agency representative E#1 through E#3. These codes were used in compliance with ethical considerations as well as to separate my sample according to the participant groups I interviewed.

Following my interviews I began the coding process. In the open coding stage I reviewed my field notes and reconstructions to find general themes. These general themes became memos I found in my data. Memos that I recorded included:

- Voting, the electoral process, and sources of information for homeless participants
- Whether the homeless vote and initiatives offered for service providers
- The process of voting for election agency representatives
- Interactions with homeless participants and knowledge of the process for politicians.

These themes were chosen based on the research question, which asks for the analysis of barriers to voting. As I coded each interview the common themes of the process, sources of information and initiatives of institutions were repeatedly mentioned and were directly related to my research question. Furthermore, the themes had to be divided based on the different groups due to the varying perspectives of each sample. For example, the election agency representatives laid out the formal structure of the process of voting, however how the homeless and service providers viewed the process differed, with more focus on the barriers and first hand experiences at the polls. Politician interviews were also coded in accordance with the initiatives offered by politicians to encourage the population to vote and their interactions with the population.

During the axial coding phase, I analyzed the data with the general themes in mind from the first stage, taking more detailed notes about the content, tagging important quotes and parts of the reconstructed interviews, and labeling them under these themes. During the last phase of
coding, or selective coding, I further analyzed the data, saturating the categories, and added additional themes:

- Interest in politics and interaction with politicians for homeless participant interviews
- Interaction outside of election time with politicians/homeless for the homeless, service providers and politician participant interviews
- Ideas on improving the process for all participant interviews

Interest in politics was added as a code due to the general finding that the interest in politics was often discussed in the interviews with some variation among participants. Interaction with politicians was added to offer corresponding data to the politician interviews and was added once it was identified as a barrier to participation by numerous homeless respondents. This was also added to the service provider interviews due to the fact that almost all service providers mentioned initiatives that included politicians. They were asked if they had seen any politicians at shelters, with the objective of exploring the relationship between politicians and the homeless population. Ideas on improving the process was added as a final code due to the nature of all the interviews, which almost always ended with a retrospective reflection and an in-depth examination into how the process could be improved or how the population could be encouraged to vote. This final stage of coding served as a form of “intracoder reliability testing and data cleaning” as I refined my categories and modified tags as needed (Wesley in Archer & Berdahl, 2011, pg. 349-357).

The coding frame for each sample of participants, derived from this three stage coding analysis, can be found below in Figure 1. The codes can be found in capital letters following their specific descriptions.
Figure 1: Coding Frame used for Qualitative Interview Analysis

Limitations

In order to put the analysis into perspective the limitations of this study will now be discussed. This research project, although a major contribution, is not able to make claims with regards to the overall system of voting for homeless individuals or their voter participation. As a small n study, further research is needed before claims can be made. These findings cannot therefore be replicated across contexts or populations. The sample of homeless participants was not only small but also not necessarily representative of the general homeless population. The unsheltered, specifically, were not included in the sample for accessibility reasons. The unsheltered, and others that do not access institutions were therefore harshly underrepresented in
my project. These individuals face additional barriers to voting and experience elections and politics differently from those I was able to interview.

This same limitation is also present in the institutions that I accessed for my homeless participants, the sample of service providers and politicians. Only three institutions were accessed for homeless participants, and although they varied in their level of engagement with the population during elections, they cannot speak to the wide variety of institutions in the city of Toronto. Furthermore, the nine service providers interviewed and the institutions they worked for ranged but these findings are not transferrable to all those working in institutions serving the homeless. The sample of politicians exhibits the thoughts of only the individual politicians, and therefore, the lack of knowledge regarding the voting processes and outreach to the population is not representative of all politicians.

Voting has been the focus of this specific study, however, it is worth noting that political participation is not restricted to voting; “… It is incomplete and misleading to understand citizen participation solely through the vote” (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995. P.23). Engagement in politics includes numerous acts and relationships, although the population may also be excluded from other forms of political participation as well. “Much [political] participation is through nongovernmental organization: voluntary associations, unions, and the like. … the unorganized in any society will be more likely to be exploited and less likely to participate effectively.” (Verba, 1967, p.65). By examining voting alone, this study cannot speak to the broader political engagement of the population. Furthermore, participants were asked if they had voted in the last federal election (October 2015), and because the election was recent and rather contentious, those participants that voted in that election remembered doing so. In terms of other jurisdictions, however, although participants could speak to whether or not they have voted in other elections
(or all levels) not all of the participants were able to identify specifically which elections they voted in. Some remembered the individuals they voted for but the interview questions were not properly designed to provide insight into specific elections and jurisdictions. This served as a major limitation to the study, particularly since the barriers vary depending on the level of election due to procedural differences.

Moreover, this project could not isolate other individual-level factors that may impact the voter turnout of the population such as race, education, age and gender. Although barriers to participation could be identified, the impacts of other variables, particularly individual-level factors, could not be divorced from the findings. There are other factors, therefore, that influenced the political participation of participants that this study could not identify.

**Conclusion**

The combination of semi-structured interviews and accessing the homeless through service providers provided me with a thorough cross-section of the population. My sample provided a rich picture of the political participation of the homeless population, although with certain limitations. My findings are not generalizable across the entire homeless population, the diverse groups within the population, or differing contexts. As a result I cannot definitively say that my results will be replicated in other studies. The results of this study, however, are suggestive of important findings that run counter to many assumptions of the homeless and voting, providing useful information for the development of future research questions and policy direction for increasing the engagement of this population. Prior to presenting my findings, the processes of voting for citizens without a permanent residence must be outlined to provide some context to the study.
Chapter 3

Some Context: Canadian Election Legislation and Voting as a Citizen without a Permanent Address
Introduction

Laws in Canada ensure that the homeless have the right to vote and are supported by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees every citizen the right to vote (1987). There are processes in place to ensure that not having a permanent address does not impede the democratic right to vote. Prior to analyzing the results of this research, a discussion around the legal and electoral processes is necessary to establish the institutional framework of voting for homeless citizens. Although these procedures exist there has been no research to examine their effectiveness. This discussion will provide a foundation of the process and systemic issues that will be reviewed in the analysis – particularly the complexity of voting as a homeless citizen in Canada and the multiple actors involved in the process.

In order to understand the impediments homeless individuals face to voting, an examination of the existing processes and their historic developments is necessary. The complexity of Canadian elections and the jurisdictional variation of voting procedures, particularly for electors without a permanent residence, act as systemic barriers to voting. Preliminary research, coupled with informational interviews with election agency representatives provided information regarding the process of voting for citizens without an address. Election agency representatives further supplied the documentation that the homeless require to vote, which can be found in Appendix H through J.

The Charter and the Canada Elections Act

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that all citizens should have the right to vote. As such, this includes the homeless population. The democratic right to vote and the qualification of voters has been enshrined in the Canadian Charter and therefore acts as a basis to
the historical progression of policies surrounding the homeless and their right to vote. According to Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1987):

> “Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein”

(Parliament of Canada, 2008).

There have been numerous challenges to the qualifications and disqualifications of electoral law including the requirement of residency, incapacities such as imprisonment, procedural limitation and limitations on the equality of voting power. These Charter challenges have led to legislation that has broadened the qualifications of electoral participation. The Canada Elections Act in 2000 addressed the extension of eligibility to individuals without a fixed address. This piece of legislation outlined procedures for homeless individuals to vote, including individuals that do not have a piece of identification. Definitions of residence were also broadened to include institutions such as shelters.

The Canada Elections Act (2000) qualified electors as “every person who is a Canadian citizen and is 18 years of age or older on polling day…” (Bill C-1, 2000), and allowed electors without identification to vote if another elector could vouch for their identity. The legislation states that to register on polling day without identification:

> “The elector takes an oath in the prescribed form and is accompanied by an elector whose name appears on the list of electors for the same polling division and who vouches for him or her on oath in the prescribed form” (Bill C-1, 2000).

Service providers or other electors in the same polling division could therefore vouch for homeless individuals that did not have pieces of identification. In addition to place of residence, the definition of temporary residence was added which states that:
“Temporary residential quarters are considered to be a person’s place of ordinary residence only if the person has no other place that they consider to be their residence (Bill C-1, 2000).

Temporary residential quarters are further defined as:

“A shelter, hostel or similar institution that provides food, lodging or other social services to a person who has no dwelling place is that person’s place of ordinary residence (Bill C-1, 2000)”.

This definition allowed for homeless citizens to use a shelter, drop-in centre or other institutions serving the homeless as their place of residence when registering to vote. As a federal piece of legislation, this Act refers to federal election processes; however, similar processes that outline how homeless individuals can vote are found across jurisdictions in Canada. The varying processes will be outlined shortly. Although complexity is inherent in the operation of Canadian elections, the procedures are not static, with numerous changes in legislation. The Fair Elections Act, for example, made amendments to the Canada Elections Act, and made it more difficult for homeless individuals to vote.

The Fair Elections Act

The Fair Elections Act or Bill C-23 (2014; Canada Elections Act, 2016) includes amendments to the Canada Elections Act, and was enacted by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government. This followed Bill C-31, and required all electors to provide one piece of government-issued photo identification with their name, as well as two pieces of identification showing their name and address (Marland, 2011). One important amendment of the Fair Elections Act included the elimination of having someone vouch for the identity of an elector during a federal election. If a homeless elector does not have a piece of identification,
another elector can no longer vouch for their identity. It amends the original legislation by necessitating that all electors have two pieces of identification. After this amendment received immense criticism from numerous agencies, opposing political parties, and prominent individuals, the Conservative party added a component known as the “attestation of address”. An elector must show either one piece of identification issued by a Canadian government or two pieces of identification that establishes their name and address. If there is no proof of residence, then the elector may provide two pieces of identification and be accompanied by someone that can attest to their address by taking an oath, or have a prescribed confirmation of their residence from a confirmed institution adhering to the definition of temporary residence as outlined in the original legislation. This legislation, therefore, allows for homeless electors to vote without proof of residence, though identification is required (C-23, 2014; Wingrove & Hannay, 2014).

Although the purpose of these amendments was to decrease the threat of fraud, for homeless electors with no identification it eliminated the possibility of having someone else, such as a service provider, vouch for their identity. Initiatives such as ID banks (such Street Health in Toronto) exist to assist individuals with applying for and holding identification, however, the requirement for government identification is still a major impediment to participation, particularly for citizens living on the street.

**Ontario Election Act and the Municipal Elections Act**

Provincially, in Ontario (Election Act, R.S.O. 1990 c.E.6), and according to the *Municipal Elections Act* (1996), rules are in place to determine the residence of individuals that do not have a permanent lodging place. To determine the residence of such individuals the following rules are applied:

1. “The place to which the person most frequently returned to sleep or eat during the
five weeks preceding the determination is his or her residence.

2. If the person returns with equal frequency to one place to sleep and to another to eat, the place to which he or she returns to sleep is his or her residence.

3. Multiple returns to the same place during a single day, whether to eat or sleep, shall be considered one return” (Election Act, R.S.O. 1990 c.E.6; Municipal Election’s Act, S.O. 1996, c. 32).

Municipally, city council has the jurisdiction to pass by-laws under their jurisdiction that deal with the administration of elections. Therefore, although there are laws in place to ensure that there is some unification of policies, particularly pertaining to the definition of residence, procedurally there may be several differences between cities within one province, and between different provinces. Each jurisdiction has a process of voting for electors that do not have a permanent address, but it is not uniform across the varying levels of government in Canada.

Existing Processes of Voting for those Without a Permanent Address

The administration of elections is under the responsibility of different agencies in Canada depending on whether it is a federal, provincial or municipal election. At the federal level elections are the responsibility of Elections Canada, while Elections Ontario plays this role at the provincial level in this particular case study. For municipalities, elections are conducted under the auspices of the local City Clerk’s Office. As Toronto is the specific case study of this research project, the municipal agency under examination is the Toronto City Clerk’s Office. As a result of the division of authority over elections, the rules and processes for voting by homeless persons varies from election to election. The differences across jurisdictions adds an element of complexity that was expressed by service providers as a barrier to voting – with varying processes there was often confusion regarding what information to provide to the homeless.
While there is variation in processes (particularly around the need for identification), each level of government allows the elector to use the address of a shelter or drop-in centre when registering to vote.

Canada

According to the Elections Canada, during a federal election a homeless person can show any identification with their name and can use a shelter or drop-in centre as an address. The individual must coordinate with the shelter or program to receive a letter from them confirming their residence. Also, without an ID proving an address, they can take an oath, show any two pieces of identification with their name and have another elector or individual attest to their address (Elections Canada). In order to serve as a place of residence for homeless electors, the shelters and drop-in centres must provide their name and address before an election to authorize them as places of residence. Elections Canada provides institutions with documents that they must sign before being able to provide letters of attestation. As was discussed above, this was a replacement of vouching for the identity of an elector, which was allowed under the original Canada Elections Act in 2000.

Ontario

In the province of Ontario, Elections Ontario sends out letters to shelters and drop-in centres in the province. The shelters are provided with an Authorization for Administrators form. Once the shelters complete the form (with their address and signatures of administrators), they qualify as a place of residence for the individual, similar to the federal process. They are also provided with copies of a “Certificate of Identity and Residence” which can act as identification and proof of address for the homeless electors, eliminating the requirement for government identification to vote in provincial elections (Elections Ontario).
Municipally, in the city of Toronto, individuals can come to a polling station with identification and declare that they do not have a permanent address. If they declare themselves homeless, they can vote under the address of a shelter or drop-in centre they provide. If registered beforehand, however, the declaration is not needed. Drop-in centres and shelters receive Voter’s List Amendment Applications, which allow the individual to register to vote in advance. This application does not require a piece of identification if an elector does not have a permanent address and allows the voter to register under the address of a shelter or drop-in centre. As such, if an individual without identification registers to vote before arriving at the polling station, this Amendment Application will place their name on the Voter’s list with the signature of the elector and revising officer with the assistance of the shelter or institution accessed. If a voter is on the voter’s list but does not have identification they can complete a Declaration of Identity at the polling station. A voter without identification and not on the voters’ list can also be added to the voters’ list at the voting place if they do not have a permanent residence.

Conclusion

Federally identification is required, provincially the Certificate of Identity and Residence Form acts as both identification and proof of address, and municipally there are procedures that do not require identification. Registering to vote entails additional effort, with pre-registration not a common practice among the population (which will be further discussed in Chapter 4).

The logistics of voting is clearly more complicated for the homeless population than it is for most citizens. For the non-homeless, at the federal level a permanent voters list is maintained based on income tax returns. As Black (2005) illustrates in his discussion on enumeration and
registration, the poor have historically faced greater difficulties to register to vote than other Canadians. Without shelter, the homeless may face additional barriers in not only registering to vote but also voting on Election Day. At the provincial and municipal level Canadian citizens are routinely sent their voter information (polling station, etc.) and are not required to “register to vote”. The processes also vary according to jurisdiction, specifically for the homeless, requiring that they be provided with preliminary information regarding the procedures to vote. Given the more complex process for the homeless, greater assistance may be required to ensure that those that do have an interest to vote are, in fact, able to do so.

Political participation and engagement is strongly impacted by the complexity of the voting process. In Canada citizens are able to register on the same day as they vote, removing a hindrance that may influence whether or not the homeless in other countries, such as the US, vote. The processes in Canada, however, are still complex and may inhibit participation. As Steed notes “…procedures govern the ease with which the citizen can exercise his [/her] entitlement to vote” (Steed, eds. Parry, 1972). Like many other forms of political activity, costs associated with participating are calculated beforehand. Therefore, “the easier it is for a person to cast a ballot, the more likely he [or she] is to vote”(Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980, p. 8).

Although there is a cost associated with voting for all citizens, including learning about the parties and deciding how to vote, the cost is greater for homeless individuals not only in accessing such information but also in getting to the polls and voting on Election Day. Having to declare themselves homeless, or depend on institutions to act on their behalf, adds an additional impediment to voting.

There is also little information regarding how the homeless receive the information regarding these processes of voting. As a multifaceted and unique process, the homeless that do
want to vote require the information on how they can participate in elections. In the US the varying registration laws act as impediments to voting, with many disadvantaged populations unaware of the procedures and regulations (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Carpini & Keeter, 1996). This can also be true of the homeless in Canada, where although they can vote, they are not aware of how to or what they require in order to do so.

Although many nations have ensured that the right to vote is expanded to the homeless, it is not known if existing initiatives are specifically tailored to this population to incite their participation. There has been little investigation of how these processes impact the voting tendencies of the homeless, or if they are valuable to the population. The extent to which the population votes is unknown, and to begin to unravel this query, investigating the impediments and opportunities that may exist is an effective preliminary effort. To begin the analysis, the voting behaviour of the homeless participants in this study will be presented, exhibiting that there are homeless individuals that have voted in their lifetime and some that continue to do so even when experiencing homelessness.
Chapter 4

Results & Analysis
Introduction

This chapter is thematically organized based on four major findings of this research study. Following the coding procedure, I found that my sample of homeless participants had previously voted and was interested in politics. I also found that there is a lack of knowledge of electoral processes, that institutional initiatives and service providers have an important role to play in encouraging the population to vote, and that the population has received little attention from politicians and election agencies.

Based on these findings this chapter is divided as follows:

• 4.1: Voting Behaviour of Homeless Participants
• 4.2: Political Interest and Accessibility of Information
• 4.3: Knowledge on the Process of Voting for those Without a Permanent Address
• 4.4: Institutional Initiatives and Role of Service Providers
• 4.5: A Disjunction: Politicians and Election Agencies
4.1 Voting Behaviour of Homeless Participants
Although the literature would assume that the homeless do not have an interest in politics or voting, the sample of homeless participants exhibits that there are homeless individuals that are knowledgeable on politics and vote. A majority of homeless participants (22 out of 28 participant; 79%) voted in the past and exactly half (50%) in the last federal election. A majority of the participants that voted in their lifetime however did so when housed and one quarter (7 out of 28 participants) voted when not housed, using the process of voting for citizens without a permanent address. This speaks to the possible barriers to voting as a citizen without a permanent residence. Furthermore, a majority of participants who did not vote (80%) were also not aware that they were able to do so without a permanent address. Participants adamantly identified the importance of voting and expressed the desire to vote. Participants were also strongly supportive of having homeless people more engaged in politics.

Voting

A majority of street-involved participants did vote in their lifetime, although only a quarter voted when they were not housed. Nearly half of the respondents voted during times of being housed or before becoming homeless. A resounding majority of those that voted when housed, however, were still in a precarious state of poverty, placing them in the fourth category of the definition used in this study – at risk of homelessness (Gaetz et al, 2013).

Participants were asked if they voted in the last federal election (October 2015), and exactly half (14/28) self reported that they voted in that election. This was an interesting finding, exhibiting that half of the participants were politically engaged and participated in that election. According to Elections Canada, the overall voter turnout of that election was 68.3%, a dramatic increase from previous years (Elections Canada). Nearly a third of the homeless participants that voted in the last election (4 out of 14; 29%) did so using the process of voting for citizens
without a permanent address. No precise data on the other levels of elections that the participants voted in was gathered. Although participants were asked if they voted in other elections, they often could not recall which elections they voted in the past, or simply argued they “always voted” but did not know if they voted in every level of election.

As Figure 3 illustrates only 18% of the homeless participants had never voted, with almost half of those that have not voted only recently being eligible to vote (due to their age). 78% of participants had voted previously, although only a quarter voted when they were not housed. A large number (46%) of respondents, therefore, voted when housed. Virtually all of those that voted when housed, however, were in precarious states of poverty, sporadic periods of stability and at risk of homelessness at the time. According to the definition of homelessness used in this study, a majority of the participants would, therefore, be placed in the fourth category of homelessness: at risk of homelessness, when they voted. One participant was in prison at the time of voting and another in the hospital, both of which have been placed under “different circumstance” in Figure 3 below. The fact that only a small number of participants have never voted, illustrates the overall interest of politics and elections. With a majority having voted when housed, however, possible barriers to voting as a citizen without a permanent address are exhibited. This illustrates that a loss of stable housing makes continuing to be politically engaged difficult.

Although there were many street-involved individuals who did not vote, a majority of respondents viewed voting and participating in elections as vital to the homeless population. The importance of elections was often expressed, with homeless participants identifying voting as an opportunity to share their opinion, influence change, participate in democracy, hold politicians accountable, contribute to society, and fulfill a duty. Respondents believed that since the
population is immensely affected by budget cuts and changes in services, voting is particularly vital to the homeless; “if you don’t vote, be quiet” as one respondent emphasized. When asked if those in the population should vote, almost all respondents replied with a resounding “yes” or “of course”. When asked to elaborate many referred to voting as imperative to having a voice: “better to vote and say something then not say anything”, “if you don’t involve yourself you have no right to have opinions”, “they should vote if they want to count”.

Table 3: Raw Data for the Number of Homeless Participants that Voted in the Past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Not Housed</th>
<th>When Housed</th>
<th>Different Circumstance</th>
<th>Have Never Voted</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Percentage of Homeless Participants who have Voted in their Lifetime.

Precarious situations, however, did act as a barrier to actual voting. Homelessness requires several survival skills, with a complex array of behaviours needed to survive (Rokach, 2004). Survival and the reality of life on the streets did act as an impediment to voting, with
almost all respondents arguing that the need to survive influences how the homeless population participates in politics. Some participants recognized voting as low on the priority list when living on the streets and in shelters. The struggles of the cycle of poverty were often expressed, “it’s like being stuck in quicksand…. I want to get out of here”. When in a state of physical need, the homeless focus on survival, preoccupying their interest and time from political participation (Milbrath, 1965). Although this was a significant barrier, it did not have the assumed effect of automatically keeping electors from participating. Service providers and policymakers identified life on the street as a significant barrier for the homeless. Homeless people also recognized this barrier but tended to express it in relation to other homeless people rather than themselves. Although this did inhibit some participants from voting, it did not inhibit their interest or knowledge in politics.

Conclusion

Participants identified voting as an important act that homeless individuals should practice. A majority of participants had voted in the past, exhibiting the political interest participants had, even if it was prior to their homelessness. Respondents not only expressed the importance of voting, but also shared political opinions and the knowledge of several political issues. This political interest and knowledge of homeless participants will now be discussed.
4.2: Political Interest and Accessibility of Information
Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) create a resource model that expands the SES model. They examine various forms of political participation and find that political interest drives voting, more so than any resource. The political interest and knowledge of the homeless was an important finding in this study, contradicting common stereotypes of the population. Many respondents recognized the stigma of being homeless and argued that this kept them from being considered in politics. Social exclusion literature discusses the exclusion from various systems in society, including the political system (Gaetz, 2004); however there is no empirical evidence of this specific exclusion offered by scholars or its impacts on homeless individuals and their political interest. Participants believed that their societal marginalization fuelled stereotypes of their disengagement from, and lack of knowledge regarding, politics. Although the literature on political participation assumes that the homeless lack interest in politics due to their low socio-economic status (Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972; Pateman; 1974; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Carpini & Keeter, 1996), a majority of participants (20 out of 28 participants; 71%) identified the significance of voting. Furthermore, a majority of participants also expressed general knowledge on the parties running in Canada, previous candidates in multiple elections, and campaign platforms. While the homeless may be excluded from society and political institutions, the findings suggest that this is not necessarily reflected in their knowledge or interest in politics and elections.

Fighting Existing Stereotypes

As was discussed in the literature review, the homeless population is often alienated, excluded from, and stigmatized by, the rest of society. This marginalization, coupled with numerous other disadvantages, limits the population’s abilities and opportunities to participate fully in society. Social marginalization, coupled with feelings of inadequacy, excludes the
homeless and leads them to experience loneliness more so than the general population (Rokach, 2004). Additionally, marginalization and social exclusion from public space result in the alienation of the homeless (Gaetz, 2004; Peressini, 2007). As Taylor (2013) discusses, homelessness is not only place-based marginalization but extends to social norms and attitudes. Although the social exclusion of the homeless leads to stereotypes of their disinterest and inability to participate fully in society, little is actually known about the knowledge and interest the homeless possess with regards to politics. As my sample of homeless participants exhibited, while the homeless may be excluded from society and political institutions, this is not necessarily reflected in their knowledge or interest in politics and elections. Societal misconceptions that lead to exclusion generate the assumption that the homeless do not know enough about politics to participate, or that they in fact are not interested in politics. My findings, however, run contrary to such stereotypes.

Despite the knowledge they possessed, homeless participants often referred to the stereotypes and stigma surrounding their identity that often silenced their opinions. Many respondents were surprised by my research topic, particularly since they believed society disregards them due to the negative perceptions associated with homelessness. Participants were eager to discuss politics and argued that they rarely were asked to discuss issues they valued. As one street-involved participant stated, “we are smarter than people think” when referring to their knowledge of politics. Following an interview another respondent expressed how encouraged they were just by the interview claiming, “Normally people just talk at us”. Another respondent argued, “…Not all homeless people are a waste”. These quotes signify the marginalization that the participants experience, and were often discussed in conjunction with their genuine interest and knowledge of politics, which run contrary to societal beliefs.
The perceptions of the general population would present the homeless as a disillusioned population that does not find value in participating in politics. Although this was the case in some of the individual interviews, overall almost all participants had argued for the need to involve homeless people in voting and elections. Participating in politics through voting, however, was seen as a way to fight societal stereotypes. Service providers argued for increasing the engagement of their street involved clients as well, advocating for their participation in society to bring about a change in not only societal misconceptions, but also to increase the quality of life of homeless individuals. A service provider expressed their belief in the political engagement of the population, “it is not beyond them… voting gives a sense of ownership”. Another service provider captured the value of the participation of the population when asked if it is important that the homeless vote, “Absolutely because people in political power have the ability to change things for people in poverty”. One homeless respondent argued that the homeless should be voting even more than the general population, because their voices need to be heard. Participants repeatedly discussed poverty and its associated stigma. The need for a stronger voice of the poor was deemed necessary to improve governance and public policies.

Homeless respondents associated voting with the power to influence policy and change. Although there were respondents that argued that their votes do not matter, which will be outlined shortly, all homeless participants believed that the population should, as a whole, vote to influence policies that impact the population directly. This contradicts common stereotypes regarding the homeless - there is an interest to participate.

**Interest in Politics**

Against conventional wisdom and some of the proponents of the SES model (Schlozman & Verba, 1979), participants did possess a genuine interest in politics. As scholars have noted,
the model does not provide a clear mechanism that links social status to activity (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). The SES model predicts that those of lower SES lack interest in politics and activity due to their non-democratic attitudes (Pateman, 1974). The interest in elections varied, however a majority of participants expressed political thoughts and opinions. The outdated SES model would have scholars predicting that the homeless would not be inclined to participate and that they in turn lack the necessary resources to do so. On the contrary, respondents expressed genuine interest in politics and public policy issues that impacted the population. Access to resources, particularly information, did inhibit participation however, which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Turcotte (2015) found that interest in politics has a strong impact on voting; “for people who were very interested in politics, the probability of having voted was 30 percentage points higher than for people who were not very interested or not at all interested” (pg. 15). Having an interest in politics is therefore an indicator of voting. Establishing that there are homeless individuals with interest in voting, can therefore establish the importance of alleviating any barriers that may exist to their participation.

An interest in politics, and a desire to participate in society, was pronounced among homeless participants. Nearly all participants had a basic understanding of Canadian politics, although the knowledge of specificities varied among them. A majority of participants identified the current Prime Minister and his political party. Several participants also identified the provincial party and premier as well as the Toronto mayor. The interest in politics was evident with a majority (75%) of participants not only expressing their knowledge but also their opinions regarding various policies, platforms and party politics.
Very few respondents could identify their local Member of Provincial Parliament or City Councillor, however, all respondents were aware of the federal election that occurred in October 2015. The younger respondents seemed profoundly aware of the Liberal campaign promises of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and several made strong political statements of support and opposition to one or more of the political parties running in that election. Furthermore, respondents expressed their opinions on international matters, arguing that the country needed to stay out of international wars. Numerous participants expressed support for the refugees coming into the country although they suggested that their place on the housing list was influenced by the entry of refugees. One participant even discussed international human rights, playing numerous videos of Amnesty International Secretary General, Salil Shetty.

The most recent federal and municipal elections were of particular interest to participants. Many respondents also discussed the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne. Partisanship was evident among the homeless sample, a majority of respondents associated with more left wing parties – the Liberal Party and the New Democrat Party. A majority of participants supported the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, hoping that his policies would improve their quality of life, although some participants did express support for Stephen Harper as well. Participants understood less about local government, and it was often assumed that federal politics would influence local communities directly. Service providers argued that municipal elections generate a little more discussion because they are associated with more immediate concerns, although this is not always the case. Individuals often believe that federal elections would lead to immediate change at the municipal level. One service provider related this to the lack of knowledge and education around the various levels of government and their responsibilities not just among the homeless, but the general population as a whole. The lack of civic education of all citizens in
Canada was identified as a barrier to understanding the Canadian parliamentary system, inhibiting the interest that may indeed exist.

Although service providers could not speak to the voting tendencies of their clients, many argued that homeless individuals were indeed interested in political issues simply due to the nature of their situation. Knowledge of politics, therefore, extended to issue-based politics. Homeless participants felt strongly about the issues that influenced them directly. Homeless individuals, for example, expressed awareness of inherently political issues such as housing and social welfare. Several individuals discussed the lack of housing, being placed on a long list for housing, gentrification of downtown Toronto that has pushed them to the periphery, lack of drug treatment facilities, and a lack of initiatives to eliminate poverty. Although it was recognized that the homeless might not always practice their political agency, their knowledge on such issues could not be denied. Service providers recalled hearing clients debate politics and candidates among themselves during election time.

Disenfranchisement and a Lack of Trust in Politics

Marginalization and the stigma associated with homelessness did influence the willingness some participants possessed to vote. Participants expressed critical sentiments towards the government and questioned the intentions of politicians. Political knowledge and interest, therefore, did not always translate to favourable views of the government. As Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd and Scallion (2010) found in their investigation of youth apathy and low voter turnout, high distrust and alienation have negative impacts on the intent to vote. Political alienation is illustrated through interviews with the street-involved participants; some respondents expressed a lack of trust and intense pessimism towards the government and politics.
These feelings were often exacerbated due to what many participants believed was a lack of attention from politicians during elections.

Dissimilarity, dissatisfaction and disillusionment were evident in interviews with homeless individuals, expressing the components of political alienation discussed by Olsen (1969). These elements were obvious in the participant’s views on politics, which included: complicated, confusing, inequality, a “hot mess”, full of liars, corruption, everything is about money, no one cares about the homeless, manipulation, falseness, and politicians not being relatable. Many participants argued that the homeless are often disregarded by politicians and that they have no power in policymaking, leading to their alienation from politics.

I found a high level of apathy among some of the homeless respondents, with one participant stating that their vote is simply “another drop in the bucket”. Disengagement from politics was associated with elitist views of politics. One homeless respondent expressed such opinions, “the 1% owns everything and everyone else is just there to pick up their scraps”. Another participant viewed voting as vital to the democratic process, although also admitted, “we are just voting in the next director of chaos”. Participants often argued that politicians are rarely held accountable to their promises and faults; big government and the establishment were often regarded as criminal and discriminatory. Such sentiments were often expressed in reference to participant’s individual voting tendencies, but not conveyed when asked if the population as a whole should vote. Regardless of their personal feelings towards politics and the government, participants argued that the homeless should be voting.

The alienation of the homeless from society was often perceived as a contributing factor to a lack of engagement in politics, making a better connection with the government essential to their inclusion. A rapport between the government and the homeless was therefore identified as
necessary to encourage participation. Homeless participants identified a disjunction between the population and the government. Respondents believed that many politicians ignore issues that impact the population and that policies are rarely communicated to the homeless. Issue specific information was viewed as vital to the population – an important predictor of their choice of candidate. This information is often hidden in general elections by issues that effect the greater population. Policies pertinent to the homeless, therefore, need to be communicated to the population in order to aid engagement and participation.

This relationship will be further discussed below, however the disjunction between policymakers and the most vulnerable, was identified as a major impediment to their engagement. Both homeless participants and service providers felt strongly that politicians should make direct contact with shelters and provide easy to read information, or make themselves physically available to discuss these issues. Politicians need to make more of an effort to be involved in the community in order to create a necessary relationship that can benefit the population and the government.

Accessibility of Information

Although there was a genuine interest to participate or to encourage the homeless to engage in politics, accessibility of information regarding campaigns, vital political issues and general information regarding elections, was identified as an impediment to voting. Their stigmatization and political alienation was intensified due to their lack of access to information regarding elections. Such information, it was often argued, would encourage the homeless to participate. Participants cited social media, television, the news (online, paper and on television), discussions with others, and institutions they accessed, as sources of information. Those with particular political interest followed politics through social media and news stations. Participants
often argued that more resources on the candidates and their campaigns were required in order to ensure homeless individuals can make an informed decision at the polls. This was identified as necessary not only to engage the homeless population but also the general public.

The homeless participants as well as service providers further acknowledged accessibility of information as a major barrier. Impediments included access to information regarding elections at shelters and drop-in centres as well as access to media outlets, “…Increased media use increases political participation” (Filla & Johnson, p. 681, 2010). As such, having more access to media, can lead to an increase in the political participation of the homeless. The limitations to media were expressed, with Internet and television access not always available. The content of the news and the concerns that are addressed in the media were also classified as factors influencing voting tendencies. As was emphasized above, many street-involved participants expressed a lack of information regarding the candidates and the issues that influence them more directly. Participants often conveyed their demand for more information on the issues important to the homeless during elections. Access to information, the participants argued, is vital to their participation – without it the population is once more alienated from society.

After all “…democracy without information can be exclusionary in effect”, and this exclusion was evident in relation to the street-involved participants with the inequality in the access to information (Krishna, p. 439, 2006). Krishna (2006) further found that higher access to information is associated with greater participation. Whether there is a relationship between access to information and participation cannot be directly extrapolated form this study, although a correlation can be identified through the discussions with the participants that identified access to information as a significant barrier.
Participants offered numerous solutions to solve the inaccessibility of election and political information. One respondent believed that MPP’s should send letters to shelters with information regarding issues that specifically impact the homeless and how their platforms address them. A stronger rapport was also deemed necessary between politicians and the homeless to allow for the transfer of information; this relationship will be specifically discussed in the last section of this chapter. Homeless respondents also repeatedly accentuated that information had to be more accessible to the population. Examples of solutions to the inaccessibility that the participants offered included: an easy to read package with information about the different campaigns, candidates, and how to vote, and having information displayed on billboards where the homeless congregate.

Carpini and Keeter (1996) discuss the important association between the access of information and political participation. In order to encourage the political participation of all, citizen knowledge needs to be distributed equally among citizens. They identify knowledge as an important political resource and facilitator of political activity. It is known that knowledge is more easily obtained by the most advantaged in society, creating this inequality of accessibility. Knowledge is usually related to being more formally educated and affluent, due to the increasing opportunities available, motivation and ability to learn about politics. Inequities in knowledge between socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and others can be associated with the structural resources that limit certain groups including the poor, which leads to such groups being less informed. It is vital to increase efforts to motivate and expand the political ability of such groups because they are likely to produce the greatest gains. The government can also then be forced to increase efforts to improve the civil knowledge of the least informed in society (Carpini & Keeter, 1996).
Conclusion

Participants expressed a genuine interest in politics and were knowledgeable on numerous political issues. Although participants recognized the stigma of homelessness, they often felt that this led to their lack of consideration in politics. The interest they expressed ran contrary to societal misconceptions of the population. Respondents possessed extensive knowledge on various political issues and expressed politicized opinions. Participants that voiced negative views of the government cited their stigmatization as a major contributor to their apathetic tendencies and still articulated their knowledge of politics.

Participants often argued that the homeless would be more inclined to participate and interested in politics if information regarding elections was accessible and geared towards issues that impact them specifically. This absence of information regarding elections further extended to a lack of access to information regarding the systematic processes of voting. Participants were often unaware of how to vote without a permanent address. When asked if they do vote many respondents answered that they are unable to do so due to their lack of an address. This brings the analysis to the finding that the lack of knowledge regarding the process of voting itself is a major impediment to voting – an addition to the lack of information regarding politics in general.
4.3: Knowledge on the Process of Voting for those Without a Permanent Address
As the preceding chapter on the voting process elucidated (Chapter 3), service providers and institutions accessed by the homeless play a vital role in ensuring the homeless can vote. The process of voting for the homeless varies from that of the general public, differs depending on the level of election, and requires specific documentation. Not all of the homeless participants, however, were aware that such processes exist. Participants that were aware of the process discussed the complexities of unique jurisdictional processes, the documentation needed and the processes overall.

Coupled with the lack of access to information regarding politics in general, the lack of knowledge regarding the process was noted as a major impediment to participation. Half of the participants who knew about the process accessed the same institution that has been historically involved in elections; the data suggests that knowing about the process can impact the likelihood of voting. This suggests that information on elections is contingent on the institution that the homeless access, which serves as a major contribution to the literature on political participation. Access to information is often regarded as a factor to voting, however, there is little research conducted on the process of voting for the homeless and whether or not the population is aware of the process. This finding also has practical implications, if the homeless are not aware of the processes, policies and initiatives can be put in place to encourage their participation.

Although homeless participants expressed a genuine interest in politics and were knowledgeable on Canadian politics, few knew how to vote as citizens without a permanent address (39%). Service providers and the homeless participants that were aware of the process often discussed its complexity, jurisdictional differences, and procedural limitations.

Knowledge on the Process of Voting for Electors without a Permanent Address
Although participants expressed knowledge and interest in Canadian politics, this knowledge often did not include the actual voting process. In Canada, as was discussed in Chapter 3, voting as a citizen without a permanent address entails a specific process. Many participants did not know they could vote, and service providers often discussed the complexity of the process of voting for homeless individuals. The lack of access to information, particularly information regarding how to vote, was found to be a major barrier to the homeless participants’ ability to vote. A majority of street-involved respondents knew nothing or very little about how they could vote without a permanent address.

As can be seen from the pie chart below, nearly 50% of the street-involved respondents did not know about the process of voting without a permanent address. Many were unaware that there was a process in place for those without an address and in the case of Ontario and Toronto, without identification. Two participants were aware of the existence of a process but did not know the particular aspects involved. Several respondents argued that this process should be more known and that this information needs to be more accessible. Around 80% of the respondents that did not vote also did not know about the process of voting for homeless individuals, exhibiting the possibility that knowing about the process may increase the likelihood to participate.

It must be noted that 50% of those that did know the process were from the last institution I accessed, which was the most active during elections and has been a polling station during past municipal elections. These participants spoke highly of the information provided, the assistance they received in registering to vote, and the overall political activism of the drop-in centre. The initiatives at the ground level within the shelters and drop-in centres therefore, did have an impact on the knowledge of the process and subsequent opportunities to vote. In some
drop-in centres and shelters, service providers actively encouraged homeless individuals to vote, viewing it as a part of their job to assist their clients and educate them about their political rights. Many service providers considered themselves and others in their field partially responsible for disseminating information and encouraging their participation. The information and engagement of the various centres was in part dependent on their culture (whether or not they are prominently involved in advocacy issues) as well as their available resources, which was not uniform across the seven centres investigated. The services that were accessed therefore, influenced the homeless participants’ knowledge on elections. The role of institutions and service providers is further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Table 2: Raw Data for Homeless Participants that Knew About the Process for Citizens without a Permanent Address

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knew about the process</th>
<th>Did not know about the process</th>
<th>Knew a little about the process</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Knowledge on the Voting Process for Citizens without a Permanent Address
Thoughts on the Process

Although there were questions and concerns about the process, participants were eager to hear about how the homeless can vote. This was mainly due to the fact that a majority of participants were not aware that such procedures existed. The inconsistencies of the process based on jurisdiction, however, was identified as difficult to understand by the service providers and homeless respondents. The first service provider interviewed, a lawyer from a legal clinic, illustrated the complexity of the process when describing their attempt to encourage homeless clients to vote in the previous federal election (October 2015). This participant had attempted to learn about the process of voting for those without a permanent address but had difficulty finding information online. Furthermore, when this respondent inquired deeper and contacted polling stations in the area, they were told that there were no shelters in the area (although there were many in the neighbourhood). This participant felt that if the information was nearly impossible to find for a lawyer, it is obviously not presented in a way that is accessible to the homeless population.

The differences between jurisdictions were also identified as a major impediment to voting, with very few individuals aware of the differences and the details of the processes. Difficulty of voting is an element of Harder and Krosnick’s (2008) likelihood of voting – as the process of voting becomes more difficult and complex the likelihood of voting decreases. Difficulty includes conditions of the mind, registration procedures, physical closeness of the polling station, and availability of information. Numerous participants discussed the process of voting for those without a permanent address as a significant barrier, entailing a greater individual effort. This was mainly due to the requirement of service provider signatures,
jurisdictional differences and the documentation that is required (which has to be provided by an institution and is not accessible to the individuals themselves without assistance).

Each level of government allows voters to use shelters and drop-in centres as places of residence. Procuring the information needed to vote from the shelters and inquiring about the process to register requires individual effort at each level, or a significant effort by service providers to disseminate the information. Jurisdictional differences further complicate the process, particularly with the need for identification. With identification necessary to vote federally there is an obvious additional impediment for the homeless population. Indeed, ID Banks and various other services that assist the population in securing forms of identification do exist, with many service providers insisting that these services have been on the rise. Although such initiatives exist, many participants still identified not having the proper identification as a barrier to voting.

Furthermore, homeless participants did not know that they did not require identification for provincial elections. As the context chapter described, in Ontario, the Certificate of Identity and Residence (Appendix I), which is provided to institutions serving the homeless, acts as both proof of address and identification. Moreover, none of the homeless participants outside of the last institution were aware that they did not require identification to vote in municipal elections as well. Service providers repeatedly mentioned their frustration with jurisdictional differences – it was confusing and often led to disenfranchisement – when clients learned about the complexity of the process it often deterred them from voting. The complexity of the process was also identified as a deterrent for service providers, adding a certain level of difficulty to disseminating the information.
The documents used by the varying jurisdictions confirming the residence of homeless electors (particularly at the municipal and federal levels) were also thought to be incredibly intrusive, forcing the homeless to identify as such, and as one service provider described “become a piece of paper”. Service providers viewed the language of the documents as paternalistic and condescending. Documents were not written for the elector but more for the service provider, particularly at the federal level (all necessary documentation can be found in Appendix H-J). Service providers further mentioned the note at the bottom of the federal form as confusing and accusatory due to the language of an elector committing an offence. In addition, the terminology used in all documents such as “food bank” was deemed out of date.

Overall, the process was identified as a system that discourages the participation of homeless electors, seemingly inclusive to ensure that the homeless can legally vote but practically difficult for them to do so. Simplifying the process was repeatedly discussed. Information that is provided regarding elections and the process needs to be tailored to the population. With numerous homeless individuals being unaware of the process of voting for those without a permanent address, this information needs to be more accessible to the population. The general population should also be aware of the process. One participant felt strongly about this, arguing that if it was general knowledge then when an individual is in a situation that renders them homeless, they do not have to search for this information and fear embarrassment by having to inquire about how to vote. As the aforementioned section of this chapter regarding interest and knowledge of politics highlighted, there is a strong correlation between access to information and political participation. Access to information regarding the process itself is a minimum level of knowledge necessary to participate – without it the homeless
cannot vote even if they have the interest or desire to do so.

Conclusion

A majority of participants were not aware of the processes of voting for citizens without a permanent residence. Those that were aware of the process mainly accessed the same politically active drop-in centre. A majority of those that did not vote (80%) were not aware of the process, speaking to the barrier and possible impact on the likelihood of voting. Furthermore, participants that were aware of the process, and service providers in particular, spoke of the complexity of the process and the need for not only greater accessibility of information but also tailoring the process for homeless voters specifically.

The process of voting for homeless electors in Canada acts as a systemic barrier to voting, particularly because the process of voting as a citizen without a permanent residence requires the assistance from a third party. Voting without a permanent residence is complicated on its own, and requires significant individual effort and the assistance of numerous other actors. Moreover, without the information on how to vote, homeless electors face a significant impediment to participating in democratic processes. With the knowledge that service providers are vital to the process of voting for homeless citizens, this preliminary investigation allowed for an examination of the role that institutions and service providers play in encouraging the political participation of the homeless, which will now be specifically presented.
4.4: Institutional Initiatives and the Role of Service Providers
As the previous discussion exhibited, institutions play an important role in the voting process and providing homeless voters with the information needed to vote. Although the literature on institutions and political engagement highlights the importance of certain institutions on political participation, the agencies accessed by the homeless have not been subject of investigation. This finding, therefore, is a major contribution to the literature on political engagement and the role of institutions – adding institutions that service the homeless and discussing their vital role in the political participation of the population. While a majority of service providers interviewed did recognize their role in politically engaging the population, many respondents requested more resources from election agencies and governments, along with more partnerships to assist them in doing so.

Institutions and Political Engagement

Due to the role that service providers must play in the process, they are vital actors in not only disseminating information and assisting the homeless to vote, but also in encouraging their participation. The importance of institutions in engaging citizens to vote has been examined in the literature, although institutions accessed by the homeless are absent. Huckfeldt, Plutzer and Sprague (1993) discuss the importance of social interaction in transmitting political information in relation to churches, neighbourhoods and workplace associations. As vital physical spaces to the homeless the institutions accessed by the population also have a role to play as spaces of social interaction and influence. Social structures and institutional factors can shape individual choices, which is why the role of service providers and agencies cannot be overlooked when examining the voting behaviour of the homeless. Shelters and institutions that the homeless access can act as political stimuli, and increased exposure to such stimuli does increase the likelihood of participation in politics, as well as the depth of participation (Milbrath, 1965).
Organizations increase the “potency of citizenry vis-a-vis the government” (Verba & Nie, pg.175, 1972). There is a relationship therefore between social and political participation. Even in nonpolitical institutions individuals can be exposed to politically relevant information, which can boost the activity of lower status groups (Verba & Nie, 1972). As the data on the knowledge of the process indicates, institutions serving the homeless can indeed impact the information that the homeless receive regarding elections, as well as their exposure to political activity. Since institutions serving the homeless offer spaces for political discussions, even by simply providing information as the institutions I accessed did, they do act as political spaces (Knoke, 1990). Although they may not directly mobilize the homeless to vote, they can in fact encourage them to do so. Charitable and social service organizations have been examined as having a relatively small impact on producing and practicing civic skills, although such institutions have been found to support other variables of political engagement and political interest (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995).

As the homeless do not access many institutions other than shelters and drop-in centres, the importance of them cannot be overstated. Institutions bring citizens into politics and can mobilize them into actions (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). As such, the service providers were interviewed as not only necessary mediators in the process of voting but also due to their role in creating political spaces that can mobilize the population.

Importance of Institutions Accessed by the Homeless and Service Providers

Service providers need to have a certain level of knowledge on the process of voting in order to assist the homeless with the necessary documentation and encourage them to vote. As the main contact that homeless individuals may have with institutions, shelters and drop-in centres do in fact play a major role in not only providing information to the homeless, but also
their engagement with politics in general. I found that the institutions accessed did play a role in the political engagement of homeless participants, impacting the knowledge they possessed regarding the process of voting and the level of political discussions they were exposed to at the institution. The sample of service providers was from a wide variety of institutions serving the homeless population. The services that these institutions offered varied, as did the information provided during elections. Political activity during elections depended on the institution. Some of the institutions were very politically active, particularly during elections, and others less so. The three agencies that my sample of homeless individuals was taken from included a youth shelter that was active during elections, encouraging clients to vote and asking for an Elections Canada representative to give a presentation; an adult drop-in centre with transitional housing that did not focus much on elections and occasionally posted information on elections; and an adult drop-in centre that is known for its political activism and has historically been a polling station during municipal elections.

The youth shelter, where the first sample of homeless individuals was interviewed had a vote campaign during the last federal election and a representative from Elections Canada came to the institution for an information session on how to vote. The service provider that was interviewed felt strongly about encouraging clients to vote. This participant had made it their mission to educate themselves on the process, particularly during the last federal election. This service provider was engaged in politics and the shelter had initiatives aimed at encouraging the homeless to vote. This shelter also had data on the voting tendencies of their clients, with 14 out of 40 residents of the shelter having voted in the last federal election in October 2015. Before this last federal election a representative from Elections Canada did come to the youth shelter, but only after the service provider reached out to the election agency and asked for more
information. Although the outreach worker did provide some information regarding the voting process, the service provider argued that the representative was rather biased in the information provided, showing obvious support for a particular party. The service providers at the shelter therefore made sure to provide unbiased information regarding the parties and campaigns. The sample of homeless respondents from this institution did include some new arrivals and individuals that were recently homeless. For this reason many of the participants from this institution were unaware of the institution’s efforts, although this was not necessarily representative of all clients accessing the services. One homeless participant had been at the centre during the last federal election and remembered the information being provided as well as service providers taking groups of clients to vote at the nearby polling station.

Service providers at the institution where the second sample of homeless participants were interviewed had provided little information regarding voting during elections. One service provider remembered placing a notice on the information board with information of nearby polling stations in the past. The homeless participants interviewed from this institution did not recall there being much conversation during elections or discussions surrounding how and where to vote. Two participants (out of 14) did remember seeing a notice, but overall there was little knowledge of the process by both homeless individuals and service providers at this institution. The participants from this institution that did vote did so either on their own, or through other shelters/drop-in centres. One participant was not aware that the address of an institution could be used when voting, so they provided an address from a previous residence. Another participant from this institution attempted to vote during the municipal election and was denied due to a lack of identification. Although the municipal process does allow voters without a permanent address
to vote without identification, the polling staff was not aware of the process and turned this participant away.

The last institution I accessed for homeless participants was arguably the most politically active of the three. The service provider interviewed here had discussed the numerous initiatives at the centre, and almost all of the homeless participants echoed similar sentiments. The service provider that was interviewed shared some encounters they had with homeless individuals regarding voting. Discussions included not only the importance of voting but also the option of voting as a form of protest by declining a ballot. The service provider described the disenfranchisement of the population due to the lack of trust in the establishment. Although there were participants that chose not to vote, all of the homeless participants from this institution were aware of the process of voting for those without a permanent address. This could be associated with the fact that this centre had been used as a polling station in municipal elections. With the polling station located within the centre, clients were more educated on the process, the election was well advertised, and it was convenient to vote. Almost all participants also remembered being encouraged to vote during the federal election and having several conversations with workers regarding various campaigns and platforms.

The participants from this institution therefore, made up a majority of those that were aware of the process for homeless individuals to vote. Out of the seven participants from the last institution, five out of seven voted and six out of seven were aware of the process (one participant was not able to answer the question). The drop-in centre made it a point not only to ensure clients were registered, but also that they were aware of the process and could vote if they decided to do so. This institution also encouraged discussions around elections and had events such as all-candidate debates. The first group of individuals from the youth shelter was less
aware although still conscious of the right to vote. The group from the second adult drop-in centre was not as aware of the process of voting, and those that were had heard about the process from other institutions they accessed.

I interviewed service providers from numerous other institutions to assess the initiatives from a broad range of institutions. Although the initiatives varied among the institutions the participants served, all nine of the service providers interviewed believed that it was important for the population to be more involved in politics. All of the service providers in my sample believed that the homeless should be voting and that it was important for them to be encouraged to do so. A major limitation was the complexity of the process as was already mentioned, as well as the lack of resources. Although there was interest in having programs geared towards elections, the lack of staff and resources restricted the ability of many institutions to have such an impact. Service providers often requested more resources in order to be able to offer more information during elections. They expressed the desire to hold discussion groups, workshops or debates regarding politics, but found that they were limited in their capacity to do so. As institutions offering immediate services, they require further funding, resources and assistance from the government to be able to achieve such goals.

Service providers recognized that they play a vital role in encouraging the population to vote and be informed on the process. By being politically active and involved themselves, many participants felt the need to facilitate their clients in accessing the information and voting. Their role in creating spaces for political discussions and having workers dedicated to elections was often highlighted, although the lack of resources was classified as an impeding factor. Various homeless participants, service providers and a politician argued that the political engagement of staff at shelters also influenced the engagement of the population, affecting how and whether or
not they encourage the population themselves.

**The Need for Collaboration**

Although they often expressed the importance of their own role as sources of information and encouragement, service providers cited the requirement for assistance from government officials, election agencies and politicians. It was argued that onus should not be placed on the homeless or agencies alone. A relationship with local politicians was also viewed as vital to encouraging the population to vote. Having a strong relationship with the government and local representatives was recognized as a way to form networks and allow for the easy passage of information.

Participants requested more education not only for the homeless population but for service providers as well. There was a clear demand by service providers to have the information easy to find and understand, and provided to them in a clear package by the government or election agencies. One service provider offered a solution to the current fragmented approach; the city or level of government holding the election can gather all service providers together before an election to relay the information. This would allow for the service providers to ask questions, learn about the process from election agencies and policymakers while also brainstorming how the information can be disseminated to the population.

There was a call to unify the current approach to encouraging the population to vote. In order to create a more uniform system, certain networks would have to be utilized between institutions and the homeless. Building dialogue between institutions can also allow for the communication of barriers between service providers and election agencies to allow for repeated evaluation of current practices for future improvement. More of a unilateral approach can ensure that there is some consistency in the information provided to the population, rather than being
dependent on the institution that the homeless individuals access. The importance of a more unilateral approach with the assistance of multiple actors was a common theme among the service providers, seen as a way to alleviate some of the pressure on service providers and engage the population in politics.

There was an apparent disjunction between election agencies and service providers. Many service providers reported that their organization did not receive any information from election agencies regarding the process. Election agencies, on the other hand, insisted that all drop-in centres and shelters receive information packages during elections to disseminate to the population and to educate workers on the process. Service providers demanded more information from election agencies. Many participants cited the Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN) as a superior and more useful source information than election agencies.

TDIN is a network comprised of over 50 drop-in centres in Toronto. Two representatives of the Toronto Drop-In Network were interviewed, and this Network specifically put together a package that was sent to shelters during the last federal election. TDIN’s advocacy committee, consisting of clients within TDIN, requested that more information be provided regarding elections. For these reasons the Network researched the voting process before the last federal election, and sent information out to the shelters without being directed to do so by the government or any election agency. The Network distributed the information they assembled to all the drop-in centres within the organization and afterwards conducted a survey regarding the information they provided. The main critique identified by the survey was that the information was still quite dense and not necessarily accessible to all within the population. The fact that this Network was cited as the main provider of information and not election agencies or government institutions, speaks highly to the lack of communication between agencies. This disjunction was
often cited by service providers and referred to as a major impediment to their ability to encourage the population to vote. This will be further analyzed in the discussion that follows.

**Conclusion**

This study illustrates the importance of service providers in encouraging and assisting the homeless to vote. The context of voting as a homeless individual in Canada necessitates the use of service providers to vote, and creates political spaces within these institutions. The information provided and level of political encouragement, however, varies across institutions. The information and level of political stimuli are impacted by, and contingent upon, the institutions that are accessed and the service providers within them. This supplements existing literature on political participation – adding actors and factors to political participation that have not been investigated.
4.5: A Disjunction: Politicians and Election Agencies
The final group of participants interviewed included local politicians and election agency representatives. As the process of voting for those without a permanent address is rather complex, the involvement of politicians and election agencies is important to encouraging the population to vote. Politicians ranged from past and current City Council members, to Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament. Election agency representatives (from all three election agencies; Toronto City Clerk’s Office, Elections Ontario, and Elections Canada) were interviewed to learn more about the process of voting for those without a permanent address and of any existing initiatives to encourage the homeless population to vote. The sample of election agency representatives and politicians was chosen based on purposive sampling, and some of the politicians through snowball sampling (interviewees provided contact information of other participants).

Despite the importance of politicians and election agencies in encouraging the homeless to vote and ensuring they have access to necessary resources, this study shows that the homeless require more specific and targeted attention. Although there are processes that allow the homeless to vote, there is little contact between politicians and election agencies with homeless individuals. It cannot be determined if this disjunction alone is causally linked to voting, however almost all of the interviews suggested that this lack of attention does have an impact on voting.

Politicians and election agencies can exacerbate the alienation of the homeless from society during elections when the homeless are not equally considered with other voters in the general population. The lack of relationship or targeting by politicians and election agencies can partially isolate the homeless from the political system (Gaetz, 2004). Political alienation, as scholars have noted, can lead to apathy and distrust and therefore lower political activity (Olsen,
1965; Milbrath, 1965; Aberbach, 1969). The administration and policymakers, by eliminating some of the barriers that the homeless face to voting and encouraging their participation can, in some ways, manage the political alienation of the population. Programming or even contact with politicians and election agencies can run counter to the way society often treats the homeless; placing them at the margins of society.

**Politicians**

A majority (four out of five) of respondents in political positions (or having held a position in the past) did not regard the homeless as electors. Few participants had initiatives to target the population directly. The politicians interviewed ranged in their knowledge of the process and their views of the population’s engagement. Although only a small group of politicians, past and present, were interviewed, there was some variation in the ways that they approached the street-involved population both during election time and throughout their term. Relations ranged from approaching shelters and talking with individuals, to involvement in various services such as ID Banks, canvassing transitional housing, and holding events for and with the population. Only one politician purposefully canvassed shelters during election time, however. Participants believed there was an ethical conflict with reaching the population during elections, which could be misconceived as forcing citizens to vote or ‘buying’ votes. Politicians argued that they could not approach the population directly without being viewed as unethical and bribing votes. A majority of politicians had seldom attempted to encourage the population and therefore had never truly experienced these unethical aspects themselves.

Only one politician that was interviewed had made explicit attempts to encourage the population to vote. This participant had canvassed the shelters themselves, held talks at shelters during election time and prepared polling stations in the area to ensure the identity of homeless
electors was not contested. This politician had run in the federal election and was successful in gaining a seat representing a riding with a dense homeless population in downtown Toronto. Not many other politicians view the homeless population as a vital voting group, which this participant viewed as a problem. If the homeless are not viewed as voters the process is not made easier for them but rather more difficult. This respondent was adamant on breaking the theory that low-income individuals do not vote, arguing that the process has to be made easier, especially since “…we make it easier for the rich to vote”. This participant specifically referred to polling stations being relocated closer to affluent neighbourhoods to ensure voting. Elections Canada and politicians, this respondent argued, do not pay much attention to the population because they believe that there are no votes to be found among them. Efforts are usually directed at those populations that hold the most votes, and the street-involved population is not always given the highest priority. The value of the homeless is therefore calculated using a cost benefit analysis during elections, which is a “…horrible way to do democracy”. This strategy was discussed by all of the politicians, whether to explain why they themselves seldom approach the homeless, or why politicians often ignore the population in general.

Contact with politicians, as aforementioned, does have an impact on vote choice and turnout. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) discuss the importance of having contact with politicians to increasing the likelihood of voting. Huckfeldt, Plutzer and Sprague (1992) also discuss the importance of canvassing. Although not many politicians canvass institutions serving the homeless, canvassing in general is seen as an important encounter between politicians and citizens (Huckfeldt, Plutzer, & Sprague, 1992). As shelters and drop-in centres create a physical space where the homeless congregate, there is a certain ease of “canvassing” the homeless that door-to-door canvassing does not allow. The importance of canvassing to campaigning is often
discussed, with many candidates expressing the need to get to know voters. Retirement homes, restaurants and other community spaces are targeted, however, the institutions serving the homeless are rarely mentioned (Marland, 2011).

As previously emphasized, however, only one politician had purposefully canvassed homeless shelters. This politician approached institutions and held open discussions with clients. Another politician had accidentally stumbled upon transitional housing when canvassing a neighbourhood, unaware that the area had such accommodations before knocking on doors. The discussions that this participant had with these citizens were memorable, although the politician admitted that this situation was purely coincidental. Homeless individuals and service providers could rarely remember seeing a politician at a drop-in centre or shelter. The last institution where homeless participants were accessed did hold all-candidate meetings in the past and had politicians discuss their platforms. For this reason the homeless participants that accessed this drop-in centre could recall coming in contact with politicians in the past. Another homeless participant from the second institution could remember seeing a politician at another drop-in centre and having a discussion with them, but could not recall the name of the institution.

Although it was argued that politicians should be in contact with the homeless to encourage voting during election time, this was often followed by the sentiment that a relationship needs to be built in the long term and throughout the year. Service providers and homeless participants believed that the homeless are not only excluded by the public, but also by the government. For this reason, the feelings of apathy that were discussed in the first half of the analysis were usually a result of feelings associated with being ignored by politicians. Many homeless participants felt that it is the role of a politician to hear the stories of all citizens, particularly those of the less fortunate. Participants argued that politicians should come and serve
soup or sit with homeless individuals and only then can they truly govern on their behalf. This would also remove the barrier of negative thoughts associated with the current hierarchy; bringing politicians to the level of the homeless individuals allows them to feel as if they have an impact on policy and governance decisions.

The knowledge on the process of voting for those without a permanent address was not widely known by politicians, with certain participants aware that there are processes in place but not sure what they specifically entailed. A majority of the politicians interviewed actually asked me what the processes are, and following the formal interview I discussed the processes from my research findings. These interviews were among the hardest to secure and therefore among the last interviews I conducted. As such, my interviews with homeless participants were primarily completed when I met with politicians. Therefore, when the politicians inquired about my research and whether or not the homeless are voting or interested in politics I was able to offer some initial findings. In order to ensure that my findings would not interfere with the interview process I waited to share my results until the end of the interview.

I shared these initial findings only when asked to do so. All politicians except one expressed the view that the homeless were not interested in politics and did not vote. They then sought confirmation of this view from me, asking, “…I don’t think they do, but I guess you would know, do they?”. When I offered some stories from the field of homeless individuals that are knowledgeable and interested in politics, politicians were astonished. One politician’s demeanour completely changed. At first the participant almost laughed at my research project and asked why I would even consider researching homeless voting when they don’t vote and don’t care to. After I shared that my participants were interested in politics, and the complexity of the process, this politician began to search their phone for contacts and became extremely
interested in the changes needed to encourage the population to vote. Although the interview was over I noted this interaction, noticing that after realizing that the homeless might be voters and that the process does have barriers, there was a complete change in attitude. This also exhibited the politicians’ lack of knowledge on not only the process but also the population’s engagement.

Overall, the politicians interviewed were unaware of the process of voting for those without a permanent residence and did not incorporate the homeless into their election strategies. One politician was ashamed that they had never thought of the homeless before my interview with them. Several politicians were very interested in the project and requested to hear my results to be able to incorporate the homeless in upcoming elections.

*Election Agencies*

Election agencies were often identified as vital actors in ensuring the homeless receive information regarding the process of voting and as partners in encouraging participation. Current initiatives rely heavily on service providers as the disseminators of information. As the aforementioned section described, service providers often requested that election agencies cooperate more closely with institutions, and provide clearer information regarding elections. Rather than cite election agencies as the primary sources of information several service providers designated an organization (TDIN) acting on its own accord as more useful in providing election related information.

Representatives from Elections Ontario and the Toronto City Clerk’s Office were interviewed and both agencies were very willing to provide all of the information and documents needed for homeless individuals to vote (see Appendix H to J). Additionally, a representative from Elections Canada was contacted via email and also provided the necessary information at the federal level. All three participants discussed the difficulties of reaching the homeless.
Provincially and municipally the representatives were willing to admit that there were flaws in the process that required further attention and modification.

Elections Canada does have outreach initiatives that specifically target various marginalized populations, including the homeless. According to their website, as well as information provided by a representative, there has been an increase in the number of community relations officers hired, with 40 community relations officers hired in the 2011 election specifically for vulnerable populations in Canada. Two service providers, did mention that an outreach worker came to their institution during an election, although a majority were not aware of outreach workers and had never came in contact with them. One of the service providers that had an outreach worker come to the shelter argued that the representative was biased and that the information provided was not necessarily useful. This participant preferred to take the time to provide the information themselves, and relied heavily on the information from the Toronto Drop-in Network (TDIN), rather than from Elections Canada.

According to Elections Ontario, all the shelters in the province are on a list that is provided by each city to the administrative agency. Each shelter or drop-in centre receives an information package. This outreach kit includes a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer asking for the service provider’s assistance, the authorization form and the Certificate of Identity and Residence. All of the forms and posters regarding voting, nearby polling stations and the process, are sent to all shelters in the province. I discovered that there is an obvious disjunction, however, regarding the information that the population is provided during election time. Elections Canada and Ontario not only advertise their involvement with the population on their websites but were also eager to share that they do target the shelters and drop-in centres themselves. There were however, many service providers that could not definitively say that they received any such
material. Others argued that the information provided by the agencies was not coherent or accessible. Once information is sent to the shelters there is little that the election agencies claim they can do to ensure the homeless receive it. They ask for service providers to disseminate the information and at times do follow-up with institutions to confirm they have received the information, however beyond that they cannot ensure that the information is provided to clients.

Election agencies asserted that information on where and when to vote is sent to institutions serving the homeless. In terms of presentations and further information, the election agencies often wait to be asked by institutions serving the homeless. Once information is requested, however, election agency representatives did express interest in offering the required additional information. Respondents from the municipal and provincial election agency were open to building a relationship with institutions serving the homeless population. This was particularly stressed by the municipal election agency, as the ease of the process required that shelters assist the homeless to register in advance (to bypass issues at the polling station, refer back to Chapter 3). Working together with other election agencies was also deemed vital in order to share the different processes and networks. The Toronto City Clerk’s Office, for example, communicates with institutions such as TDIN and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration in Toronto (SSHA), which the representative believed would be useful to other levels of electoral administration.

Election agencies were able to discuss the barriers that the existing processes create, particularly the lack of knowledge that election staff and polling clerks have regarding the process of voting for those without a permanent address. Two homeless participants were questioned at the polls due to the lack of knowledge of polling station staff regarding the process of voting. Both participants expressed these difficulties while attempting to vote during the last
federal election in 2015. The election agency representatives were open to admit that polling staff needs to be better educated on the processes, particularly in places with a concentrated homeless population.

The Toronto City Clerk’s Office representative further identified the intimidation of polling stations as a specific barrier. Having polling stations within institutions serving the homeless has alleviated this at the municipal level. According to the respondent, shelters have acted as polling stations in municipal elections since at least 2010. Although not many shelters have been utilized, the participant argued that the City Clerk’s Office is open to having institutions request to be polling stations in the future. Having polling stations located within shelters was viewed by the municipal election agency as a way to encourage the population to vote, eliminate certain barriers and to create a safe space for voters. Staff from the institutions can be trained as polling staff, allowing homeless electors to vote in the presence of individuals they know and trust, while also educating service providers on the process.

Polling Stations at Institutions Serving the Homeless

Voting as a citizen without a permanent residence requires specific documentation. A voter must identify as homeless and staff at polling stations may not be aware of the process. This can lead to embarrassment and deter certain individuals from voting. Polling stations may not be in an accessible area, which adds another element of difficulty. The proposition of having polling stations at shelters was repeatedly made by a majority of interview participants in order to address various concerns of comfort and accessibility. Municipally as already mentioned, shelters and drop-in centres have been used as polling stations. Provincially, however, shelters have not been used, although an Elections Ontario official argued that this was due to accessibility issues for persons with disabilities. Federally this information could not be gathered,
although service providers were unaware of shelters being used as polling stations for federal elections. The Toronto Clerk’s Office has however, used drop-in centres and shelters as polling stations in municipal elections. There is some data that can be directly associated with the voting tendencies of the street-involved population, due to the voter statistics from municipal elections, specifically the last Toronto election in 2014. This can be found in Table 4 below. The city does collect data from each polling station, specifically the total electors, additions (those that were not on the voter’s list but were added at the polling station), and the number that voted.

Table 4: 2014 Toronto Municipal Election Voter Statistics of 6 Polling Stations in Drop-In Centres and Shelters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polling Station</th>
<th>Total Electors</th>
<th>Additions</th>
<th>Total Eligible Electors</th>
<th>Number Voted</th>
<th>Number of Clients Using Services (approximate number)</th>
<th>% Voted (approximate number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Toronto (2014) and interview data.

The Toronto City Clerk’s Office has historically used six drop-in centres and shelters as polling stations, and this was also the case in the 2014 municipal election. The polling stations at the shelters and drop-in centres in Table 4 were not open to the public so it can be assumed that those that did vote at these locations were clients using the services. This does not account for those that voted at other locations and does not capture the broader picture of those who vote, however it can speak to the fact that there is a significant voting population among the homeless. The percent of people voting has been calculated as a percentage of the number of clients using the shelter/drop-in centre (usually the maximum), which can only serve as an approximation. As
the chart illustrates, the centres serving a larger number of clients had lower voter turnouts, possibly speaking to the associated lack of resources and access to information. According to the city of Toronto, the overall voter turnout for the municipal 2014 election was 54.67% (calculated from the number of eligible electors to those who voted). The number of clients that voted in some of the above polling stations therefore, is comparable to the overall voter turnout statistics of the general public (Toronto 311).

The additions in the above table are those electors that were not registered voters and had to be added to the voters list. As the Toronto Clerk’s Office indicated, this was a common occurrence, with registration requiring a form in advance and the assistance of service providers. Table 4 exhibits, from the data of polling station number 5 however, that pre-registration is not necessarily vital in encouraging the population to vote. Polling station number 5 for example had 128 registered voters, however a very small percentage of that number actually voted. Polling station number 4, on the other hand, only had one elector registered and over one hundred electors arrived at the polling station to vote on Election Day. This data suggests that providing the opportunity for voters to get on the list the day of an election is critical to them voting. Registering on Election Day is somewhat unique to Canada, which does facilitate the ability for the homeless to vote. As Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) argue, when citizens have to register long before Election Day, as is the case in the US, voting becomes costlier and turnout decreases. Voting in Canada by the homeless, however, can be further simplified with polling stations situated within drop-in centres and shelters to ensure the process of voting on Election Day is as efficient as possible. With such a small number of polling stations actually located within such facilities, however, there is a large proportion of the population that is still required to go through
a more complex process at the polls.

**Conclusion**

Registering voters that do not have a permanent address can be a complex process that requires the assistance of various mediators. Voting without an address and as an unregistered voter brings with it even further complications. The ease of registration and voting is often discussed in the literature as a vital aspect of increasing the likelihood of voting. Turnout decreases as the costs associated with voting increase, as was discussed in Chapter 3. If registration is too complex and difficult then individuals are less likely to vote (Steed, 1972; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Carping & Keeter, 1996). Data from the municipal polling stations does speak to the ease of voting to a certain extent, exhibiting that although not many homeless individuals register to vote, having polling stations within the institutions does show that they do vote. A comparison with other polling stations is not possible due to the lack of data, although qualitative data does suggest that having polling stations within shelters and drop-in centres can limit some barriers to voting and possibly encourage the population to vote.

This study has led to an increased knowledge on the barriers that the homeless face to voting, whilst also adding to the literature on the voting behaviour of this marginalized group. Furthermore, interview participants were eager to share their views on policy innovation that could alleviate the barriers this study identified, which will be explored in the following chapter together with the contributions of this project.
Chapter 5

Conclusion
The Barriers the Homeless Face to Voting

This research project serves as a preliminary investigation into the political participation of the homeless. The results of this study speak to broader issues in the existing democratic processes that allow the homeless to vote, while also elucidating the political engagement of the population and the various actors that encourage their participation. The homeless are deeply impacted by policies and decisions made by their government, as such their political activity serves not only as an analysis of existing processes, but also the desire homeless individuals may have to be included in the political framework of society. The qualitative data of this study exhibits the political interest and knowledge of the population and their desire to participate in politics. Previous voting tendencies further elucidate the importance of ensuring the barriers to voting are mediated. Several homeless respondents were not aware of the process of voting and the information they received was often contingent on the institutions accessed. Service providers were identified as the primary actors that encourage the population to participate and assist with the process of voting. Politicians and election agencies were also acknowledged as important actors and current initiatives were deemed insufficient.

The connection to institutions serving the homeless, and the importance of service providers in encouraging and supporting political activity can be explained by social structural factors (Hritzuk & Park, 2000). The homeless that use institutions, and more specifically those institutions that offer information regarding elections or are particularly active during elections, offer a network that encourages them to vote. Naturally, ending homelessness is the most desired option in facilitating participation through networks and structures. However, while Canada continues to face homelessness, ensuring that the homeless are connected to structures that encourage democratic engagement can enhance their political participation.
The major findings discussed in the preceding chapter answer the research question regarding the barriers that the homeless in Toronto face to voting:

- Access to information is contingent on institutions accessed;
- Stereotypes about homeless population’s lack of interest and knowledge about politics;
- Lack of access to information about elections and politics in general;
- Lack of access to information regarding the process for voting;
- Lack of contact with politicians and election agencies.

To conclude, I compiled a comprehensive list of barriers using the qualitative data I gathered to expose the nuances of the barriers each group of participants identified. This list can be found in Table 5. As the table exhibits there are barriers that all participants identified, and others that were exclusive to specific participants.

**Table 5: Barriers to the Homeless Participating in Elections Mentioned by Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless Participants</th>
<th>Service Providers</th>
<th>Policymakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of information about the process of voting</td>
<td>- Sense of disempowerment/disenfranchisement</td>
<td>- Intimidation of polling stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Concern about surviving day to day; immediate impact</td>
<td>- No identification</td>
<td>- Tactical issues (receiving a voter’s card)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Complexities of politics</td>
<td>- Lack of education by Elections Canada staff</td>
<td>- Emotional stamina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of identification</td>
<td>- Access to information/media</td>
<td>- Lack of identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contestation at the polling station</td>
<td>- Not knowing the process</td>
<td>- Reality of being homeless (lack of motivation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Complicated process</td>
<td>- Limitations of schedule</td>
<td>- Circumstances of being homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not being registered to vote</td>
<td>- Physical disabilities</td>
<td>- Mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stereotypes about them</td>
<td>- Mental health</td>
<td>- Health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Falseness of politics</td>
<td>- Establishing residency</td>
<td>- Economic issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of issues being addressed that are relevant to the population</td>
<td>- The process is too difficult</td>
<td>- Credentials challenged at polling stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Difficulties of registering to vote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research serves as a major contribution to the literature on political participation and homelessness, and has practical implications for policymakers. The barriers that were identified by participants were often accompanied by proposals for overcoming barriers faced by the homeless and can serve as contemplations for future policy innovation.
5.1: Contributions and Directions for Policy Innovation
This research has contributed to two bodies of literature, exposed a significant gap in political science literature and has identified areas for policy innovation. The political participation of the homeless has not been specifically explored in academic literature. Sociological literature regarding the homeless discusses the social exclusion of the homeless and the associated disadvantages of stigmatization with little discussion of their political activity. Political participation literature, furthermore, explores the political participation of certain subsections of the poor, but does not offer any investigations of the homeless in particular. This research project, therefore, serves as a contribution not only to literature regarding the homeless, but also the political participation literature. More specifically, the literature examining political participation of the poor is outdated, particularly in regards to voting. Few recent studies examine the political participation of the poor specifically. The previous literature that investigates the voter turnout of the poor does so in the American context, with little data offered on the poor in Canada (Black, 2005). The investigation of institutions impacting voting and politicization of citizens has also disregarded the importance of institutions serving the homeless. Although the literature establishes that voting is among the most equitable acts (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995), as states have developed policies to legalize the voting rights of the homeless, there has been little concurrent research regarding these policies and the systemic procedures. As a preliminary investigation into the political participation of this specific population, this study has also exposed certain impediments that influence voting and require further examination.

Voting can serve as a way for homeless individuals to partake in their community as well as encourage their further or deeper political participation. This study has exposed the unprecedented political interest of homeless individuals. Although not all participants expressed
intense political interest, this research points to the importance of fair and accessible processes to the voter turnout of the homeless. Ensuring a simple and flexible process of voting for all citizens is, after all, the overall goal of election agencies and democratic governments. Exposing the difficulties for such a vulnerable population, therefore, serves as a reflection of these goals, the populations ignored, and the intended benefits.

The findings of this research, particularly in terms of the systemic barriers that were identified, have major policy implications. As such, I asked participants how they believe the barriers can be mediated. All participants expressed interest in improving the current process of voting for, as well as increasing the political engagement of, the homeless population. Some of these solutions were mentioned throughout Chapter 4, however they require specific attention. In the latter half of my interviews, I asked questions about possible solutions to the barriers the respondents had identified. Not only did this allow participants to reiterate existing barriers, but it also provided participants (particularly the homeless participants) the ability to share their own solutions from their own perspective. In policymaking, bureaucratic processes limit the extent to which the voice of the most vulnerable is heard. This led me to ask these questions and ensure that the data from these discussions serves as a major contribution of this research project. Almost all respondents were enthusiastic about improving current initiatives and identified various processes, events, materials and actors that could facilitate further engagement of the street-involved population in politics and elections.

To encourage the population, respondents repeatedly suggested that policymakers have a stable relationship with the population. Many of the street-involved respondents insisted that candidates and policymakers should make a greater effort to come to shelters and drop-in centres to get to know the homeless, hear their stories, and discuss issues of importance to them.
Although they emphasized that this was necessary during elections it was often argued that this rapport had to be built outside of elections as well. One respondent suggested that institutions serving the homeless organize all-candidate debates. Another participant proposed that the homeless should be invited to conferences and debates in the community on issues of homelessness. Participants from the most politically active institution had greater opportunities to interact with politicians in the past and expressed the importance of such encounters in facilitating not only their individual participation, but also of the homeless population more broadly.

Respondents also argued there was a need for the homeless to be more mobilized and vocal during elections. One homeless respondent reasoned that the homeless have to learn to network and make noise to catch the government’s attention. In order to do so, however, participants contended that they must have access to necessary information. Overall, information was argued to be inaccessible and many respondents, including service providers, agreed that there was a need to provide more readily accessible information to the population regarding elections and voting. Service providers were encouraged to be the providers of such information. If they are, as Elections Ontario claims, the disseminators of knowledge regarding elections, this should be a priority. It was acknowledged that many of these shelters and centres are understaffed and experience countless hardships, and so bolstering resources for institutions or placing a larger responsibility on election agencies, politicians and other government agencies was considered necessary.

Many participants therefore encouraged a stronger relationship between institutions serving the homeless and election agencies. This included liaisons between election agencies and shelters, the creation of accessible information delivery, and officials visiting organizations to
educate both service providers and clients. There was some evidence (from interviews with the representative and service providers) that the municipal administration, the Toronto Clerk’s Office, has some positive networks within the community, working in partnership with the Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN). A service provider discussed these networks and wondered if the staff from municipal elections could be used during elections at other levels to allow for these networks and strategies to be used at other jurisdictions as well. The Toronto Clerk’s Office was not opposed to working with Elections Ontario and Canada, offering information on their strategies and networks in the local community.

Other proposed directions for policy innovation varied from changes to the identification requirements during elections, and the language and nature of the forms used to register to vote. Service providers specifically expressed the limitations of the forms used during elections for those without a permanent address. Critiques included the use of paternalistic language, absence of forms translated into different languages, the form not being presented in an official manner like other government documents, and the use of language considered outdated and offensive by the homeless. Words such as “soup kitchen” were highlighted as examples of a dated and paternalistic approach on the part of election officials. The training of election agency staff, particularly those working at the polling station was also repeatedly emphasized. Two respondents experienced difficulties at polling stations due to the lack of knowledge of the staff on the documentation and the process of voting for those without a permanent address. Elections Ontario also expressed this barrier, with the representative insisting that the training of polling staff on the specific processes was necessary.

As a result of this research, and the solutions offered by participants, the following is a list of key recommendations:
• Educating service providers and encouraging the dissemination of information
• Harmonization of processes across jurisdictions
• Increasing the presence of politicians in shelters and drop-in centres
• Plain language materials provided to all shelters and drop-in centres about the voting process
• Training polling clerks and election staff on the process
• Coordination between election agencies, politicians and service providers
• Polling stations at shelters and drop-in centre
5.2: Areas for Further Research
This study has illustrated major impediments the homeless face to voting. As has been found in this study, there are members within the population that are politically conscious, vote regularly, and are knowledgeable in politics. There are significant barriers to participating that include systemic issues of homelessness and poverty. Other impediments have also been identified such as the process itself, the lack of information disseminated and the wide variation in the work done in shelters and drop-in centres, which may include more manageable solutions.

Voting was the particular form of political participation under investigation in this study. Although a limitation to this study, this does provide a valuable area for future research. The SES model and other theoretical notions on the political participation of the poor assume that the homeless (as among the most poor) participate less in other forms of political activity as well (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Whether or not the homeless participate in other forms of political activity, the barriers they face to other methods of participation, as well as how they may bypass traditional forms of political activity and participate in other ways, requires specific investigation. Further research on the other methods that the homeless population participates in politics is therefore necessary to understand the population’s broader political engagement.

As the limitations in Chapter 2 described, future investigations of the political engagement of the homeless should also include homeless individuals that do not access institutions – a group that has been underrepresented in this study. Research into this particular subgroup needs to be conducted to capture their voice. The barriers that were found cannot therefore speak to that particular subsection of the population. Although it can be inferred, due to the systemic process of voting for individuals without a permanent address and the requirement of institutions, that the unsheltered face more extreme impediments in addition to others not found in this research.
In addition to research on broader political engagement of the homeless population, the processes and the actors involved require more targeted research. The systemic barriers that were found, particularly the process, documentation and role of service providers should be more closely investigated. As the process of voting was identified as a major impediment to voting, it requires precise examination. This cannot only lead to more comprehensive research but also serve as an illustration of jurisdictional differences, and a stronger claim of the correlation between institutional access and voting. Although interviews with the homeless included questions regarding voting, particularly in regards to the last federal election, there was a lack of specific data that identified which other elections they voted in. At times participants stated which elections they voted in, and at other times they simply said they voted in the past and could not recall the level of election they had previously voted in. In order to examine the complexity of voting processes more closely, and their impact on homeless participation, further research needs to investigate further electoral processes at different jurisdictional levels. Structuring such research to correspond with elections at different jurisdictional levels would be desirable.

Further research can also compare the differences in political interest, knowledge and participation among the general population to the homeless. Although this study utilizes a small sample size, the interest and knowledge exhibited by the sample may be comparable to the general population. Once more data is available on the voting behaviour of the homeless specifically, how this data compares to data of the general population can serve as an interesting area of empirical investigation. If the data is comparable it can increase the consideration of the homeless population as an electorate, and if not then examining the reasons for the discrepancies
can speak to the specific barriers the population faces to voting. Such research can offer supplementary findings to this study, whilst offering more in-depth and generalizable data.

As was discussed in the limitations in Chapter 2 this project could not isolate other individual-level factors that may impact the voter turnout of the population such as race, education, age and gender. It is not known if these variables, or others, impacted the likelihood of voting, or if there is an interrelationship between such characteristics and the barriers that were found in this research. Do some homeless individuals have better access to institutions that encourage them to vote? Do some homeless people vote more than others? Why or why not? This is a vital area for further research. As a heterogeneous population the homeless serve as a useful population to study the interrelationship of factors influencing the propensity to vote.

This project served as a preliminary investigation into the political participation of the homeless. These findings are significant to the field of political science. The political engagement and participation of the homeless has not been examined by academics in the field, and the policies that have been formulated to encourage this population to vote have not been investigated. As such, the barriers identified, particularly their systemic nature, exhibit the need for further research regarding not only the political participation of the homeless but also the policies oriented towards the population.
Works Cited


Blais, A. & Rubenson. (2013). The source of turnout decline: new values or new contexts? *Comparative Political Studies, 46*(1), 95-117


Elections Canada. (2015). The electoral reminder program and information to specific groups of electors.

http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=faq&document=faqvoting&lang=e#a4


https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e06.


Appendix A

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: March 3, 2016
EXPIRY DATE: March 3, 2017
REB: G
REB NUMBER: 16JA043
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sheidrick, Byron (bsheldri@uoguelph.ca)
DEPARTMENT: Political Science
SPONSOR(S): None
TITLE OF PROJECT: The Impediments and Opportunities the Homeless in Canada Experience to Voting

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: March 3, 2016

L. Kuczynski
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General
Appendix B
Consent Form for Homeless Participants

Research Study Information:
Any information used for evaluation or research will be anonymized, and your name will not be attached in any final reports. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not want to participate in this research this does not in any way affect any services that you receive from this shelter/day programming now or in the future. The researcher will be taking notes during the interview; no personal information will be recorded on these notes.

Withdrawal:
You may, at any time, withdraw consent for the collection, use, or disclosure of your personal information, by simply discussing this with the researcher. If you make the decision to withdraw, you can have the researcher remove any information that you have already provided. After the interview, and once the researcher leaves, however, you can no longer withdraw from the study because your information is anonymous and the data will not be identifiable by the researcher.

Payment for Participation:
You will receive a $10 Tim Horton’s gift card at the end of the interview to thank you for your time and participation.

Contact:
This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study. If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB# 16JA043), please contact:

Director of Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; (519) 824-4120 ext. 56606.

If you have any further questions regarding this research study, you may also contact:

Anna Kopec (Student Investigator):
Masters Student
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph

Dr. Byron Sheldrick (Principal Investigator):
Associate Dean, Academic
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
University of Guelph
sheldric@uoguelph.ca

Dr. William O’Grady (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
University of Guelph
wogrady@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Janine Clark (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
jclark@uoguelph.ca

Consent:
Please check and initial whether or not you agree to participate in this research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I hereby freely consent for my information to be collected and used for evaluation and research purpose, as described above. I understand that I may revoke my consent at any time, by notifying the researcher.

Participant:

Initials (print): ______________________________

Date of Birth: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Witness:

Name (print) ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix C

Consent Form for Service Providers

UNIVERSITY
of GUELPH

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Political Science

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: The Impediments the Homeless Face to Voting

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Anna Kopec, from the department of Political Science at the University of Guelph. The results will be used for a Master’s thesis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The researcher aims to gain knowledge into the impediments the homeless population in Canada faces to participating in elections, as well as the services available to encourage the population to vote.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, please:

- Email the researcher a minimum of 3 days and times that work for you, as well as the place that you would feel most comfortable to meet for the interview.
- Sign this consent form
- Participate in an interview that will take approximately 1 hour

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The topic of this research is of sensitive nature and does inquire into the current practices of your organization. Although questions of this nature may invoke minor discomfort, the participant is encouraged to be open with the researcher and has the right to only answer those questions they feel comfortable with.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANT AND/OR SOCIETY

By participating in this research you are part in parcel to a larger research study that discusses the impediments that the homeless population in Canada face to voting. By sharing your views
through your close interaction with the population, as well as the efforts that your organization has taken, or any known initiatives that the government has invoked, your involvement will lead to an increased knowledge of the political participation of this marginalized population.

This research may lead to future initiatives to encourage the inclusion of the homeless in discussions surrounding civic engagement and future policies encouraging their participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Upon your request the information and data collected with any identifying information will be anonymized. Although due to the low participant numbers, the information may be identifiable in the final results due to your role in the research study. With your permission your name and association/title will be used in the research and in the data analysis.

The researcher will be taking notes during the interview. Identifying information will be removed if the participant decides to remain anonymous.

If you have any further questions regarding your confidentiality please contact:

Anna Kopec (Student Investigator):
Masters Student
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
akopec@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Byron Sheldrick (Principal Investigator):
Associate Dean, Academic
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
University of Guelph
sheldric@uoguelph.ca

Dr. William O’Grady (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
University of Guelph
wogrady@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Janine Clark (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
jclark@uoguelph.ca

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate you may withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study at any time. You may also refuse to answer certain questions and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study. If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB# 16JA043), please contact:

Director of Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; (519) 824-4120 ext. 56606.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “The Impediments the Homeless Face to Voting” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

____________________________________________________
Signature of Participant

____________________________________________________
Date

____________________________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

____________________________________________________
Signature of Witness

____________________________________________________
Date
Appendix D

Consent Form for Politicians/Election Agency Representatives

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: The Impediments the Homeless Face to Voting

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Anna Kopec, a student of Political Science at the University of Guelph. The data collected will be used for a Master’s thesis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The researcher aims to gain knowledge into the impediments the homeless population in Canada faces to participating in elections, as well as the services and government initiatives that are available to the population to encourage their involvement.

PROCEDURES

If you are willing to participate:

- Email the researcher a minimum of 3 days and times that work for you, as well as the place that you would feel most comfortable to meet for the interview.
- Sign this consent form
- Participate in an interview that will take approximately 1 hour

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The topic of this research is of sensitive nature and does inquire into the current practices of the federal, provincial and municipal branches of the government. Although questions of this nature may invoke minor discomfort, the participant is encouraged to be open with the researcher and has the right to only answer those questions they feel comfortable with.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANT AND/OR SOCIETY
By participating in this research you are part in parcel to a larger research study that discusses the impediments that the homeless population in Canada face to voting. Through your knowledge on whether or not the government has services tailored towards the population to encourage them to vote, as well as whether or not this population has been a target of such research, invaluable information can be gathered. This research may lead to future initiatives to encourage the inclusion of the homeless in discussions surrounding civic engagement and future policies encouraging their participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Upon your request the information and data collected with any identifying information will be anonymized. Although due to the low participant numbers, the information may be identifiable in the final results due to your role in the research study. With your permission your name and association/title will be used in the research and in the data analysis.

The researcher will be taking notes during the interview. Identifying information will be removed if the participant decides to remain anonymous.

If you have any further questions regarding your confidentiality please contact:

Anna Kopec (Student Investigator):
Masters Student
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
akopec@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Byron Sheldrick (Principal Investigator):
Associate Dean, Academic
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
University of Guelph
sheldric@uoguelph.ca

Dr. William O’Grady (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
University of Guelph
wogrady@uoguelph.ca

Dr. Janine Clark (Co-Investigator):
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
jclark@uoguelph.ca

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate you may withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study at any time. You may also refuse to answer certain question and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study. If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB# 16JA043), please contact:

Director of Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; (519) 824-4120 ext. 56606.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study ‘The Impediments the Homeless Face to Voting’ as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

___________________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

____________________________________________________
Signature of Participant _____________________________
Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

___________________________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

____________________________________________________
Signature of Witness _____________________________
Date
Appendix E

Interview Questions for Service Providers

I. Background

Tell me about your organization.

What is your position here? How long have you been with the organization/shelter?

II. Experience with Clients and Voting

In your time here, have you had any discussions with clients about voting and elections?

If so, can you describe an example of such a discussion?

If so, are there specific elections that spark more discussion than others? (Municipal, Provincial, Federal)

Do clients often express an interest in elections?

Why do you think that is?

Based on your experiences do clients who use this service vote?

III. Impediments to Voting

Do you think it is important that homeless people vote?

Why or why not?

What do you see as the barriers for homeless people participating in voting and getting involved in politics more generally?

IV. Possible Opportunities to Voting

Does your organization offer any information about elections such as information on the candidates as part of your services?

If so, what kind of information do you provide?

Do clients ever ask for this type of information?

Have any of the homeless inquired about where or how to vote?

V. Need for More?
In your opinion, is there more that can be done to include the homeless in elections?

If yes, what more can be done to motivate them to vote? Can you provide some examples?

Have you ever witnessed an election candidate at your organization/shelter?

   What about at other shelters/organizations/day programs?

Are you aware of the polling stations nearby?

   How do you know this?

Does the government send any information to your organization during election time?

   If so what does this include?

If encouraged, do you believe that more homeless youth would participate in elections?

   Why or why not?

**VI. Reiteration of Possible impediments**

What barriers do you believe the homeless face to voting?
Appendix F

Interview Questions for Homeless Participants

I. Background

How long have you been coming to this shelter/day program?

How long have you been street-involved?

II. Interest in Elections/Voting

Do you follow politics? Are you interested in elections?

Were you aware of the last federal election that took place last October?

   How did you hear about the election?

Did you vote in that election?

   Why/why not?

If not in the last election have you voted previously (provincially or federally? What about municipally?)

Are you more interested in certain elections?

   If so, why is that?

Do you know who your MPP or city councilor is?

III. Impediments/Opportunities to Voting

Was there ever a time when you wanted to vote but could not?

   If yes, what stopped you?

Has anybody recently encouraged you to vote?

   If so, who?

Do you ever get information about where to vote?

   How?

What about information about what people to vote for (the candidates)?
Would you like to know more about upcoming elections?

If you knew where to vote in the next election, would you?

   Why/ why not?

**IV. Importance of Voting/Increasing Interest**

What does voting, and participating in elections mean to you?

Can anything be done to make you more aware of elections and the candidates?

   If so, can you give some examples?

How do you think this information should be given to you?

**V. Views on Politics**

Do you see voting as giving citizens power?

Do you believe the government takes your interests into consideration?

   Why/ why not?

   Can voting help bring your needs to the governments attention?

   Why/ why not?

What are the most important issues to you?

Do you think politicians are concerned about people’s well-being – why/why not?

What do you think would lead to politicians being more interested in your well-being?

Do you think politicians should be made more accountable? If so, how?

Young people usually don't vote. Why do you think that is?
Appendix G
Interview Questions for Policy Makers

I. Background

What area do you represent?

How long have you worked in your position?

II. Homeless People and Voting

What initiatives exist to encourage marginalized populations to vote in your area?

Are there specific initiatives for the homeless?

In your opinion do the homeless in your area vote?

Why or why not?

Do you think it is important that street-involved people vote?

Why or why not?

III. Impediments the Homeless Face to Voting

What are possible barriers that the homeless face to participating in elections?

What can be done to assist them in overcoming these barriers?

Can more be done to include the population in voting?

Do you know if the homeless receive information regarding elections?

If so how? In what form?

IV. Government’s Role

Why is the population not often targeted during elections?

Do you know if candidates go to shelters/day programs during elections?

Have you gone to shelters or day programs during election time?

Are you aware of the information, if any, that is provided to shelters/day programs during election time?
How can the government encourage the homeless to become more educated about elections?

Do you believe that by voting the interests and needs of the homeless can be better heard?
Appendix H

Municipal Voter’s List Amendment Application

**Voters’ List Amendment Application**

**Instructions**

A Voters’ List Amendment Application can be used to:
- Add your name to the voters’ list
- Correct your information on the voters’ list
- Remove your name from the voters’ list

Your application must be received by Election Services no later than Friday, June 10th, 2016.

**How to Submit an Application:**

Mail to Election Services, 89 Northline Road, Toronto, ON M4B 3G1:
- a completed application and
- one piece of identification (a copy is acceptable) showing your name and qualifying address in Toronto

OR

Submit in person at the location noted below:
- a completed application and
- one piece of identification (original or certified copy) showing your name and qualifying address in Toronto:

- City Clerk's Office, Election Services, 1st floor north, City Hall, 100 Queen St West

**Acceptable Identification:**

1. An Ontario driver’s licence
2. An Ontario Health Card (photo card)
3. An Ontario Photo Card
4. An Ontario motor vehicle permit (vehicle portion)
5. A cancelled personalized cheque
6. A mortgage statement, lease or rental agreement relating to property in Ontario
7. An insurance policy or insurance statement
8. A loan agreement or other financial agreement with a financial institution
9. A document issued or certified by a court in Ontario
10. Any other document from the government of Canada, Ontario or a municipality in Ontario or from an agency or such a government
11. Any document from a Band Council in Ontario established under the *Indian Act* (Canada)
12. An income tax assessment notice
13. A Child Tax Benefit Statement
15. A Statement of Old Age Security T4A (OAS)
16. A Statement of Canada Pension Plan Benefits T4A (P)
17. A Canada Pension Plan Statement of Contributions
18. A Statement of Direct Deposit for Ontario Works
19. A Statement of Direct Deposit for Ontario Disability Support Program
20. A Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Statement of Benefits T5007
21. A property tax assessment
22. A credit card statement, bank account statement, or RRSP, RRIF, RHOSP or T5 statement
23. A CNIB Bard or a card from another registered charitable organization that provides services to persons with disabilities
24. A hospital card or record
25. A document showing campus residence, issued by the office or officials responsible for student residence at a post-secondary institution
26. A document showing residence at a long-term care home under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007*, issued by the Administrator for the home
27. A utility bill for hydro, water, gas, telephone or cable TV or a bill from a public utilities commission
28. A cheque stub, T4 statement or pay receipt issued by an employer
29. A transcript or report card from a post-secondary school
## Voters' List Amendment

### Applicant
- **Last name**
- **First name**
- **Date of Birth (yyyy-mm-dd)**
- **Qualifying address in Toronto**
- **Unit**
- **Postal code**
- **School Support/Ballot Type:**
  - Owner
  - Tenant
  - Spouse
  - Other
  - Public school elector (anyone can support)
  - Catholic school elector (must be Roman Catholic)
  - French public school elector (must have French language education rights)
  - French catholic school elector (must be Roman Catholic + have French language education rights)
  - Other – Non-resident, commercial/industrial property
- **Previous qualifying address (if moved)**
- **Mailing address (if different than qualifying address)**
- **I declare I am a Canadian citizen, I have attained the age of eighteen years on or before voting day and on voting day I am entitled to be an elector in accordance with the information submitted above. I apply to have my name included or the amendments made on the voters' list in accordance with the information provided.**
- **Signature of Applicant**
- **Date (yyyy-mm-dd)**

### Agent Details (if applicable)
- **I declare that the voter has appointed me as their agent and on the voter's behalf I file this application**
- **Last Name**
- **First Name**
- **Home Phone**
- **Business Phone**
- **Address**
- **Unit**
- **City**
- **Postal code**
- **Signature of Agent**
- **Date (yyyy-mm-dd)**

### Approval or Refusal
- **Application Approved**
- **Signature of Clerk or Designate**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Refused</th>
<th>Give reason:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Sub</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The personal information on this form is collected under the authority of the Municipal Elections Act, S.O. 1996, Ch.32, s. 88 and the Assessment Act, 1990 Ch. A31, ss. 15 and 16 for the purpose of determining voter eligibility. Your information will be filed with the City Clerk and will be available for public inspection by any person at the City Clerk’s Office at a time when the City Clerk’s Office is open. Questions about this collection can be directed to Elections Coordinator, 99 Northline Rd., Toronto, ON M4B 3G1 or by phone at 416-398-1111.

VOTE765 07-0120 2015-12
Appendix I

Provincial Certification of Identity and Residence

Certificate of Identity and Residence (E0824)

Valid at the following voting location: __________________________________________________________
(Please visit www.elections.on.ca and click on “How, When and Where to Vote” to find your voting location.)

To be filled out by the prospective voter:

My name is __________________________________________________________
(Please print)

I live at ________________________________________________________________
(Please print the name of the place where you expect to sleep or eat most often between January 6, 2016 and February 4, 2016).

I am or will be 18 years of age or older on Election Day, February 4, 2016, and I am a Canadian citizen.

I certify that this information is true.

________________________________
Voter’s signature

To be filled out by an administrator or representative of the shelter or food bank, or a community health care worker:

I am an authorized representative of the following facility (please print facility name and address):

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

I certify that I have witnessed the signature of the prospective voter above and that the information I have provided is true.

__________________________________
Administrator’s name (Please print)  Administrator’s signature

__________________________________
Date (Please print)

51 Rolark Drive
Toronto, ON, M1R 3B1
elections.on.ca
1.888.668.8683
Please note: Any person who furnishes false or misleading information to a Returning Officer or to any other person authorized to act as an election official may be guilty of an offence. If convicted, he or she may be fined up to $25,000.

**Instructions for Elections Ontario**

This Certificate of Identity and Residence is valid as proof of identification and residence.

If the name of the elector does not appear on the List of Electors, refer him or her to the Polling Day Revision Assistant, if applicable. Otherwise, help the elector complete the Application for Addition to the List of Electors on Polling Day (F0520) form.

The Certificate of Identity and Residence (E0824) form must be the original, and not a copy. It must be signed by the elector and an administrator or representative of the shelter or food bank, or a community health care worker.

File this document in ENVELOPE B – Poll Documents.

**Attestation de l’identité et du lieu de résidence (E0824)**

Valable sur le lieu de vote suivant: ____________________________________________

(Dès le déclenchement de l’élection, rendez-vous sur le site www.elections.on.ca et cliquez sur “Où, Quand et Comment voter” pour trouver votre lieu de vote.)

À remplir par l’électeur potentiel :

Je m’appelle
(Nom et prénom en majuscules) __________________________________________________________

J’habite à _________________________________________________________________

(Inscrivez en majuscules le nom de l’établissement dans lequel vous prévoyez de dormir ou de vous restaurer le plus souvent entre le 6 janvier et le 4 février, 2016)

Je suis ou je serai âgé(e) de 18 ans ou plus le 4 février 2016, jour des élections, et je suis un(e) citoyen(ne) du Canada.

J’atteste la véracité de ces renseignements.

________________________________________

Signature de l’électeur

À remplir par un administrateur ou un représentant du refuge, de la banque d’alimentation ou du centre de santé communautaire :

Je suis un représentant autorisé de l’établissement suivant (nom et adresse de l’établissement, en majuscules):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Je certifie avoir été témoin de la signature de l’électeur potentiel susmentionné et j’atteste la véracité des renseignements que j’ai fournis.

________________________________________

Nom de l’administrateur (en majuscules) __________________________

Signature de l’administrateur __________________________

Date (en majuscules) __________________________

Remarque : Toute personne fournissant des renseignements erronés ou trompeurs à un directeur du scrutin ou à toute autre personne autorisée à agir en qualité de membre du personnel électoral se rend coupable d’un délit passible d’une amende pouvant aller jusqu’à 25 000 dollars.
Instructions à l’intention d’Élections Ontario

La présente Attestation de l’identité et du lieu de résidence est valable à titre de preuve d’identité et de résidence. Si le nom de l’électeur ne figure pas sur la Liste des électeurs, demandez à l’électeur de s’adresser au réviseur adjoint pour le jour du scrutin, le cas échéant. Sinon, aidez l’électeur à remplir le formulaire de Demande d’ajout à la Liste des électeurs le jour du scrutin (F0520).

L’exemplaire original du formulaire d’Attestation de l’identité et du lieu de résidence (E0824) doit être présenté. Aucune copie n’est acceptée. Le formulaire doit porter la signature de l’électeur et d’un administrateur ou représentant du refuge, de la banque d’alimentation ou du centre de santé communautaire.

Placez ce document dans l’ENVELOPPE B – Documents du bureau de vote.
Appendix J

Federal Letter of Confirmation of Residence

Letter of Confirmation of Residence

You can use this letter as your proof of address — along with a second piece of ID — to register and vote in a federal election.

What you need to know:

• This proof of address will be valid only if it is signed by the administrator of a student residence, seniors’ residence, long-term care facility, shelter, soup kitchen, First Nations’ band or reserve, or Inuit local authority.

• If you live in or receive services from one of the places listed above, print this letter and ask the administrator to complete and sign it.

• The administrator should contact the local returning officer* to make sure the facility is listed with Elections Canada†. If it is not on our list, this letter will not be accepted at the polls.

• When you go to register and vote, bring this letter and a second piece of ID with your name. Choose from the ID listed on our website.

I confirm that the person named below:

__________________________
(Voter’s first name and last name)

resides or receives services at:

__________________________
(Full name and address of facility or establishment)

Administrator’s full name, title, address and telephone number:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
Contact information for local returning officers can be found on the Elections Canada website once the election has been called.

† The list refers to the List of Facilities – Letter of Confirmation of Residence (EC 50054) and is only available once the election is called. Facilities can be added to the list once the election has been called.

Note: Any person who knowingly registers to be included on a list of electors for a polling division that he or she does not ordinarily live in commits an offence under the Canada Elections Act, unless he or she is authorized to do so under the Act.

EC 50053 (08/2015)