

A British Perspective: Reflections on the *Cityscape* Symposium

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When discussing the themes emerging from this series of articles, we are struck by the diversity in both the content and methods covered in these contributions. We also commend the authors' desire to grapple with complex questions surrounding homelessness and service provision. We can readily identify evidence gaps that this program of research helps to fill, but—if we take a more global perspective—it seems that considerable value could be added to this science by engaging with the existing international literature and situating these findings in that broader context.

For example, George Carter's thesis raises a number of substantial points about the inclusion of the homeless people both in the housing market and in society more generally. A well-established literature on housing and social inclusion (as well as housing and social exclusion), however, already exists in the United Kingdom and Europe, which would fit nicely with the study (see Barnes, 2005; Berghmann, 1995; Clapham, 2007). The research to which we refer is groundbreaking because it seeks to “write the level of the individual” back into structural analyses of housing, which in turn facilitates theorization about norms, perceptions, and minority/majority group dynamics influencing perceived choices and housing allocation. Tatjana Meschede also uses an innovative approach, and similar comments can be made in reference to her thesis storyline. Finally, Courtney Cronley's research focuses on monitoring the effectiveness of service provision, another topic that falls into the exclusion debate. Overall, the picture emerging is that these works fit nicely within a framework primarily used by non-U.S. researchers.

In closing, we are left asking how we can best achieve sustainable excellence in both research and policy when the literature on homelessness internationally is so vast—approximately 9 million pieces of work in both the United States and United Kingdom. Clearly, we can learn key lessons from the strengths (and weaknesses) in both the U.S. and U.K. research traditions (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). We are mindful that cross-disciplinary work is not always an easy undertaking, nor is cross-national work. Considerable effort has to go into identifying a common language, realizing that something as simple as discussing “single homelessness” or “descriptive analysis” can mean very different things in divergent literatures. In the end, however, the cross fertilization of

concepts, methods, and ideas must be a key priority for scholars in this field, because it is the most effective way to drive forward positive change in national and global responses to homelessness in the future.

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