Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

PETER GREENWELL

MUr (Simon Fraser University, 2008)
BA (Simon Fraser University, 1985)

“Access, Barriers and Role of Transit for Homeless Shelter Residents in Surrey, BC”

Social Dimensions of Health

Monday, August 24, 2020
2:00 pm
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Cecilia Benoit, Department of Sociology, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Michael Hayes, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Robin Kearns, Department of Environment, University of Auckland

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Erin Kelly, Department of English, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

In this research, I examine the mediating role of transit for individuals experiencing homelessness in accessing needed support services to exit homelessness. The research looks at the mobility needs and experience of individuals who are homeless in the suburban community of Surrey, BC, in relation to their access to the public transit system. I have used Harvey’s (2005) conception of spatial sorting as a means of understanding the suburbanization of poverty.

I employed a multiple case study, using semi-structured interviews, from residents and staff of three homeless shelters, located in three distinct neighbourhoods in Surrey. A cross-case analysis of the interview data was undertaken, to draw conclusions and recommendations for policy development and further research concerning the transit needs of people who are homeless. To provide a policy context, a review of existing transit access programs available for people that are homeless and/or low-income is presented according to criteria and best practices.

Four dimensions of transit access were identified by residents and staff: physical, temporal, social and financial. Residents had the least agency in relation to the physical and temporal dimensions, so that these dimensions became the most problematic in this suburban context.

The importance of considering the geographic context of shelters and potential impacts on mobility and social inclusion of shelter residents, for their exit from homelessness, are demonstrated.