THE "HOMELESS SEMINAR" AT UCLA

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INTRODUCTION

This is a report of an exploration, an effort to break down the subtle intellectual barriers between disciplines and professions, between professors and practitioners, to serve a common goal: finding effective strategies for addressing the problems of homeless families in California. The exploration became known simply as "the Homeless Seminar." It drew together a diverse, interdisciplinary group of people with experience and broad knowledge regarding homelessness and extreme poverty in California. They come together against the backdrop of a growing crisis, faltering remedial efforts and with an awareness of the limits of their individual knowledge and experience.

As perhaps the inevitable result of a phenomenon which is now the subject of independent disciplines, *what* one knows about social facts is largely constrained by *how* one knows them. Unfortunately, social problems do not fall neatly into the same categories that correspond to university departments and professional school organization. Nor is the collective knowledge of social problems acquired in academic settings coextensive with all human knowledge in these areas. Knowledge is also attained through actual experience.

Beyond these constraints on the intellectual understanding of social

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facts are the limits of knowledge of a more instrumental kind. This is exemplified by what the Homeless Seminar proposal to the Ford Foundation called "the professional myopia of lawyers." In an extreme form, this "myopia" blinds lawyers to all aspects of a problem that are not potential litigation subjects. In a milder form, the myopia merely colors how lawyers perceive problems and potential solutions. However, lawyers are not the only professionals so afflicted. For example, a psychologist may pay attention only to the individual coping mechanisms of a person in a situation that a social worker would understand as entirely impossible.

As the participants in the Homeless Seminar came to realize, there is a more general limit to the ability (or advisability) of intellectuals and professionals in devising solutions to the problems of the poor. This is a product not only of the limits of understanding, but also of the effects of self-interest on the perception of intellectuals and professionals who are not themselves homeless or extremely poor. In a later iteration, the Homeless Seminar focused explicitly on these questions of empowerment and control, and the exploration continues. This, then, is a report of a process, rather than an ending.

BEGINNINGS

The Homeless Seminar had its origins in occasional interactions over the course of some years between faculty at the UCLA School of Law and legal services attorneys active in advocacy and litigation on behalf of homeless people in Los Angeles. Nationwide, homelessness became the subject of great public concern and controversy during the 1980's; Los Angeles was no exception. Many of those controversies found their way into litigation, perhaps more so in Los Angeles than anywhere else. The litigation resulted from the efforts of a group of lawyers and advocates from several legal service and public interest law firms.[1] Some of these attorneys lectured to poverty law classes at UCLA law school. They related their specific litigation and advocacy

1. Both participants and observers have described homeless litigation in Los Angeles. *See generally* Kerry R. Bensinger, *From Public Charity to Social Justice: The Role of the Court in California's General Relief Program*, 21 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 497 (1988); Gary L. Blasi, *Litigation Strategies for Addressing Bureaucratic Disentitlement*, 16 N.Y.U. REV. L. & SOC. CHANGE 591 (1987-88); Gary L. Blasi, *Litigation on Behalf of the Homeless: Systematic Approaches*, 31 WASH. U. J. URB. & CONTEMP. L. 137 (1987); Gary L. Blasi, *Rights on the Homeless Litigation Concerning Homeless People*, 4 PUB. L. F. 433 (1985); Robert C. Coates, *Legal Rights of Homeless Americans*. For an examination of litigation on behalf of homeless families in California, see Donna Mas-

experiences on behalf of homeless people to the broader perspectives on poverty law issues taught in these courses. The litigators added unique insight into courses that normally only discussed broad perspectives on poverty law issues. The litigators had also consulted informally from time-to-time with the law faculty regarding litigation strategy considerations, remedies, and for assistance in the identification of potential expert witnesses.

These informal relationships offered a number of benefits to both practitioners and professors. From the law professor's perspective, the interaction provided concreteness and immediacy to the theoretical and historical classroom approaches. From the litigator's perspective, the relationships facilitated the kind of longer range strategic planning that is often very difficult to achieve in the heat of litigation. The professors and the practitioners shared common intellectual interests in understanding the phenomena of extreme poverty and analyzing how and why advocacy approaches have succeeded or failed in the past.

Although the benefits of these informal relationships were real, the informality and lack of structure limited the joint consideration of complex questions to only a meeting or two. Further, all the participants were acutely aware of the limitations of perception and experience that result from spending most of one's time thinking about the world as a lawyer or law teacher. As a result, the participants decided that it was necessary to involve a more diverse group.

From past work, the litigators and law professors knew a broad range of people who could contribute to the discussions.[2] They began to recruit colleagues in other fields, and people who were neither lawyers nor academics. These recruits were thoughtful people who had experience working with and advocating for the very poor and homeless. The litigators and law professors also wrestled with ways in which to narrow the substantive focus.

COMING TO FOCUS ON INCOME PROBLEMS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

As observers have pointed out,[3] homelessness is not a phenomenon

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cari, Comment, *Homeless Families: Do They Have a Right to Integrity?*, 35 UCLA L. REV. 159 (1987).

2. These people included service providers, community advocates, organizers, and academics from other disciplines including urban planning, medicine, psychiatry, and anthropology.

3. *See, e.g.*, GREGG BARAK, GIMME SHELTER: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF HOMELESSNESS IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA (1991).

separate and apart from poverty, but rather one of the most extreme manifestations of poverty. Most people who are homeless have been "merely" ill-housed in the recent past and have fallen from the very bottom of the housing market. There is great variation among people who are homeless, but nearly all of them share one characteristic: they are too poor to afford stable housing. It is clear that people who suffer from mental disorders and substance abuse are overrepresented among the homeless. This is, however, principally the result of their relative inability to compete for a very small and decreasing supply of housing at the bottom of the market.[4]

Whatever one's causal analysis, however, it is clear that as a social problem, homelessness is associated with a complex set of other problems. These problems include: economic dislocations in industries that once employed low-skilled workers; deficiencies in the "safety-net" programs ostensibly designed to meet the bare subsistence needs of the poor; deteriorating health and mental health care systems; drastic reductions in governmental housing assistance programs; dramatic losses through a variety of processes in the supply of affordable housing to the poor; persistent racial discrimination in housing and employment; and the continuing and residual effects of inadequate and discriminatory public education systems. The list is endless. Although all of these issues deserve attention, it would be difficult for any set of people, however diverse and eclectic, to carefully consider them all simultaneously.

For a variety of reasons, the planning group decided to focus initial efforts on problems of homeless *families* (as distinguished from single adults) and to consider only problems of *income and temporary shelter* (leaving aside the problem of the housing market). One salient reason for narrowing the focus to this set of issues was that some of the lawyers and advocates in the seminar had recently participated in litigation that was enormously successful in some senses and frustratingly incomplete in others.

Prior to this litigation, California did not have an emergency shelter program for homeless families. Other states operated these programs through welfare departments. In California, lawyers representing the poor searched the welfare statutes in vain, hoping to find legal relief for these families. Meanwhile, homeless families who sought help from

4. *See, e.g.*, Kay Y. McChesney, *Family Homelessness: A Systemic Problem*, 46 J. SOC. ISSUES 191, 192 (1990) ("The rapid increase in homelessness in the 1980's is the result of a shift in the low-income housing ratio . . .").

the public sector faced a cruel choice. The only effective way for a homeless parent to give her children shelter was to relinquish them to the government and the foster care system established under child neglect or abuse statutes.

In *Hansen v. Department of Social Services*,[5] a coalition of public interest attorneys that represented homeless parents filed a class action lawsuit against the State of California. The suit sought to prevent the state from conditioning its provision of emergency shelter to homeless children upon the separation of parent from child.[6] The plaintiffs sought and obtained an injunction,[7] later sustained in the appellate courts, prohibiting this policy and effectively requiring the government to provide emergency shelter care to homeless children *with* their parents.[8] A judicially mandated emergency shelter system for homeless families resulted from the suit. The mandate, however, was imposed on a child protection bureaucracy ill-equiped to operate a family shelter program. Later, a legislative settlement produced a publicly funded emergency shelter program for homeless families. This was the first program of its kind in California. The new system consisted not of newly constructed shelters or welfare hotels, but of a system of special disbursements to homeless families. These payments helped pay for temporary housing and move-in costs for permanent housing. From a purely lawyerly perspective, *Hansen* was a brilliant success.

The lawyers for the *Hansen* plaintiffs, however, were mindful of the limits to the remedy that they had achieved through litigation. Although homeless parents now had new resources to spend in the private market, they often lacked the necessary information and the transportation to take advantage of the existing affordable temporary shelter. In some California counties, market conditions made it extremely difficult to find either temporary shelter or permanent housing even with the provided maximum payments. With the *Hansen* remedy in place for about one year, and the limits of those remedies becoming increasingly apparent, the time seemed ripe for review of the problem.

5. 193 Cal. App. 3d 283 (1987).

6. *Id.* at 287.

7. *Id.* The injunction prohibited the Department of Social Services "from denying the provision of emergency shelter care 'so as to exclude homeless children, regardless of whether homeless children remain with their parent(s), guardian(s), or caretaker(s).'" *Id.*

8. *Id.* at 298-99.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEMINAR

Membership in the seminar evolved through individual referrals and decision rather than from a conscious plan. The planning group discussed the limits of a purely professional perspective on problems of extreme poverty and considered ways to involve homeless and poor participants. At that point in the planning process, however, too many people had already committed to the seminar to truly incorporate poor and homeless participants beyond mere tokenism. These discussions did result, however, in a more concentrated and successful effort to include in the seminar people of color, especially among the advocates who worked with homeless families. A later iteration of the seminar did involve homeless and poor people.

Four of the seminar participants worked in shelter and related service-providing agencies, two were lawyers actively engaged in litigation on behalf of homeless people, and two participants were high-level policy advisors (one to a major charity, the other to an influential state politician). The seminar included six professors at UCLA, including four law professors and one professor each from the Social Work and Urban Planning Schools. Finally, two researchers based outside the university participated — one an anthropologist and the other a pediatrician. All of the academics and researchers had individual knowledge and experience regarding homelessness and poverty.

CONDUCT OF THE SEMINAR

The seminar had two structural components: weekly discussions organized around topics selected by seminar participants; and, for the non-academics, a reflective paper on a topic drawn from recent experience. The weekly seminar discussions focused on examining problems from a variety of analytic perspectives and experiences. There was no expectation that a uniform set of views would emerge, although the seminar planners explicitly hoped that sharing perspectives would extend the knowledge of each of the individual participants and deepen their collective understanding of homeless families. A brief account of a sample of the seminar sessions may illustrate the degree of success.

The initial seminar consisted of discussions led by three people who provided service to homeless families. In addition to providing food and shelter to clients or guests, they helped individuals obtain welfare or food stamp benefits. They occasionally organized and challenged regulations or welfare bureaucracy practices that led to the denial of benefits.

These participants revealed their experience with hundreds of homeless families. They told stories and uncovered themes that were repeated throughout the seminar. For example, one person observed that homeless families were more likely to find success if they could share a sense of community and interdependence with other families. The effective resources available to individual women could be expanded in a multitude of small ways. An example was sharing informal child care, making it much easier for women to look for work and housing. Small arrangements of this sort made a large cumulative difference.

All three service provider/advocates at the initial seminar provided a concrete view of the intersection of homelessness and housing economics. Even if a family was extraordinarily successful at achieving the goals they jointly established with social workers, their ability to avoid homelessness in the future was entirely dependent on their ability to accumulate enough assets to find and maintain an apartment.[9] There was obviously great variation in the competencies of the families that were helped in these shelters. There was also great variation in the random exigencies of life. Health problems, stolen welfare checks, and failed marriages exemplified this. The great constant that homeless families faced was the acute shortage of low-rent housing in the Los Angeles market.

The seminar then turned to an examination of the housing market. In 1990, rent levels in Los Angeles were such that a person working full time at a minimum wage job would, on average, be required to spend seventy percent of his or her total income on rent. Fully twenty percent of Los Angeles households spent more than half their total income on housing. Many factors converged to make the situation worse for poor people in the future: 4,000 units a year were being demolished, most of them low-income rentals. Although about 1,000 low-income units were built each year, about 10,000 low-income households moved to Los Angeles each year. Earthquake damage prevention laws that required reinforcement of older buildings indirectly decreased the low-income housing market. Owners either reinforced their buildings and raised rents or simply demolished the buildings. The seminar focused on recent legislative successes and placed them

9. In the context of individual histories of homeless families, the familiar academic/political debate — about whether homelessness is a product principally of personal pathologies or of the local consequences of large scale economic phenomena — seemed particularly sterile.

into perspective: a statewide $200 million low-income housing program was expected to generate fewer than 1,000 new rental units in Los Angeles. It appeared that the constant constraints of the housing market would make it extraordinarily difficult for very poor families to avoid occasional homelessness, even if they were successful in the short term. These constraints also made it much more difficult and expensive to address homelessness as a matter of income support.

After establishing some of the parameters of the problem, the seminar turned to recent litigative efforts. The litigators involved in the *Hansen* case gave an account of how the litigation developed and examined the resulting remedies. The litigators also examined pending legislative threats to restrict or eliminate the program. A Homeless Assistance Program which resulted from the litigation provided cash payments for temporary shelter and move-in costs for permanent housing. However, the program was under administrative and political attack.

The welfare bureaucracy was trying to find ways to limit the cost of the program, which was far above earlier expectations. The bureaucracy established procedural requirements that made it more difficult for homeless families to use the program. In addition, the program had been initiated without any consideration as to how ground-level employees would view it. The eligibility workers who administered the program had to deal with an entirely new set of processes and paperwork. Further, these eligibility workers were trained almost exclusively to deter and prevent fraud. They needed extensive documentation before approving the issuance of even the smallest benefit. These same workers now were asked to write large checks to applicants who necessarily had little documentation. Faced with this dissonance between their training and the new regulations, many workers devised their own *ad hoc* documentation requirements.

There were several results of these unanticipated consequences of the *Hansen* remedy. First, eligibility workers began to ignore or distort the regulations that governed the program. Consequently, homeless families were being turned away even though they were entitled to aid on the face of the statute. Second, politicians were calling for severe legislative restrictions, basing their attacks on press accounts exposing isolated abuses of the Homeless Assistance Program. Finally, the welfare bureaucracy was considering radical changes in the regulations governing the program. In short, the litigation had generated an entirely new program that was largely without a political constituency. The

litigators were ill-equipped to deal with the bureaucratic and political war that was being waged on the program.

These accounts led to a broader discussion of the public attitudes and political undercurrents affecting legislators, including a discussion of how to expand the very limited direct constituency for the homeless assistance program. It became clear that the program could not survive in a hostile political climate without the direct, active, and organized support of a broad group of people. Clearly it was necessary to include those most affected, the very poor. It was also clear that in order to achieve their client's goals, litigators would have to pay careful attention to the manner in which broad mandates are implemented at the ground level.

Seminar participants analyzed the lessons that were learned from similar efforts at broadening support for social programs. They examined accounts of programs in other eras in this country and programs initiated in contemporary Europe.

A unified grand strategy did not emerge from the Homeless Seminar, nor was that the intention. The final product was less tangible. One participant, an advocate and practitioner, recently described the seminar one year after participation:

> The seminar was one of the most important events in my recent life. I spend my professional life trying to get things done. I have no time to think about much beyond the immediate objective. And I often can't talk openly about hesitations or uncertainties without risking what I am trying to do. The seminar was a very rare, safe place to talk about ideas, to learn from other people, and also to work out what I have learned in my own work but didn't fully understand.

Some Lessons Learned in the Seminar

1. *Practitioners Possess a Significant "Fugitive" Body of Knowledge*

Although academics spawned the seminar, all participants recognized explicitly that the non-academics were essential to the enterprise. They possessed rare knowledge attained through years of experience. While the practitioners had neither formalized nor published their knowledge, the knowledge was nonetheless valuable.

There is an understandable tendency in academia to rely on published accounts and analyses in addressing social problems. These are, after all, available at low cost without leaving the campus. Often, however, what distinguishes published thinking from the "fugitive" knowl-

edge of the practitioners is not greater methodological sophistication or theoretical grounding, but merely the fact of publication itself. Most practitioners lack the time and incentives to publish articles. The seminar gave them both the time and the incentive to reflect upon their knowledge and make it explicit.

For example, the work of professionals is often defined and limited by conventional notions of a professional-client relationship. In a transcribed session, one of the service provider/advocates shared how she came to a changing sense of the definition of a "client." She found that representing merely one client in a room full of homeless people seeking welfare assistance led to her representation of one client at the direct expense of other unrepresented homeless people. Consequently, she organized other advocates to go to a single welfare office and offer help to all the people there.

In one of the seminar papers, a litigator commented about changing litigation approaches on behalf of the homeless poor. Although much litigation had previously focused on the interpretation of arcane welfare regulations, some lawyers in Los Angeles tried another approach:

> The theory was straightforward. The state General Assistance statute required the counties to relieve and support the poor. Denying aid to the homeless was contrary to this mandate. The tactics and strategy, however, were innovative. Lawyers, paralegals and community workers interviewed literally hundreds of homeless people and took sworn declarations on the spot for later use in the lawsuit. A factual record of unusual density and breadth resulted. Prior to these lawsuits, the welfare litigation in which I had been involved was based on a handful of sworn statements from persons whom we believed were typical of welfare recipients as a whole. In these homeless lawsuits, the suffering of the clients was not left to the courts' imagination. The statements from needy people were literally three and four inches thick and created a "moral imperative" for the court to act.

This litigator went on to describe how the lessons learned in one series of cases could be extended to other contexts.

Another service/provider advocate assessed the role of individual client advocacy in making law reform litigation effective:

> [After a successful lawsuit] if you get something and nobody knows about it, nobody tests or uses the system. If this is the case, then the suit was worthless. The Homeless Assistance program has been more of a team effort. You know, people like us are out there making sure that rights get exercised and people get what they're entitled to. If we weren't out there badgering people to

> death about Homeless Assistance, and the new regulations requiring it, it would be meaningless and is still meaningless in places where people aren't doing that.

The litigators and policy specialists understood the lesson. Litigation and advocacy efforts that succeed at the court judgment level can fail dramatically at implementation and administration levels.

One of the seminar participants involved in public policy and advocacy work on a statewide level saw the seminar as a place to think about and discuss "the real 'scary questions' . . . that challenge our own conceptions of homelessness — of what we are doing — our strategies as well as our tactics." He went on to consider the entire question of framing advocacy in terms of homelessness rather than poverty:

> Advocates obviously, and rightly, can argue that there are solid tactical reasons for focusing on homelessness. Homelessness is an extremely visible manifestation of extreme poverty. It is dramatic and, at least initially, extremely sympathetic. It exists in the middle of downtown business communities side by side with the most visible manifestations of the country's wealth.
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> Thus it is arguable that we are setting the agenda, and are focusing on homelessness because housing and homeless activists feel that it is tactically important to use homelessness to dramatize the plight of the poor. But what if focussing on homelessness is a trap? Why are we discussing homelessness when we are dealing with families who are also in need of basic nutrition, medical care, education and every other basic necessity of life? Why is it interesting to find out why a mother chose to feed her kids rather than pay the rent, or vice-versa?
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> The needs of other constituencies also drive the homeless debate. We have now all but ended public discussion of homeless men. Why? Possibly, the media finds them less sympathetic or compelling. The 'real' issue is now homeless families. Recently, the New York Times printed a major article on homeless 'throwaway' children. Perhaps we are moving off of families to this even more rarefied issue. Ultimately, the issue will be defined so narrowly (homeless throwaway children of veterans who are HIV positive) so that there are only 200 in the country. They will all be given lifetime support and the issue of homelessness will be solved.

2. *Reflection Deepens and Improves Practitioners' Experiential Knowledge*

Although practitioners can acquire knowledge through experience, it is clear that experience alone is an inadequate teacher. Even John

Dewey recognized that "[s]ome experiences are mis-educative,"[10] particularly where they are disconnected and not organized.[11] This does not mean that knowledge acquired by experience is worthless unless it fits into an elaborate theoretical scheme. Donald Schon has described how practitioners acquire knowledge through what he calls "reflection-in-action"[12] or "a reflective conversation with the situation."[13] He explains that professionals extract from their experience a "repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions"[14] that permit them to make intelligent decisions in very complex and changing settings. Schon's work suggests that the conscious reflection process may be a requisite to learning from experience.

The Homeless Seminar provided opportunities and incentives for the practitioner-participants to reflect on their experience. The seminar discussions themselves were largely devoted to these reflections. Presenters were required to make sense of their experience. Other participants shared analogs from their own practice. A small stipend was offered to the non-academic participants to motivate them to reduce their reflections to an essay or to record them.

3. *There are Substantial Benefits from Shared Reflection and Theoretical Context*

Of course, no formal seminar is required for practitioners to learn the lessons of their experience. However, there are substantial benefits from sharing reflections in a seminar setting. There are reasons for this. Some lessons derived from individual experience are simply wrong. There is now a substantial body of literature in experimental and cognitive psychology demonstrating the existence of pervasive biases in the processing of experiential information of all kinds.[15] For example, we are all subject to a tendency to generalize too strongly from very striking examples.[16] One way to correct these errors in indi-

10. JOHN DEWEY, EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION 25 (1938).

11. *Id.* at 20-21.

12. DONALD A. SCHON, THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER: HOW PROFESSIONALS THINK IN ACTION 49 (1983).

13. *Id.* at 167.

14. *Id.* at 138.

15. One excellent collection is found in JUDGMENT UNDER UNCERTAINTY: HEURISTICS AND BIASES (Daniel Kahneman et al. eds., 1982).

16. Cognitive psychologists call this phenomenon the "availability heuristic." *See, e.g.*, Amos Tversky & Daniel Kahneman, *Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability*, *in* JUDGMENT UNDER UNCERTAINTY: HEURISTICS AND BIASES (Daniel Kahneman et al. eds., 1982). This psychological phenomenon may

vidual assessments of experience is to subject them to commentary and comparison. This was one of the functions of the seminar discussions.

Both individual and shared reflections on experience may extend the tacit knowledge of practitioners and make it explicit. However, there are obvious limits to the collective experiential knowledge of any small group. The academics in the seminar introduced lessons derived from analogous situations not only in other cities, but in other countries, cultures, and historical periods. In addition, the academics and the more theoretically-minded practitioners suggested theories and constructs from several disciplines that provided a common language for talking about common experiences. Discussions about how individual welfare workers were improperly denying homeless assistance payments to homeless families could be understood in light of the theory of "bureaucratic disentitlement." Under this phenomenon, "obligations to social welfare beneficiaries are reduced or circumscribed through largely obscure 'bureaucratic' actions and inactions of public authorities. . . ."[17]

4. *There is Considerable Value in Shared Reflection that Crosses Lines of Discipline and Profession*

One of the underlying premises of the seminar was the value of an interdisciplinary approach to a multifaceted social problem like homelessness. Whether the seminar participants viewed homelessness abstractly as a social problem or more concretely through the often tragic biographies of individual people, no traditional academic discipline could lay exclusive claim. Instead, many disciplines had something to offer. The Homeless Seminar included participants who were experts in different areas. These areas were as diverse as anthropology, law, psychiatry, medicine, social work, history, and sociology. In this sense, the seminar held a place in a long history of efforts to establish interdisciplinary approaches to multifaceted social problems.

In addition to the differences in perception and analysis that flow from the perspectives of particular disciplines, there are significant differences resulting from the nature and goals of an enterprise. These differences are only partly captured by familiar notions of "theory and practice." There are many accurate answers to the question, "Why are Rachel and her children homeless?" Some of the answers deal with the

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account, for example, for the common perception that nearly all homeless people are mentally ill, despite overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary.

17. Michael Lipsky, *Bureaucratic Disentitlement in Social Welfare Programs*, 58 SOC. SERV. REV. 33 (1984).

mobility of capital and the effective export of jobs to cheaper labor markets. Other answers deal with the psychodynamics of Rachel's family relationships. Other explanations could point to low-income housing shortages or to a particular regulation that caused Rachel to lose her only source of income. Many of these explanations are interesting; indeed, all may be true and some may be extraordinarily insightful and important. However, only a few of the possible explanations for her homelessness are of immediate interest to Rachel, her children, and anyone trying to help her. People who use knowledge that they have acquired through experience in helping Rachel and others like her naturally develop a more instrumental view of the world. Donald Schon would designate their understanding an example of an "epistemology of practice."[18]

There are limits to both theoretical knowledge learned through a discipline and the "epistemology of practice" that is developed experiencially. All of us see the world through mediating cognitive structures. Karl Mannheim described these "perspectives" as mainly functions of self-interest and social position.[19] Modern cognitive scientists make a convincing case that *all* experience and learning is mediated through structures that have variously been called "frames,"[20] "scripts,"[21] "schemas,"[22] or "mental models."[23] Studies of the differences between experts and novices across a variety of domains suggest that experts impose "templates" on complex and confusing situations. The "templates" are derived from similar situations seen in past experience.[24] Of course, different experts acquire different "templates," just as the "schemas" imposed through ordinary experience vary from person to person. For this reason, qualitative methodologists recommend

18. SCHON, *supra* note 12, at 37.

19. KARL MANNHEIM, IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE (1936).

20. MARVIN MINSKY, THE SOCIETY OF MIND 244-72 (1985).

21. ROGER C. SHANK & ROBERT P. ABELSON, SCRIPTS, PLANS, GOALS AND UNDERSTANDING: AN INQUIRY INTO HUMAN KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES (1977).

22. Shelley E. Taylor & Jennifer Crocker, *Schematic Bases of Social Information Processing*, *in* SOCIAL COGNITION: THE ONTARIO SYMPOSIUM (E. Higgins et al. eds. 1981).

23. JOHN H. HOLLAND, ET AL., INDUCTION: PROCESSES OF INFERENCE, LEARNING AND DISCOVERY 29-67 (1986).

24. K. VanLehn, *Problem Solving and Cognitive Skill Acquisition*, *in* FOUNDATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE (R. Posner, ed. 1989).

the use of information from multiple sources.[25] Similarly, empirical studies of expert medical judgments have demonstrated the validity of the folk notion that two heads are better than one, even when the one head is particularly expert.[26]

CONCLUSION

The Homeless Seminar exemplified these principles in a number of ways. The seminar enabled participants to begin to look at the problem of homelessness among families in different ways from their usual research or practice. A litigator could, for example, suspend the need to focus instrumentally on what is possible legally, and think about how organized and empowered clients might achieve different and more successful results. Both the litigator and the social worker could think about changing public attitudes toward homeless people in light of historical experience in this country as well as others. These opportunities resulted from the diversity of the seminar membership. The opportunities were possible because the seminar was a "safe" place to discuss ideas openly, without concern for their effects on particular litigation, legislation, fund-raising, or other goals.[27]

The UCLA Homeless Seminar consisted of both professionals and practitioners. However, none of the participants were or had been homeless, though some participants had been very poor in the past. All of the seminar members came to more fully appreciate the inevitable limits to the professional and practice-oriented perspectives, no matter how broadened or extended. The social and psychological forces that constrain understanding of individual disciplines or professions also constrain to some extent the understanding of all professionals. Clearly, homeless and poor people also have important knowledge acquired through experience, knowledge that is incomplete but nonetheless an essential component of the truth.

25. This phenomenon is called "triangulation." *See* STEVEN J. TAYLOR & ROBERT BOGDAN, INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS: THE SEARCH FOR MEANINGS 68-69 (1984).

26. Roy M. Poses et al., *Are Two (Inexperienced) Heads Better than One (Experienced) Head?: Averaging House Officers Prognostic Judgments for Critically Ill Patients*, 150 ARCH. INTERN. MED. 1874-1880 (1990).

27. The seminar was "safe," in part because of an assumption of confidentiality, which underlies the lack of attribution to particular views recounted in this Article.