



The Homeless

By Christopher Jencks

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How widespread is homelessness, how did it happen, and what can be done about it? These are the questions explored by Christopher Jencks, America's foremost analyst of social problems. Jencks examines the standard explanations and finds that the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, the invention of crack cocaine, rising joblessness among men, declining marriage rates, cuts in welfare benefits, and the destruction of skid row have all played a role. Changes in the housing market have had less impact than many claim, however, and real federal housing subsidies actually doubled during the 1980s. Not confining his mission to studying the homeless, Jencks proposes several practical approaches to helping the homeless.

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The Homeless By Christopher Jencks Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Noted sociologist Jencks (*Rethinking Social Policy*), who teaches at Northwestern University, here offers a brief but instructive survey and analysis of much literature on the homeless. Concentrating on the "visible homeless" (street people and those using shelters), Jencks agrees that their numbers have risen but also notes that his estimate of 400,000 homeless in 1987-1988 is disputed by many advocacy groups as far too low. He attributes the proliferation of mentally ill homeless people both to liberal policies boosting individual autonomy and to conservative policies that cut mental health budgets. He suggests that the "cumulative effect" of having been born disadvantaged, not merely bad luck, leads to the streets. He blames crack and deinstitutionalization for fueling homelessness among individuals and cites skimpy welfare payments, the growth of single motherhood and crack addiction (again) as leading to homeless families. He recommends certain admittedly stopgap measures: increased welfare payments or subsidized housing for families; a day-labor market supported by government and private sources for working adults; and social services and intervention for the mentally ill.

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From [Booklist](#)

In this brief but thoughtful analysis of homelessness, Jencks, a sociology professor at Northwestern University, focuses on what he calls the "visible homeless": those who "slept in a public place or a shelter" (the latter includes welfare hotels) during a given week. After wrestling with the numbers (appendixes spell out the methodology used and provide supplementary tables), Jencks discusses in some detail the factors he feels are most significant in pushing Americans onto the streets: deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, crack cocaine, joblessness and declining marriage rates, reduced welfare benefits, and the destruction of skid rows across the country. A final chapter offers "Some Partial Solutions"; among them, cubicle hotels to give homeless people a bit of privacy and stability; recognition that, even with training, many former welfare mothers will need continuing subsidies; a publicly run day-labor market for childless homeless adults who *can* work, and improved disability benefits for those who cannot; and vouchers to allow homeless Americans to select support services *they* feel are worthwhile. Jencks' concessions to political realities will make his study controversial. *Mary Carroll*

Review

Jencks is a savvy and clear-thinking policy analyst...An honest and illuminating portrait of homelessness in America...[A] superb book. (Douglas J. Besharov *Washington Post Book World*)

Because homelessness has become so politicised, its possible causes and cures the battleground of lobbies, the true nature of the problem has been lost in an ideological blur. This readable and relentlessly logical book...successfully strips away the dogma. (*The Economist*)

How is it that a 57-year-old sociology professor can transcend hyped-up numbers, ideological cant, and government obfuscation to tell us roughly how many homeless there are and where they come from? Our biggest and best news organizations have been unable to perform this simple task for nearly fifteen years. (Jon Katz *New York Magazine*)

Much of this concise text is taken up evaluating the validity of claims made by liberals and conservatives as to the causes of the '80s homelessness epidemic...No previous work, to my knowledge, has tried so assiduously to winnow fact from rhetoric in so many complex policy realms. (Kathleen Hirsch *Boston*)

Sunday Globe)

Clear, unclouded by political preconceptions and rigorously logical, Jencks takes a much needed fresh look at debates that generally yield more heat than light...By the end of the book, even readers who disagree with his conclusions will feel thoroughly educated about one of America's most pressing social problems. (Philip Kasinitz *Newsday*)

Jencks...subjects the various explanations of homelessness to rigorous analysis. Much conventional wisdom withers under his scrutiny...Jencks's thinking is guided by a zeal for the truth that has been sadly lacking in homelessness policy over the past decade. (Heather MacDonald *Wall Street Journal*)

In his new book, Christopher Jencks sets out to bring clarity and sense to the public debate. He systematically reviews and evaluates a large body of research literature on the homeless and, in less than 200 pages of tersely written and tightly argued text, he deftly leads the reader through a maze of assertions...He writes lucidly and compellingly and, what is more, he does not pull his punches...*The Homeless* is undoubtedly a major achievement...[Jencks'] findings defy not only the wisdom of the average sidewalk sociologist, but also the arguments of many established researchers...*The Homeless*, with its challenging findings, is a bold book...Mr. Jencks, with his masterly exposition of complex data and his discriminating, well-balanced assessments, goes a long way toward restoring confidence in the capacity of the social sciences to transcend politically loaded policy analysis. He also goes a long way toward restoring a modicum of realism to public debate. (Brigitte Berger *New York Times Book Review*)

A thoughtful analysis of homelessness...Jencks' concessions to political realities will make his study controversial. (Mary Carroll *Booklist*)

Users Review

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Hey guys, do you wishes to finds a new book to see? May be the book with the headline The Homeless suitable to you? The actual book was written by well-known writer in this era. Typically the book untitled The Homeless is one of several books which everyone read now. This book was inspired many men and women in the world. When you read this publication you will enter the new age that you ever know just before. The author explained their idea in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to understand the core of this book. This book will give you a wide range of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world on this book.

Nellie Kim:

The Homeless can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to set every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing The Homeless nevertheless doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource information that maybe you can be among it. This great information can certainly drawn you into fresh stage of crucial thinking.

Michael Davis:

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