



Experiences of Voters with Disabilities in Michigan

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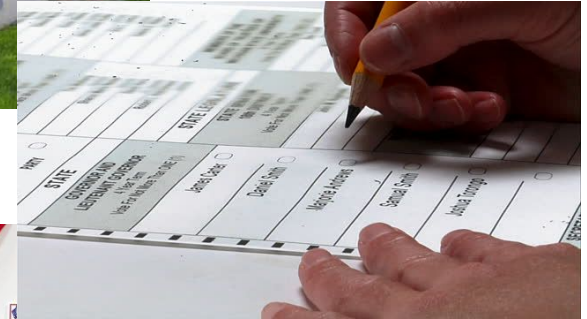


Objectives

- Conduct activity analysis of the voting process
- Present current literature of voting accessibility
- Discuss theoretical foundations of current study
- Outline methodology
- Share preliminary results
- Discuss application to OT practice

The Voting Process

1. Register to vote
2. Identify your polling place
3. Get the correct polling place
4. Enter building
5. Navigate interior of polling place
6. Fill out paperwork
7. Fill out ballot
8. Insert ballot into tabulator





Problem Statement

Although there is a strong body of literature discussing physical barriers related to voting in the U.S., we know very little about how people with disabilities experience voting in the state of Michigan.



Purpose Statement

This study examines the experiences of VwD in Michigan in order to provide the field of OT with the information needed to restore occupational justice and afford VwD an equal opportunity to participate in the broader society to which they belong.



Literature Review



Disability and Voting in the United States

- 19% of the population has a disability
- Within 25 years, 30-35% of voters will require an accommodation
- People with disabilities are 21% less likely to vote

If there were no barriers to voting with disability, there could potentially be 3 million more voters.

Barriers to Voting Participation



Physical and Architectural Barriers

- Architectural barriers cause inaccessibility outside of the polling place (steep ramps)
 - 60% polling places contained one or more potential architectural barriers in 2016.
- Physical barriers cause inaccessibility inside the polling place (inaccessible voting stations).
 - 65% polling places were deemed as had inaccessible voting machines and stations in 2016.



Social Barriers

- Inadequate or inappropriate poll worker support
 - 2014 vs. 2016 - a decline in reported independence while voting.
- Fear of stigma
 - Condescending atmosphere for VwD due to personal bias and inadequate election training for poll workers.



Facilitators to Participation



Legislation

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by such entity (Sec. 202).

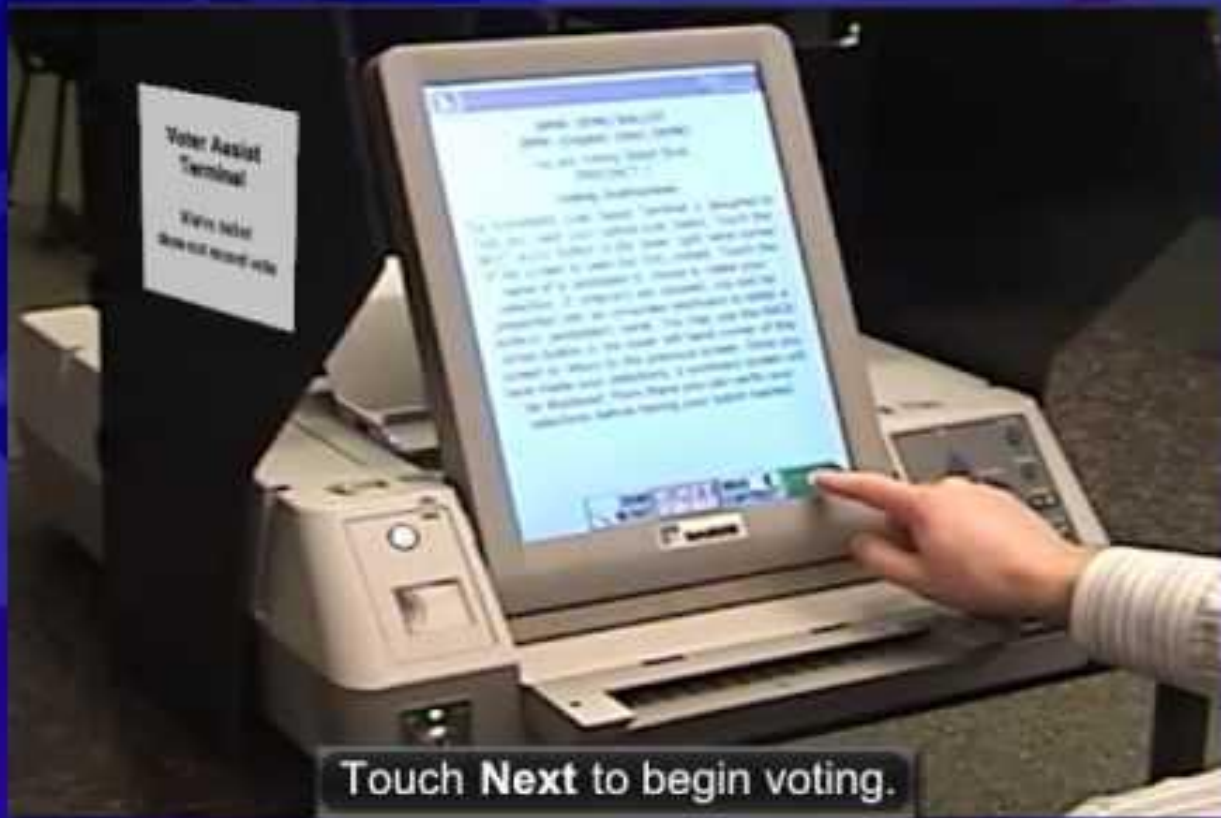
Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)

- Requirement of assistive voting machines
- Funding for transition

AutoMARK

- Introduced in 2002
- Used by all districts in Michigan
- Overwhelming negative responses
 - Miscalibration
 - Lack of poll worker training





Touch Next to begin voting.

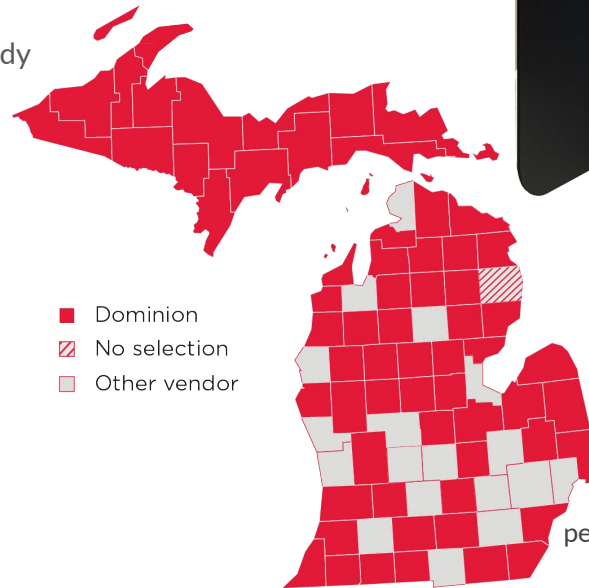


Transition to Newer Technology

- Mandated transition by August 2018
 - Funding from HAVA
- One of three options
 - Election Systems and Software's ExpressTouch
 - Hart InterCivic's Verity
 - Dominion's ICX

Dominion ICX

- Chosen by the majority of districts
 - All of the districts chosen for current study
- Features
 - Touch screen
 - Audio-Tactile Interface
 - Optional keypad and Sip-N-Puff insert
- Little use or feedback to date



(Dominion Voting Systems, 2015; Electionsources, 2018; S. McMillen, personal communication, March 1, 2018; "Using the Dominion Voter Assist Terminal," 2017)



Thank You
for Voting!

Thank You
for Voting!

CHECK-IN HERE

★ **WELCOME** ★
How to vote on the ICX BMD

Thank you for voting!

On-Site Assistance

- Accessible voting booths
- Support person of voter's choice
- Poll worker support
 - Two different parties





Theoretical Foundations



Occupational Justice Theory

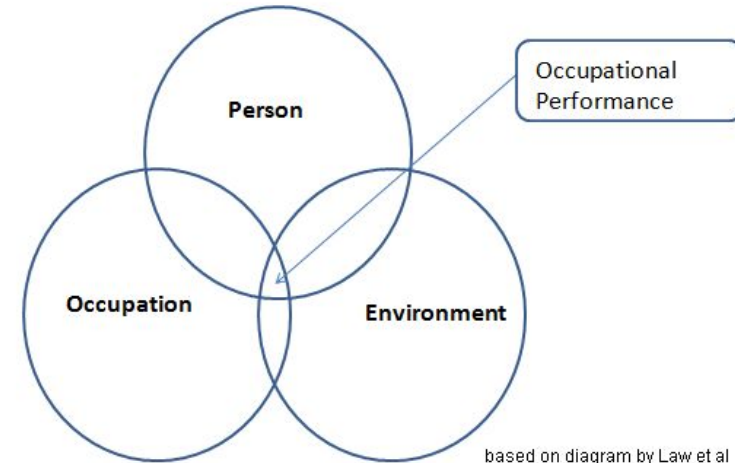
- Definition of occupational justice: “a justice that recognizes occupational rights to inclusive participation in everyday occupations for all persons in society, regardless of age, ability, gender, social status, or other differences.” (AOTA, 2014, p. S9)
- Occupational injustices occur when opportunity to engage is limited
- Implications of occupational injustice in voting:
 - Lesser ability to influence political decisions
 - Diminished empowerment

Person-Environment-Occupation Model (PEO)

The person, their environment, and activity that they wish to do must be compatible for the person to be successful

In voting:

- Person - disability status, type of disability
- Environment - physical accessibility of polling place and entry, culture surrounding voting and disability
- Occupation - voter registration, transportation to polling place, on-site paperwork, moving about polling place, voting, use of tabulator





Disability and Voting in Michigan

- Between 2003 and 2011 the state of Michigan received approximately \$104.2 million in Federal funding toward making voting more accessible.
 - Transition to the Dominion ICX.
 - Most districts no longer have HAVA funds to support transition
- The Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service (MPAS) reviewed 95% of the polling places in the state of Michigan in 2010.
 - 75% were compliant with ADA.
 - Out of 84 counties, only six were considered to be 100% physically accessible.



Disability and Voting in Michigan Cont.

- Shared personal experiences reveal voting inaccessibility in Michigan.
 - Kent County voters encountered physical and social barriers that hindered their capacity to vote.
 - “We want to be able to vote independently, securely, and privately like everyone else”.
- A current study on the experiences of VwD in Grand Rapids, Michigan reports findings consistent with the literature on voting accessibility.
- A need for more research on the experiences of VwD in MI.

Research question: How do people with physical and sensory disabilities in Michigan experience facilitators and barriers to voting?



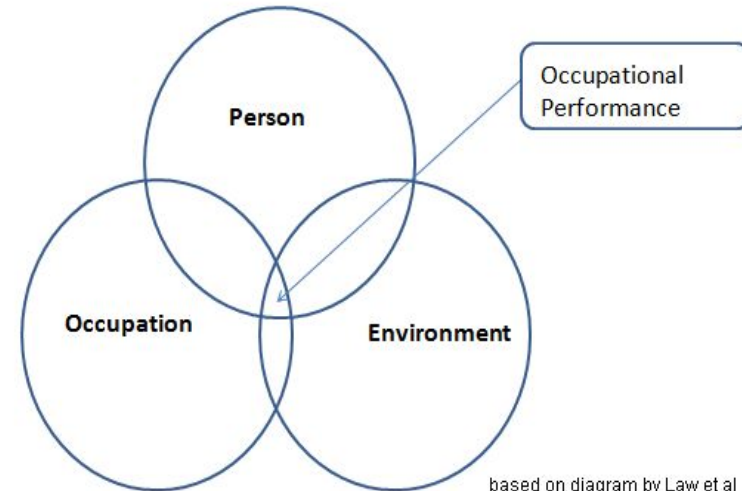
Significance

The findings of this study would provide occupational therapy with an understanding of the barriers and facilitators that influence voters' with sensory and physical disabilities occupational performance while voting in the state of Michigan. Once the personal experiences of these voters are understood, occupational therapist have the opportunity to expand their scope of research and eventually play a pivotal role in ameliorating the voting process for everyone.

Methodology

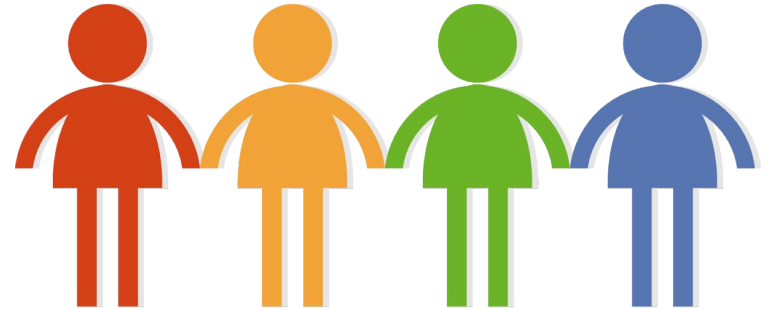
Research Design and Approach

- Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model
- Qualitative
 - Focus groups
 - Semi-Structured Interviews
 - August 2018



Population & Sample

- Convenience Sampling
- Flyer
- 26 total participants





Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- Inclusion criteria:
 - Physical and/or sensory disabilities
 - Michigan resident
 - Voted in the past
- Exclusion criteria:
 - Intellectual disability
 - Learning Disability
 - Mental Illness
 - Developmental Disorders



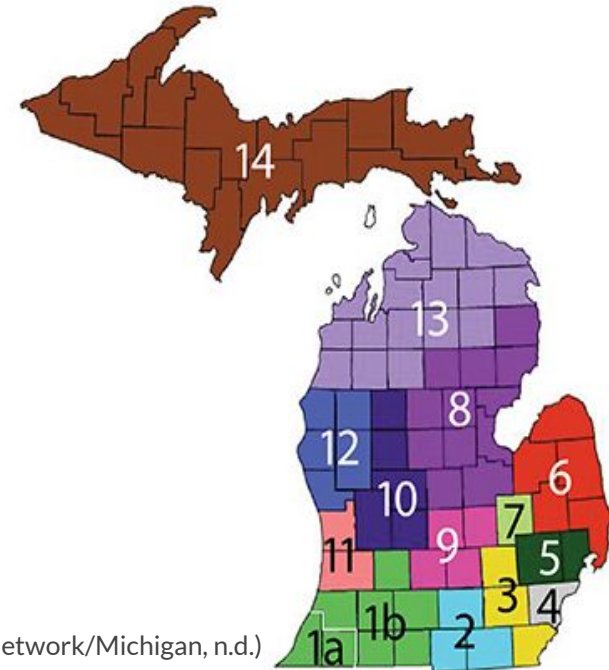
Data Collection

- Consent form
- 1.5-hour focus groups
- Two researchers
- Audio recorded focus groups
- Michigan Centers for Independent Living (CIL)
 - Districts 10, 4, and 9



Michigan Centers for Independent Living (CIL)

- Disability Advocates of Kent County (District 10)
- Disability Network of Wayne County (District 4)
- Disability Network/Capital Area (District 9)

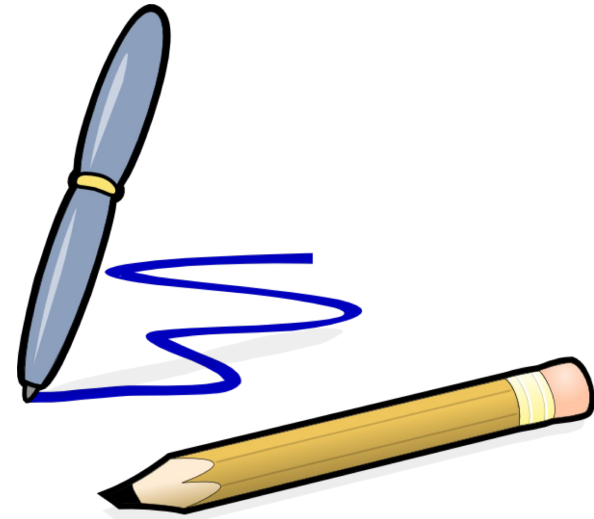


(Disability Network/Michigan, n.d.)

Data Analysis

Data analysis plan for focus groups

- Transcription
- Theming





Strengths

- The collection of personal narratives
- Semi-structured interviews
 - Combination of fixed responses and open ended questions
- Two research team members at each focus group
- Sample size
 - Larger estimated sample size than preceding study
 - More generalizable



Design Limitations

- Exclusion criteria
- Convenience sampling
- Researcher influence
- Changes in technology
- Rural areas were not sampled
- Inconsistency of physical environment
- Possibility of participants who did not meet criteria

Preliminary Results



Emerging Themes

- Poll workers
- Physical accessibility
- Prior to voting
- Voter traits

Application to OT Practice

Review and Questions



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