

## History and Overviews

**Amster, R. (2008). *Lost in space: The criminalization, globalization, and urban ecology of homelessness*. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.**

Case studies of the dynamics of homelessness are introduced in the first chapter and are used in analyses throughout the book. Guiding questions are also posed, such as why homelessness is often viewed as a “problem” and what can be learned from the experiences of homeless people and the communities they often create. Chapter 2 focuses on the spaces the homeless are often constrained to occupy, i.e., the trend toward shrinking public spaces that are open equally to everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status. Chapter 3, “Patterns of Exclusion,” considers how the homeless are demonized and stereotyped as embodiments of danger, disorder, disease, and criminality. Chapter 4 examines the motivations and methodologies in the author’s interdisciplinary study that draws upon official records, media reports, interviews, and participant observations linked to the homeless community in Tempe, AZ. Also, in-depth reviews of the relevant literature locate the issues within the context of daily life on the streets and the unique perspectives of homeless people, their advocates, and those who choose to study them. Chapter 5 focuses on the origins, intentions, passage, and enforcement of an ordinance that prohibits sitting on the sidewalks in downtown Tempe. This ordinance provides an opportunity for an intensive case study of the forces of development, privatization, demonization, sanitization, criminalization, and exclusion of the homeless. Chapter 6, “The Ecology of Resistance,” addresses the human rights struggles and the contested realms of public space. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, sets the context for future research by portraying the effects of globalization and associated issues that have arisen in a variety of locations around the world.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Barak, G. (1992). *Gimme shelter: A social history of homelessness in contemporary America*. Westport, CT: Praeger.**

According to current projections, the number of homeless in the United States will continue to swell in the 1990s unless more aggressive efforts to combat the problem are initiated. Based upon a thorough analysis of the underlying social and political causes of homelessness in this country, this study takes a hard look at the realities and misconceptions that surround the victims. Gregg Barak demonstrates how current public service programs inadequately address the issue, and proposes governmental policy changes that could prove beneficial. In an effort to dispel the myths that stereotype the homeless, this study places their plight within the continuing domestic and worldwide economic emergency and defines their demographics according to such factors as age, sex, race, health, and education. Barak’s subsequent focus on the violence and criminality associated with the condition and treatment of the homeless uncovers controversial issues of injustice and constitutionality, and aims the discussion toward possible solutions for this burgeoning problem.

## About this Resource

The books on this list are intended to help educators build their own knowledge about homelessness and support the integration of homelessness content into new and existing curriculum. It is just one of a collection of curriculum resources created by the National Center.

This list is not necessarily meant to be exhaustive, but it does provide a broad range of books addressing multiple homelessness-related topics from varying perspectives. The list is organized into five categories: History and Overviews, Housing and Housing Models, Practice and Policy Implications, Personal Accounts and Case Studies, and Special Populations.

Although some books apply to several categories, each is only listed once to keep the overall length of the list manageable. For purchasing ease, a link to Amazon is provided for each.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Baumohl, J. (1996). *Homelessness in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.**

The number of homeless people in America has continued to grow at an alarming rate since the 1970s. Yet many members of the general public still have far more questions than answers about the magnitude and implications of this complex social problem and the reasons for its persistence. Now the answers can be found in "Homelessness in America," the most current, comprehensive, and authoritative volume available on this subject. Focusing on the broad social issue of homelessness, the book's 19 essays offer in-depth examinations of policy-related issues by noted social workers, researchers, advocates, and other experts in the field. Chapter topics include the causes and prevention of homelessness, national and local advocacy movements, the local regulation of public space, and current policies on employment, income maintenance, and housing. Up-to-date statistics and tables are included along with an extensive bibliography and an appendix listing national or state advocacy organizations.

Available for purchase [here](#)

**Beard, R. (Ed.). (1989). *On being homeless: Historical perspectives (1st edition)*. New York, NY: Museum of the City of New York.**

Essays published to accompany the exhibition On being homeless : an historical perspective, 24 November 1987 through 27 March 1988.

Available for purchase [here](#)

**Blau, J. (1993). *The visible poor: Homelessness in the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.**

Taking an in-depth look at the causes of homelessness in the United States, Joel Blau disproves the convenient myths that most homeless are crazy, drug addicts, or lazy misfits who brought their suffering upon themselves. He shows that the current crisis was an inevitable result of economic and political changes in recent decades, systematically reviewing the explanations offered by researchers, politicians and pundits, from the deinstitutionalization of mental patients in the 1960s to the gentrification of urban neighborhoods in the 1970s to the evisceration of federal spending on social welfare in the 1980s. Blau argues that current government policies at every level are mired in pointless headcounting and quick-fix solutions that only push the homeless out of sight without touching the underlying causes. He advocates social reforms ranging from a national standard for welfare benefits, a higher minimum wage, and establishment of a social sector for non-profit, affordable housing. A powerful contribution to public debate on homelessness, *The Visible Poor* must be read by concerned citizens as well as by policy-makers and advocates.

Available for purchase [here](#)

**Burt, M. M. (1992). *Over the edge: The growth of homelessness in the 1980s*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.**

Often described as an emergency, homelessness in America is becoming a chronic condition that reflects an overall decline in the nation's standard of living and the general state of the economy. This is the disturbing conclusion drawn by Martha Burt in *Over the Edge*, a timely book that takes a clear-eyed look at the astonishing surge in the homeless population during the 1980s. Assembling and analyzing data from 147 U.S. cities, Burt documents the increase in homelessness and proposes a comprehensive explanation of its causes, incorporating economic, personal, and policy determinants. Her unique research answers many provocative questions: Why did homelessness continue to spiral even after economic conditions improved in 1983? Why is it significantly greater in cities with both high poverty rates and high per capita income? What can be done about the problem? Burt points to the significant catalysts of homelessness—the decline of manufacturing jobs in the inner city, the increased cost of living, the tight rental housing market, diminished household income, and reductions in public benefit programs—all of which exert pressures on the more vulnerable of the extremely poor. She looks at the special problems facing the homeless, including the growing number of mentally ill and chemically dependent individuals, and explains why certain groups—minorities and low-skilled men, single men and women, and families headed by women—are at greatest risk of becoming homeless. Burt's analysis reveals that homelessness arises from no single factor, but is instead perpetuated by pivotal interactions between external social and economic conditions and personal vulnerabilities. From an

understanding of these interactions, *Over the Edge* builds lucid, realistic recommendations for policymakers struggling to alleviate a situation of grave consequence for our entire society.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Hopper, K. (2014). *Reckoning with homelessness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.**

It must be some kind of experiment or something, to see how long people can live without food, without shelter, without security."—Homeless woman in Grand Central Station. Kim Hopper has dedicated his career to trying to address the problem of homelessness in the United States. In this powerful book, he draws upon his dual strengths as anthropologist and advocate to provide a deeper understanding of the roots of homelessness. He also investigates the complex attitudes brought to bear on the issue since his pioneering fieldwork with Ellen Baxter twenty years ago helped put homelessness on the public agenda. Beginning with his own introduction to the problem in New York, Hopper uses ethnography, literature, history, and activism to place homelessness into historical context and to trace the process by which homelessness came to be recognized as an issue. He tells the largely neglected story of homelessness among African Americans and vividly portrays various sites of public homelessness, such as airports. His accounts of life on the streets make for powerful reading.

Available for purchase [here](#)

**Kusmer, K. L. (2003). *Down and out, on the road: The homeless in American history*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.**

Covering the entire period from the colonial era to the late twentieth century, this book is the first scholarly history of the homeless in America. Drawing on sources that include records of charitable organizations, sociological studies, and numerous memoirs of formerly homeless persons, Kusmer demonstrates that the homeless have been a significant presence on the American scene for over two hundred years. He probes the history of homelessness from a variety of angles, showing why people become homeless; how charities and public authorities dealt with this social problem; and the diverse ways in which different class, ethnic, and racial groups perceived and responded to homelessness. Kusmer demonstrates that, despite the common perception of the homeless as a deviant group, they have always had much in common with the average American. Focusing on the millions who suffered downward mobility, *Down and Out, On the Road* provides a unique view of the evolution of American society and raises disturbing questions about the repeated failure to face and solve the problem of homelessness.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Levinson, D. (2004a). *Encyclopedia of homelessness* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.**

The *Encyclopedia of Homelessness* is the first systematic effort to organize and summarize what we know about this complex topic which impacts not only the homeless but all of society. The *Encyclopedia* focuses on the current situation in the United States, with a comparative sampling of homelessness around the world. The *Encyclopedia* contains entries on Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, France, Guatemala, Japan, Nigeria, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Tokyo, Calcutta, London and others from around the world. The *Encyclopedia of Homelessness* meets the needs of a broad audience, offering a rich history and the data, views, and perspectives of experts from different disciplines and perspectives.

**Levinson, D. (2004b). *Encyclopedia of homelessness* (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.**

See abstract above.

Two-volume set available for purchase [here](#).

**O'Flaherty, B. (1997). *Making room: The economics of homelessness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.**

Mentally ill people turned out of institutions, crack-cocaine use on the rise, more poverty, public housing a shambles: as attempts to explain homelessness multiply so do the homeless--and we still don't know why. The first full-scale economic analysis of homelessness, *Making Room* provides answers quite unlike those offered so far by sociologists and pundits. It is a story about

markets, not about the bad habits or pathology of individuals. One perplexing fact is that, though homelessness in the past occurred during economic depressions, the current wave started in the 1980s, a time of relative prosperity. As Brendan O'Flaherty points out, this trend has been accompanied by others just as unexpected: rising rents for poor people and continued housing abandonment. These are among the many disconcerting facts that O'Flaherty collected and analyzed in order to account for the new homelessness. Focused on six cities (New York, Newark, Chicago, Toronto, London, and Hamburg), his studies also document the differing rates of homelessness in North America and Europe, and from one city to the next, as well as interesting changes in the composition of homeless populations. For the first time, too, a scholarly observer makes a useful distinction between the homeless people we encounter on the streets every day and those "officially" counted as homeless. O'Flaherty shows that the conflicting observations begin to make sense when we see the new homelessness as a response to changes in the housing market, linked to a widening gap in the incomes of rich and poor. The resulting shrinkage in the size of the middle class has meant fewer hand-me-downs for the poor and higher rents for the low-quality housing that is available. O'Flaherty's tightly argued theory, along with the wealth of new data he introduces, will put the study of homelessness on an entirely new plane. No future student or policymaker will be able to ignore the economic factors presented so convincingly in this plainspoken book.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Rossi, P. H. (1991). *Down and out in America: The origins of homelessness*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.**

The most accurate and comprehensive picture of homelessness to date, this study offers a powerful explanation of its causes, proposes short- and long-term solutions, and documents the striking contrasts between the homeless of the 1950s and 1960s and the contemporary homeless population, which is younger and contains more women, children, and blacks.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Stiglitz, J. E. (2013). *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.**

The impact of inequality on societies is now increasingly well understood - higher crime, health problems and mental illness, lower educational achievements, social cohesion and life expectancy. But what are the causes of inequality, why is it growing so rapidly and what are its economic impacts? This exceptional book, by one of the world's most celebrated and original economists, provides authoritative answers to these timely questions. Joseph Stiglitz shows how, left to their own devices, markets are neither efficient nor stable and will tend to accumulate money and power in the hands of the few rather than engender competition. He demonstrates how government policies and political institutions, far from countering these trends, often enhance them, and that politics frequently shapes markets in ways that advantage the richest over the rest. The other great contribution of the book is to show how moving money from the middle and bottom of society to the top, far from stimulating entrepreneurship, actually produces slower growth and lower GDP but even more instability. The Price of Inequality provides a powerful critique of free-market ideas, but ends hopefully, arguing that 'another world is possible'. It is one of the most important contributions any economist has made in the public arena in recent years.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Wright, J. D. (2009). *Address unknown: The homeless in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.**

Homelessness in America has grown from a minor problem in isolated areas of a few big cities into a near epidemic. Today, scarcely any American city of any appreciable size lacks homeless people. Homeless shelters and programs have become as essential and as commonplace as police protection or water and sewage treatment. What to do for, with, or about the homeless is a nagging and complex social policy issue debated at all levels of government. "Address Unknown" emphasizes the large-scale social and economic forces that have priced an increasingly large segment of the urban poor completely out of the housing market. Seen in this light, the problem of homelessness is that there are too many extremely poor people competing for too few affordable housing units. The nation would be facing a formidable homelessness problem even if there were no alcoholics, no drug addicts, no deinstitutionalized mentally ill people--no personal pathologies of any kind. Rather than a choice, homelessness is the result of housing markets that have very little to offer to extremely poor people. The plight of the homeless is very visible, and "Address Unknown" is one of the first major investigative studies into the nature and multiple causes of the problem. Wright considers demographic, economic, sociological, and

social policy antecedents of homelessness. A hallmark is the delineation of the range of factors involved, including deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, urban renewal, the decrease in lower-skilled jobs, changing political priorities, and bureaucratic obstacles to providing existing social services to the homeless population. "James D. Wright" is a professor in the department of sociology at the University of Central Florida. He has published seventeen books including "Armed and Considered Dangerous" and "Under the Gun" as well as many journal articles. His current research interests include violence, urban poverty and inequality, health and the homeless population, and the "divorce reform" movement.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Wright, T. (1997). *Out of place: Homeless mobilizations, subcities, and contested landscapes*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.**

*Out of Place: Homeless Mobilizations, Subcities, and Contested Landscapes* details the development of two organized homeless resistances in two different cities. From the redevelopment protesters and squatting activities of the Student-Homeless Alliance in San Jose to the squatter camps of Tranquility City in Chicago, the differences and similarities between both groups are highlighted within the context of city redevelopment policies. Wright argues for considering homelessness not merely as an issue for social welfare, but first and foremost as a land use issue directly connected to issues of gentrification, displacement, and the cultural imaginings of what the city should look like by those who have the power to shape its development. How the homeless combat the restructurings of everyday life, how they attempt to establish a "place" is understood within the context of tactical resistances. Questions of collective identity and collective action are raised as a result of the successful organizing efforts of homeless groups who refuse to be victims. The struggle between individual and collective forms of empowerment is highlighted, with the conclusions pointing to the necessity to rethink and go beyond the traditional solutions of more housing and job training.

Available for purchase [here](#).

## Housing and Housing Models

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**Aron, L., Burt, M., & Lee, E. (2001). *Helping America's homeless: Emergency shelter or affordable housing?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.**

Homelessness has now been on the American policy agenda for close to two decades. In 1989, when the Urban Institute published *America's Homeless*, by Martha Burt and Barbara Cohen, policymakers and the public may have hoped that we could end the crisis relatively quickly. The arrival of the new millennium has not fulfilled that expectation. In this new volume, *Helping America's Homeless*, Martha Burt and coauthors return to the problem with the most in-depth analysis of homelessness that has ever been published. Drawing on data from the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), and extending their pioneering work, the authors examine every aspect of homelessness in America, from how many homeless people there are, where they are, and why they became homeless, to how long their homelessness lasts. They explore the programs that provide assistance to the homeless, and how they are configured within communities of different sizes. Finally, the authors look at how policymakers have approached this problem, and our prospects for solving the crisis in the new millennium.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Padgett, D., Henwood, B., & Tsemberis, S. (2015). *Housing First: Ending homelessness, transforming systems, and changing lives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.**

This book is the first to chronicle the story of Housing First (HF), a paradigm-shifting evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that began in New York City in 1992 and rapidly spread to other cities nationally and internationally. The authors report on the rise of a 'homeless industry' of shelters and transitional housing programs that the HF approach directly challenged by rejecting the usual demands of treatment, sobriety and housing readiness. Based upon principles of consumer choice, harm reduction and immediate access to permanent independent housing in the community, HF was initially greeted with skepticism and resistance from the 'industry'. However, rigorous experiments testing HF against 'usual care' produced consistent findings that the approach produced

greater housing stability, lower use of drugs, and alcohol and cost savings. This evidence base, in conjunction with media accounts of HF's success, led to widespread adoption in the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, and Australia. The book traces the history of homelessness and the rapid growth of the publically funded homeless industry, an amalgam of religious and philanthropic organizations, advocacy groups, and non-profits that were insufficient to stem the tide of homelessness resulting from dramatic reductions in affordable housing in the 1980s and continuing to the present day. The authors summarize research findings on HF and include a chapter of personal stories of individuals who have experienced HF. Unique to this book is the participation of the founder of HF (Tsemberis) and well-known research on HF by the co-authors (Padgett and Henwood). Also unique is the deployment of theories-organizational, institutional and implementation-to conceptually frame the rise of HF and its wide adoption as well as the resistance that arose in some places. Highly readable yet informative and scholarly, this book addresses wider issues of innovation and systems change in social and human services.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Schutt, R. K., & Goldfinger, S. M. (2011). *Homelessness, housing, and mental illness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.**

Community integration has been a central goal of mental health service policy since deinstitutionalization began in the 1950s, as homelessness increased in the 1980s, and as housing programs for homeless mentally ill persons developed in the 1990s. In 1990, an innovative experiment—the Boston McKinney Project—began to test alternative housing policies. Schutt's comprehensive analysis of the project's findings calls into question current housing policies that support the preference of most homeless mentally ill persons to live alone in independent apartments. Indeed, *Homelessness, Housing and Mental Illness* shows that living alone reduces housing retention and cognitive functioning, thereby supporting clinicians' usual recommendation of group living. Schutt's findings challenge the assumptions behind current policy and call for reexamining housing programs for this population.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Schwartz, A. F. (2014). *Housing policy in the United States*. New York, NY: Routledge.**

The classic primer for its subject, *Housing Policy in the United States*, has been substantially revised in the wake of the 2007 near-collapse of the housing market and the nation's recent signs of recovery. Like its previous editions, this standard volume offers a broad overview of the field, but expands to include new information on how the crisis has affected the nation's housing challenges, and the extent to which the federal government has addressed them. Schwartz also includes the politics of austerity that has permeated almost all aspects of federal policymaking since the Congressional elections of 2010, new initiatives to rehabilitate public housing, and a new chapter on the foreclosure crisis. The latest available data on housing conditions, housing discrimination, housing finance, and programmatic expenditures is included, along with all new developments in federal housing policy. This book is the perfect foundational text for urban studies, urban planning, social policy, and housing policy courses.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Tsemberis, S. (2010). *Housing First manual: The pathways model to end homelessness for people with mental illness and addiction*. Minneapolis, MN: Hazelden Press.**

This step-by-step manual provides a solid foundation for introducing the evidence-based Housing First approach--provide housing first, followed by supportive treatment services--into new locations, and evolving existing programs into those based on the ideals of the Pathways Model to End Homelessness. It guides you in structuring policies and programs that respect and respond to the voices of men, women, and families in your community, and provides easy-to-follow tools and tips for implementation.

Available for purchase [here](#).

## Personal Accounts and Case Studies

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**Cadillac Man. (2009). *Land of the lost souls: My life on the streets*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.**

For the past 16 years, Cadillac Man (so named because he was once hit by an El Dorado and thereafter bore an imprint of its hood ornament) has lived on the streets of New York City. Over those years, he has recorded the facts of his daily life - the harsh realities of surviving on the street, the often tragic encounters with the non-homeless world, the deep bonds with his fellow homeless, and the surprisingly varied realities of life on the outside - writing hundreds of thousands of words in a series of spiral bound notebooks. "My Life in the Streets" distills those journals into a memoir of homeless life that is peopled with indelible characters and packed with gripping stories. In a gritty, poignant, and funny voice, Cadillac narrates his descent into homelessness, the travails and unexpected freedoms of his life, and the story of his love affair with a young runaway, whom he eventually (and tragically) reunites with her family. The United States has 700,000 homeless people; ultimately, Cadillac's story is their story.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. New York, NY: Crown.**

In this brilliant, heartbreaking book, Matthew Desmond takes us into the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee to tell the story of eight families on the edge. Arleen is a single mother trying to raise her two sons on the \$20 a month she has left after paying for their rundown apartment. Scott is a gentle nurse consumed by a heroin addiction. Lamar, a man with no legs and a neighborhood full of boys to look after, tries to work his way out of debt. Vanetta participates in a botched stickup after her hours are cut. All are spending almost everything they have on rent, and all have fallen behind. The fates of these families are in the hands of two landlords: Sherrena Tarver, a former schoolteacher turned inner-city entrepreneur, and Tobin Charney, who runs one of the worst trailer parks in Milwaukee. They loathe some of their tenants and are fond of others, but as Sherrena puts it, "Love don't pay the bills." She moves to evict Arleen and her boys a few days before Christmas. Even in the most desolate areas of American cities, evictions used to be rare. But today, most poor renting families are spending more than half of their income on housing, and eviction has become ordinary, especially for single mothers. In vivid, intimate prose, Desmond provides a ground-level view of one of the most urgent issues facing America today. As we see families forced into shelters, squalid apartments, or more dangerous neighborhoods, we bear witness to the human cost of America's vast inequality—and to people's determination and intelligence in the face of hardship. Based on years of embedded fieldwork and painstakingly gathered data, this masterful book transforms our understanding of extreme poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving a devastating, uniquely American problem. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Duneier, M., & Carter, O. (2000). *Sidewalk*. New York, NY: Macmillan.**

An exceptional ethnography marked by clarity and candor, *Sidewalk* takes us into the socio-cultural environment of those who, though often seen as threatening or unseemly, work day after day on "the blocks" of one of New York's most diverse neighborhoods. Sociologist Duneier, author of *Slim's Table*, offers an accessible and compelling group portrait of several poor black men who make their livelihoods on the sidewalks of Greenwich Village selling secondhand goods, panhandling, and scavenging books and magazines. Duneier spent five years with these individuals, and in *Sidewalk* he argues that, contrary to the opinion of various city officials, they actually contribute significantly to the order and well-being of the Village. An important study of the heart and mind of the street, *Sidewalk* also features an insightful afterword by longtime book vendor Hakim Hasan. This fascinating study reveals today's urban life in all its complexity: its vitality, its conflicts about class and race, and its surprising opportunities for empathy among strangers. *Sidewalk* is an excellent supplementary text for a range of courses: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY: Shows how to make important links between micro and macro; how a research project works; how sociology can transform common sense. RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS: Untangles race, class, and gender as they work together on the street. URBAN STUDIES: Asks how public space is used and contested by men and women, blacks and whites, rich and poor, and how street life and political economy interact. DEVIANCE: Looks at labeling processes in treatment of the homeless; interrogates the "broken windows" theory of policing. LAW AND SOCIETY: Closely examines the connections between formal and informal systems of social control. METHODS: Shows

how ethnography works; includes a detailed methodological appendix and an afterword by research subject Hakim Hasan. CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: Sidewalk engages the rich terrain of recent developments regarding representation, writing, and authority; in the tradition of Elliot Liebow and Ulf Hannerz, it deals with age old problems of the social and cultural experience of inequality; this is a telling study of culture on the margins of American society. CULTURAL STUDIES: Breaking down disciplinary boundaries, Sidewalk shows how books and magazines are received and interpreted in discussions among working-class people on the sidewalk; it shows how cultural knowledge is deployed by vendors and scavengers to generate subsistence in public space. SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE: Sidewalk demonstrates the connections between culture and human agency and innovation; it interrogates distinctions between legitimate subcultures and deviant collectivities; it illustrates conflicts over cultural diversity in public space; and, ultimately, it shows how conflicts over meaning are central to social life.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Gowan, T. (2010). *Hobos, hustlers, and backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.**

When homelessness reemerged in American cities during the 1980s at levels not seen since the Great Depression, it initially provoked shock and outrage. Within a few years, however, what had been perceived as a national crisis came to be seen as a nuisance, with early sympathies for the plight of the homeless giving way to compassion fatigue and then condemnation. Debates around the problem of homelessness--often set in terms of sin, sickness, and the failure of the social system--have come to profoundly shape how homeless people survive and make sense of their plights. In *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*, Teresa Gowan vividly depicts the lives of homeless men in San Francisco and analyzes the influence of the homelessness industry on the streets, in the shelters, and on public policy. Gowan shows some of the diverse ways that men on the street in San Francisco struggle for survival, autonomy, and self-respect. Living for weeks at a time among homeless men--working side-by-side with them as they collected cans, bottles, and scrap metal; helping them set up camp; watching and listening as they panhandled and hawked newspapers; and accompanying them into soup kitchens, jails, welfare offices, and shelters--Gowan immersed herself in their routines, their personal stories, and their perspectives on life on the streets. She observes a wide range of survival techniques, from the illicit to the industrious, from drug dealing to dumpster diving. She also discovered that prevailing discussions about homelessness and its causes--homelessness as pathology, homelessness as moral failure, and homelessness as systemic failure--powerfully affect how homeless people see themselves and their ability to change their situation. Drawing on five years of fieldwork, this powerful ethnography of men living on the streets of the most liberal city in America, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*, makes clear that the way we talk about issues of extreme poverty has real consequences for how we address this problem--and for the homeless themselves.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**LaMarche, P. (2015). *Left out In America: The state of homelessness in The United States* (2nd ed.). Carlisle, PA: Charles Bruce Foundation.**

*Left Out in America* is a powerful look at what it means to be homeless in the United States. In her first, highly anticipated book, accomplished broadcaster and journalist, Pat LaMarche has documented a piece of American life like no one else has. Having slept in 14 homeless shelters throughout the country over a two week period, and recording her experiences in a journal, LaMarche has captured the condition of this current humanitarian crisis and brought it sharply into focus.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Lopez, S. (2008). *The soloist: A lost dream, an unlikely friendship, and the redemptive power of music*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons.**

From an impromptu concert of Beethoven's Eighth in the Second Street tunnel to a performance of Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suites on Skid Row, the two men learn to communicate through Ayers's music. Lopez collects donated violins, a cello, even a stand-up bass and a piano with the hope that Ayers can be swayed to move off the streets, where every day his well-being is threatened. Their bond takes torturous turns as Lopez imagines he can change Ayers's life - finding him lodging, reconnecting him with his family,

taking him to Disney Concert Hall to meet a former Juilliard classmate. For each triumph, there is a crashing disappointment, yet neither man gives up. And though it's Ayers he initially sets out to save, Lopez finds that his own life is profoundly changed. By turns gripping, moving, and inspiring, *The Soloist* is a story about unwavering commitment, artistic devotion, and the transformative magic of music.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Walls, J. (2006). *The glass castle: A memoir*. New York, NY: Scribner.**

Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an "excitement addict." Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever. Later, when the money ran out, or the romance of the wandering life faded, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town -- and the family -- Rex Walls had done everything he could to escape. He drank. He stole the grocery money and disappeared for days. As the dysfunction of the family escalated, Jeannette and her brother and sisters had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resources and will to leave home. What is so astonishing about Jeannette Walls is not just that she had the guts and tenacity and intelligence to get out, but that she describes her parents with such deep affection and generosity. Hers is a story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that despite its profound flaws gave her the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on her own terms. For two decades, Jeannette Walls hid her roots. Now she tells her own story. A regular contributor to MSNBC.com, she lives in New York and Long Island and is married to the writer John Taylor.

Available for purchase [here](#).

## Practice & Policy Implications

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**Coates, R. C. (1990). *A street is not a home: Solving America's homeless dilemma*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.**

Like many politicians, reporters, social workers, and others concerned about the homeless, Robert C. Coates lived for a short time on the street. But rather than returning from his mission with yet another set of platitudes about the problem, the experience set him on the road to find answers. The result is *A Street is Not a Home*. Coates' involvement with homelessness began as an exploration into judicial ethics, but quickly developed into something far more sweeping. *A Street is Not a Home* is not another recapitulation of the problem but a mosaic of workable solutions that Coates has seen evolve in municipalities across the nation. Coates dismisses opinions that the homeless dilemma is one that cannot be resolved. Writing in clear, readable prose, he cuts through the medical, social, legal, and religious jargon that customarily surrounds the issue, approaching homelessness from the perspective of basic strategic planning. He separates the larger problems into manageable components, examines programs that have already been tested and found to be effective, and isolates matters that still require resolution. *A Street is Not a Home* dispels many myths about the homeless crisis and clearly illustrates that the vast majority of America's homeless can be helped.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Feldman, L. C. (2006). *Citizens without shelter: Homelessness, democracy, and political exclusion*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.**

One of the most troubling aspects of the politics of homelessness, Leonard C. Feldman contends, is the reduction of the homeless to what Hannah Arendt calls "the abstract nakedness of humanity" and what Giorgio Agamben terms "bare life." Feldman argues that the politics of alleged compassion and the politics of those interested in ridding public spaces of the homeless are linked fundamentally in their assumption that homeless people are something less than citizens. Feldman's book brings political theories together (including

theories of sovereign power, justice, and pluralism) with discussions of real-world struggles and close analyses of legal cases concerning the rights of the homeless. In Feldman's view, the "bare life predicament" is a product not simply of poverty or inequality but of an inability to commit to democratic pluralism. Challenging this reduction of the homeless, *Citizens without Shelter* examines opportunities for contesting such a fundamental political exclusion, in the service of homeless citizenship and a more robust form of democratic pluralism. Feldman has in mind a truly democratic pluralism that would include a pluralization of the category of "home" to enable multiple forms of dwelling; a recognition of the common dwelling activities of homeless and non-homeless persons; and a resistance to laws that punish or confine the homeless.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Jencks, C. (1995). *The homeless*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.**

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.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Schiff, J. W. (2015). *Working with homeless and vulnerable people: Basic skills and practices*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.**

It has long been established that access to food, clothing, medical care, and housing are fundamental human rights the world over. Helping the approximately 600,000 Americans and 300,000 Canadians who are currently homeless work toward this goal is a complex undertaking. This text presents the fundamental knowledge and skills that frontline workers need in order to help vulnerable and homeless persons. It provides readers with both an understanding of the lived experiences of those who have faced homelessness and an outline of the interprofessional practice context of services for homeless people. Waegemakers Schiff focuses on the interventions and best practices that have been found to be most effective in making connections, establishing helping relationships, and working with individuals on moving toward stabilization. Features: in-depth discussions of the housing first philosophy, trauma-informed care, health, mental health, and substance abuse; exploration of some of the differences between American and Canadian practice situations; journaling activities following every chapter to encourage reflection and critical engagement; central discussion on self-care and avoiding burnout.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Schutt, R. K., & Garrett, G. R. (2013). *Responding to the homeless: Policy and practice*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.**

*Responding to the Homeless: Policy and Practice* is largely a product of a unique collaboration between Russell K. Schutt and Gerald R. Garrett and their Boston community. As such, it offers a rich perspective on the problem of homelessness that is derived from the authors' shared experience with researchers, academics, students, providers, policymakers, and homeless persons themselves. Schutt and Garrett take the reader into the shelters and acquaint him or her with the philosophical and practical dilemmas facing line workers as well as policymakers. They also take the reader into the community to better understand the housing market and the dysfunctional continuities among shelter, housing, treatment, and social supports. There are sensitive discussions of the salient health problems that too commonly touch the lives of homeless individuals, such as substance abuse and AIDS. The volume also includes clear descriptions of the sometimes elusive processes of counseling and case management for homeless individuals. The sidebars of "what to do" and "what not to do" contain useful information that will both inform and empower individuals who are working on the front lines, and inspire and prepare future caregivers. While the eminently readable organization and style of the book are suggestive of a highly practical handbook on the basics of homelessness, the authors and their contributors have also produced a scholarly volume that is replete with current research findings, programs descriptions, case studies, and vignettes.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Wasserman, J. A., & Clair, J. M. (2009). *At home on the street: People, poverty, and a hidden culture of homelessness*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.**

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. To view a documentary featuring the people written about in the book, visit the authors' website, [www.athomeonthestreet.com](http://www.athomeonthestreet.com).

Available for purchase [here](#).

## Special Populations

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**Bhugra, D. (1996). *Homelessness and mental health*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.**

As homelessness becomes an increasingly serious issue, the mental health of homeless people is beginning to appear on the agendas of politicians and policy makers, as well as health care workers. In contrast to the popular "Skid Row" stereotype that the word "homeless" tends to trigger, many are in fact families and young single people. The health needs of these different kinds of people are, of course, varied. This volume brings together the experiences of mental health teams from around the world in addressing the problems of mental illness in the homeless. The difficulties in assessment and treatment are discussed at length with an emphasis on the application of existing knowledge in health care. By addressing social policy implications and clinical management as well as providing models and definitions of homelessness in different cultures, this book will offer practical support for all those who work with the homeless.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Bourgois, P., & Schonberg, J. (2009). *Righteous dopefiend*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.**

This powerful study immerses the reader in the world of homelessness and drug addiction in the contemporary United States. For over a decade Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg followed a social network of two dozen heroin injectors and crack smokers on the streets of San Francisco, accompanying them as they scrambled to generate income through burglary, panhandling, recycling, and day labor. *Righteous Dopefiend* interweaves stunning black-and-white photographs with vivid dialogue, detailed field notes, and critical theoretical analysis. Its gripping narrative develops a cast of characters around the themes of violence, race relations, sexuality, family trauma, embodied suffering, social inequality, and power relations. The result is a dispassionate chronicle of survival, loss, caring, and hope rooted in the addicts' determination to hang on for one more day and one more "fix" through a "moral economy of sharing" that precariously balances mutual solidarity and interpersonal betrayal.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Cwayna, K. (1996). *Knowing where the fountains are: Stories and stark realities of homeless youth*. Minneapolis, MN: Deaconess Press.**

Analyzes inadequacies in current approaches to homeless teens; proposes hopeful alternatives.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Friedman, D. H. (2012). *Parenting in public: Family shelter and public assistance*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.**

When parents must rely on public assistance and family shelters to provide for their children's most basic needs, they lose autonomy. Within a system of public assistance that already stigmatizes and isolates its beneficiaries, their family lives become subject to public scrutiny and criticism. They are parenting in public. This book is an in-depth examination of the realities of life for parents and their children in family shelters. The author uses the Massachusetts family shelter system to explore the impact of asset and deficit-oriented help-giving approaches as they are experienced by mothers and service providers. The format of the book is unique. Following each chapter are the "reflections" of a mother who has parented in a shelter, a front-line worker, and a shelter director. The author and contributors propose a "Power With" policy and practice framework that runs counter to the prevailing "Power Over" cultural policy trends. Contributors include Rosa Clark, Brenda Farrell, Deborah Gray, Michele Kahan, Margaret A. Leonard, Mary T. Lewis, Nancy Schwoyer, and Elizabeth Ward.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Gibson, K. E. (2011). *Street kids: Homeless youth, outreach, and policing New York's streets*. New York, NY: New York University Press.**

Street outreach workers comb public places such as parks, vacant lots, and abandoned waterfronts to search for young people who are living out in public spaces, if not always in the public eye. Street Kids opens a window to the largely hidden world of street youth, drawing on their detailed and compelling narratives to give new insight into the experiences of youth homelessness and youth outreach. Kristina Gibson argues that the enforcement of quality of life ordinances in New York City has spurred hyper-mobility amongst the city's street youth population and has serious implications for social work with homeless youth. Youth in motion have become socially invisible and marginalized from public spaces where social workers traditionally contact them, jeopardizing their access to the already limited opportunities to escape street life. The culmination of a multi-year ethnographic investigation into the lives of street outreach workers and 'their kids' on the streets of New York City, Street Kids illustrates the critical role that public space regulations and policing play in shaping the experience of youth homelessness and the effectiveness of street outreach.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Kozol, J. (2011). *Rachel and her children: Homeless families in America*. New York, NY: Crown/Archetype.**

There is no safety net for the millions of heartbroken refugees from the American Dream, scattered helplessly in any city you can name. Rachel and Her Children is an unforgettable record for humanity, of the desperate voices of the men, women, and especially children, and their hourly struggle for survival, homeless in America.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Liebow, E. (1995). *Tell them who I am: The lives of homeless women*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.**

In 'Tell Them Who I Am', Liebow similarly dispels myths surrounding homelessness, revealing the actual diversity, humanity, and dignity that lie behind popular images of the homeless. In 'Tell Them Who I Am', Liebow carefully investigates and documents the patterns and routines of homeless women. These are not the most visible homeless, Liebow tells us, not the 'throwaway' homeless we see on the street. Rather they are members of the larger but less visible majority of people who are homeless but who still retain connections with society. These are people who have fallen into homelessness for many reasons; some may rise again, and some will sink. Their daily lives are thus a struggle not merely to survive but to keep alive their hope - and their humanity - in the face of what for many are insuperable obstacles. Through the women's own words and Liebow's thoughtful and sympathetic commentary, 'Tell Them Who I Am' examines every aspect of their lives.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Mate, G., & Levine, P. A. (2010). *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction* (1st Edition). Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.**

Based on Gabor Maté's two decades of experience as a medical doctor and his groundbreaking work with the severely addicted on Vancouver's skid row, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* radically re-envision this much misunderstood field by taking a holistic approach. Dr. Maté presents addiction not as a discrete phenomenon confined to an unfortunate or weak-willed few, but as a continuum that runs throughout (and perhaps underpins) our society; not a medical "condition" distinct from the lives it affects, rather the result of a complex interplay among personal history, emotional, and neurological development, brain chemistry, and the drugs (and behaviors) of addiction. Simplifying a wide array of brain and addiction research findings from around the globe, the book avoids glib self-help remedies, instead promoting a thorough and compassionate self-understanding as the first key to healing and wellness. *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* argues persuasively against contemporary health, social, and criminal justice policies toward addiction and those impacted by it. The mix of personal stories—including the author's candid discussion of his own "high-status" addictive tendencies—and science with positive solutions makes the book equally useful for lay readers and professionals.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Mullins, L., Rich, D. W., & Rich, T. A. (1995). *Old and homeless -- double-jeopardy: An overview of current practice and policies*. Westport, CT: Praeger.**

The growing number of homeless people over age 50 has reached epidemic proportions. It is important to recognize that this group has special needs and demands from health factors to safety. This book is a resource for professionals training and working with this homeless contingent.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Newman, K. S. (2009). *No shame in my game: The working poor in the inner city*. New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.**

In *No Shame in My Game*, Harvard anthropologist Katherine Newman gives voice to a population for whom work, family, and self-esteem are top priorities despite all the factors that make earning a living next to impossible--minimum wage, lack of child care and health care, and a desperate shortage of even low-paying jobs. By intimately following the lives of nearly 300 inner-city workers and job seekers for two years in Harlem, Newman explores a side of poverty often ignored by media and politicians--the working poor. The working poor find dignity in earning a paycheck and shunning the welfare system, arguing that even low-paying jobs give order to their lives. *No Shame in My Game* gives voice to a misrepresented segment of today's society, and is sure to spark dialogue over the issues surrounding poverty, working and welfare.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Ruddick, S. M. (2014). *Young and homeless In Hollywood: Mapping the social imaginary*. New York, NY: Routledge.**

*Young and Homeless in Hollywood* examines the social and spatial dynamics that contributed to the construction of a new social imaginary--"homeless youth"--in the United States during a period of accelerated modernization from the mid-1970s to the 1990s. Susan Ruddick draws from a range of theoretical frameworks and empirical treatments that deal with the relationship between placemaking and the politics of social identity.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Seltser, B. J., & Miller, D. E. (1993). *Homeless families: The struggle for dignity*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.**

How do homeless people perceive their plight? Specifically, how does their situation affect their sense of personal dignity? In intensive interviews with one hundred adult heads of families, Barry Seltser and Donald Miller asks these questions, previously not dealt with in the growing literature on homelessness.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Whitbeck, L. B., & Hoyt, D. R. (1999). *Nowhere to grow: Homeless and runaway adolescents and their families*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.**

Les B. Whitbeck and Dan R. Hoyt begin their report on street children in the Midwest with the statement, "If you live in or have visited even a medium-sized city recently, you have seen runaway and homeless young people. They congregate in certain downtown areas and hang out in malls during inclement weather . . . Mostly, they look like the other kids. . . . The difference is that they won't be going home tonight." This book draws on a study of over six hundred runaway and homeless adolescents and over two hundred of their caretakers from cities in four Midwestern states. It focuses on the family histories of these young people and on the developmental impact of early independence. Street social networks, subsistence strategies, sexuality, and street victimization are all considered, as well as their effect on adolescent behaviors and emotional health. Relying on interviews and data from survey research, and working in partnership with street outreach agencies, Whitbeck and Hoyt lead the reader through the various risk factors associated with precocious independence, beginning in the family and extending to external environments and behaviors. *Nowhere to Grow* is an emotional account of the cumulative consequences for young people with few good options at the outset and even fewer once they are on their own.

Available for purchase [here](#).

**Williams, R. Y. (2005). *The politics of public housing: Black women's struggles against urban inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

In this collective biography, Rhonda Y. Williams takes us behind, and beyond, politically expedient labels to provide an incisive and intimate portrait of poor black women in urban America. Drawing on dozens of interviews, Williams challenges the notion that low-income housing was a resounding failure that doomed three consecutive generations of post-war Americans to entrenched poverty. Instead, she recovers a history of grass-roots activism, of political awakening, and of class mobility, all facilitated by the creation of affordable public housing. The stereotyping of black women, especially mothers, has obscured a complicated and nuanced reality too often warped by the political agendas of both the left and the right, and has prevented an accurate understanding of the successes and failures of government anti-poverty policy.

Available for purchase [here](#).

### More about the National Center for Excellence in Homeless Services

The National Center is a consortium of 19 national social work programs supporting the Grand Challenge to End Homelessness by implementing the National Homelessness Social Work Initiative. Six Regional Hub Leaders advance work nationally and a network of schools, including seven partners and an additional nine programs, fosters collaboration across the New York/New Jersey region.

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