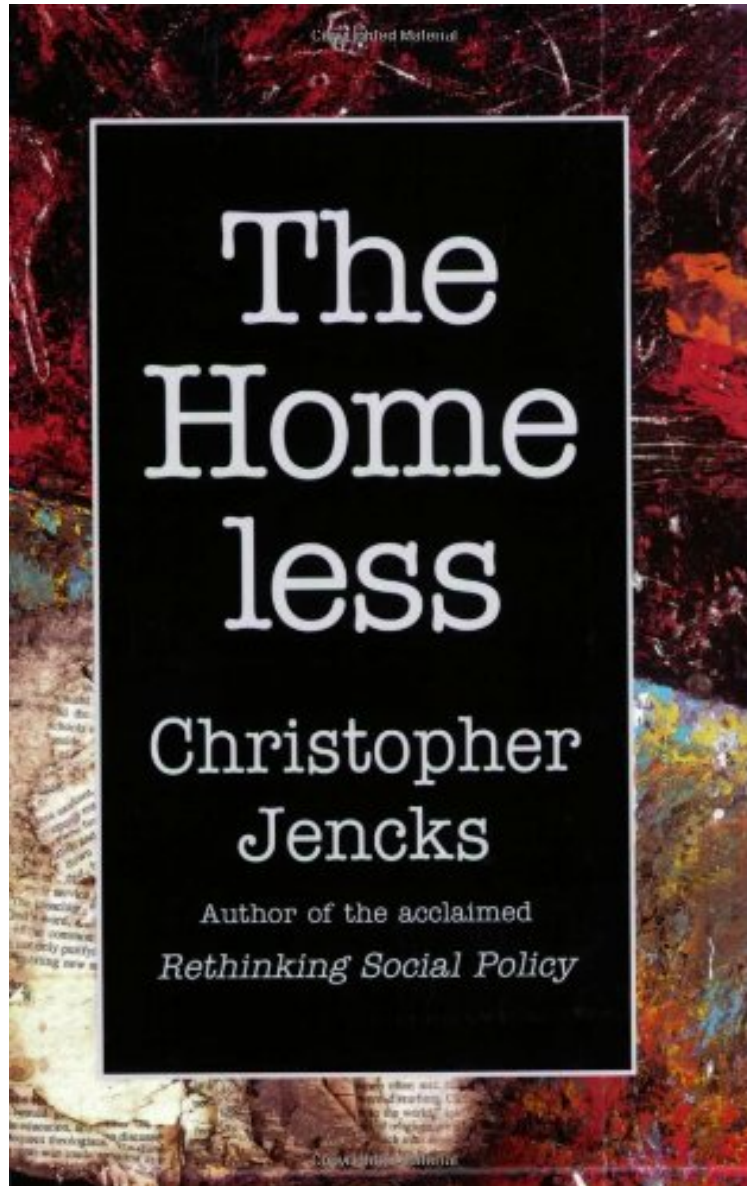


The Homeless

Christopher Jencks

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Christopher Jencks : The Homeless before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Homeless:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. It doesn't get much more boring than this By Terri Merritts As someone raised by parents who volunteered with the homeless (and often took in elderly and disabled ones) and who has spent her whole life volunteering with the homeless, I like to learn all I can to make myself even more effective as

a volunteer and an advocate. This book only succeeded in giving me a headache before putting me to sleep. This is not written in a clear narrative but is instead quite choppy. The author admits that the statistics he is including are just guesses but bases his conclusions on them anyway. For example, at the time of the writing of this book, the Census Bureau and those who supplied statistics about how many people are homeless did NOT count those who lived in parks, in subway stations, in abandoned buildings, under bridges, in doorways, in parks, in cars, and in other places than homeless shelters as being homeless. They also did not count teen runaways who lived on the streets. Now obviously all of these people ARE homeless but if you only count people who are in a homeless shelter on a given night, you miss most homeless people. I am one who is a stickler for research and verifiable facts, not just guesswork and all of this dry-as-dust book is based pretty much on guesswork with the caveat that research or facts in the situation are not available. The author raises many of the reasons given for homelessness but then shoots them down using data he admits is not applicable or based on research with homeless people. I think he really needed to actually go out and do research on the homeless or forego writing this book altogether. Guesswork is NOT social science which is based on research and facts. There are no case histories of actual homeless people included nor did the writer do any research on them. To find out why people are homeless, you need to go to the homeless and find out the facts.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book, data driven, objective approach to the problem - except for the last chapter...By J-O This is a great book, very data driven. The author does an in-depth analysis, addressing arguments from both the left and the right, always detailing with data why he opposes contradicting views and why his conclusions are more valid. This type of books brings a lot of value to any debate. Even though it is outdated (the latest data in the book is from the early 90s), the conclusions are as true and accurate for today: fundamentally, what changed since then only follows the same type of rules and approaches outlined in this book, and will have the same limitations. The only miss, in the book, is the last chapter, where the author tries to be constructive by providing basic solutions for the problem. The suggestions are almost amusing as it shows a disconnect with the rest of the book. It's like the author believes that his liberal approach to the problem (let's intervene in this particular way) will not suffer from the unintended side effects of the other interventions done in the past. This is not to say that we should not intervene and that should have been his only conclusions, but mainly that he assumes rather casually, that his suggestions are well balanced, compared to others, with very little data. More over, he contradicts statements made just a few pages before, in the previous chapter. All in all, this book should be read by all who care about homelessness and the last (5th) star is an effect of both the last chapter, and the age of the book/data. When it came out, it probably was a 5 star.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. good book By Tao I didn't know that there are different types of homeless people. This book is pretty interesting. The book came in mint condition. However I did not finish this book but I am going to finish it whenever I have the time. I use this for my research paper to help me to find homelessness homelessness in a way.. this book is well written.

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.

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. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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