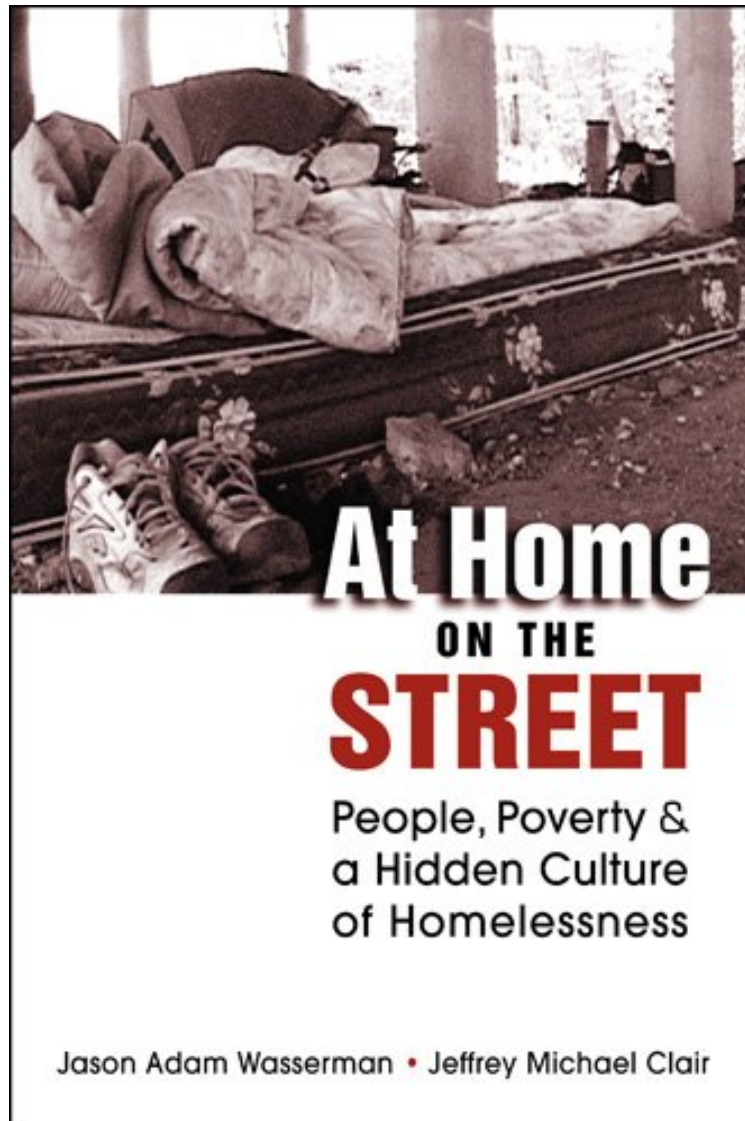


(Get free) At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness

At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness

Jason Adam Wasserman, Jeffrey Michael Clair
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Jason Adam Wasserman, Jeffrey Michael Clair : At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Bit Monotonous and Less Insightful than Hoped By Anonymous This book seemed to take on a monotonous bias quickly and without letting go. The writers obviously

developed heartfelt friendships and sympathies with their subjects and then seemed to write a whole book about homeless people as victims and society as villains. At first, these feelings struck a chord with me, but then they just took over the book. Different topics were discussed in very scientific and academic language, but I felt that the bias became too much for me and decreased the insightfulness and general usefulness of the book. I also felt that life on the streets was not described in nearly as much detail as I had hoped from researchers who spent time living amongst their subjects. That was a primary reason that I bought this particular book.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. At Home on the Street, People Poverty, and a Hidden Culture: By Thomas L. Murray A masterpiece: Insightful, brilliant and allows the laymen to see the HONEST predicament of America's Homeless population. Thank God for the authors. They took the time to study and then write a book that doesn't preach, it informs, it enlightens. Tom Murray in West Texas.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. This is not only the best book on homelessness I have found. By Nathan Hunt This is not only the best book on homelessness I have found, it is a highly creative and reflective piece of postmodern sociology. Clair and Wasserman's highly original ethnography on the street homeless--defined as those who generally shirk shelters and homeless services for de-institutionalized life on the streets--goes beyond explaining homelessness to an examination of the deep ironies in our culture that both produce homelessness and criminalize the very phenomenon for which they are responsible. The authors' core critique is that mainstream homelessness discussions become reductionistic when locating all under the same generic, individualized causes of addiction and mental illness. Their analysis is grounded in homeless people's self-understanding and from there moves outward into critique of official definitions, causes, services and policies. Which way does cause and effect flow? Is homelessness caused by mental health issues or do mental health issues emerge through homelessness? Does alcoholism result in homelessness or does the boredom and depression of being homeless lead one to drink? Furthermore, do the homeless really drink more than the rest of us or are they simply perceived as such due to their constant relegation to public places? Are people homeless because they are lazy or because a capitalist economy based on unchecked competition for limited resources naturally disenfranchises a portion of the population? These lines of inquiry allow the authors to provide a highly successful upending of homelessness orthodoxy. They argue that most services available in the continuum-of-care model which emerged in the past thirty years are predicated on two presuppositions: 1) homelessness is a result of disease (either mental illness or addiction), and 2) the cause of homelessness rests primarily in the homeless individual's personal deficiencies. Thus, if one desires to move off the streets, one must acquiesce to these assumptions. However, as the cause and effect critique demonstrates, this fails to serve many homeless for whom addiction, mental illness or personal shortcomings are not the primary roadblocks. The range of acceptable solutions are thus narrowed and exclusionary, reiterating the same oppressive elements of society that produce homelessness in the first place and neglecting the social structures that need the greatest degree of critique and transformation. Following Jacques Derrida and Paulo Freire, Clair and Wasserman argue that we must begin with the homeless not by seeking to end it with predetermined solutions based on the advice of experts. Rather, we begin by simply befriending the homeless and allow a plurality of approaches to emerge in dialogical communication which is honoring to the perspectives and wishes of the homeless themselves. The authors' experiences led them to claim, Those who are street homeless are not only on the margins of society but also on margins of homelessness (54). Though homeless friends were my initial guides me into social issues, I have stepped back from these relationships over the past few years. Jaded by a lack of innovation and effectiveness in the field, I have placed my energies elsewhere. Clair and Wasserman re-stoked my passion and provided fresh lenses for contemplating the issue.

In their compelling examination of what it means to be truly at home on the street, Jason Wasserman and Jeffrey Clair argue that programs and policies addressing homeless people too often serve only to alienate them. Wasserman and Clair delve into the complex realities of homelessness to paint a gripping picture of individuals - not cases or pathologies - living on the street and of their strategies for daily survival. By exploring the private spaces that those who are homeless create for themselves, as well as their prevailing social mores, the authors explain how well-intentioned policies and programs often only widen the gap between the indigent and mainstream society. The result is an unvarnished look at the culture of long-term homelessness and a fresh approach to reaching this resurgent population. In their compelling examination of what it means to be truly at home on the street, the authors argue that programs and policies designed to assist homeless people too often serve only to alienate them.

A revelation.... Wasserman and Clair offer a new way of looking at the diverse people living on the extreme margins of our society. Their rich ethnography confronts popular conceptions of homeless people and situates street homelessness as a choice distinct from living in shelters. Sociologists, service providers, and policymakers - not to mention students of homelessness and poverty - need to read this. --Michael Rowe, Yale University The author's expansive data is firmly grounded in the literature and theory of homelessness, making this an exceptionally strong, interesting, and well-rounded study. --Timothy Pippert, Augsburg College About the Author Jason Adam Wasserman is assistant professor of sociology at Texas Tech University. Jeffrey Michael Clair is associate professor of sociology at

the University of Alabama at Birmingham.