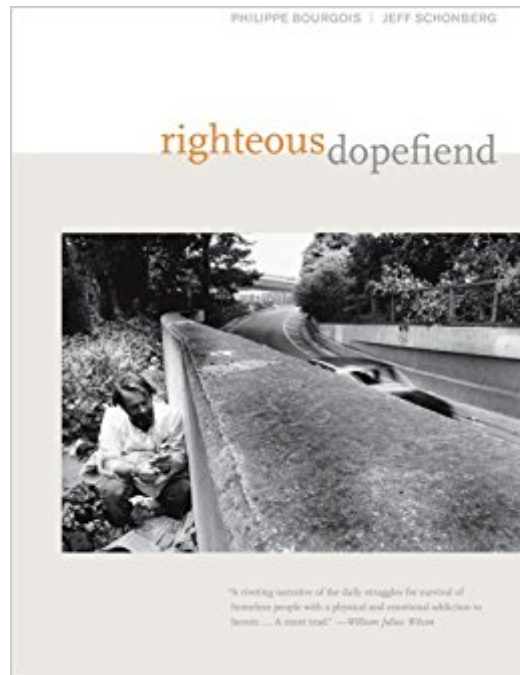




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# Righteous Dopefiend (California Series In Public Anthropology)



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this gritty ethnography exploring the world of San Francisco's homeless heroin addicts, Bourgois, anthropology and community medicine professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and Schonberg, a photographer and graduate student in medical anthropology, draw on a decade immersed in this subculture to eloquently elaborate on the survival techniques and intimate lives of black and white addicts who live in self-made communities and work the economic fringes for survival. The authors explore racial boundaries and crossings, love stories, family

relations, parenting, histories of childhood abuse, as well as the constant work of navigating hostile police enforcement, exploitative and helpful business owners, overburdened medical services and social service bureaucracies. The book details the gruesome material toll of addiction, infection and homelessness and the risks of ongoing personal and institutional violence. Bourgois and Schonberg create a deeply nuanced picture of a population that cannot escape social reprobation, but deserves social inclusion. Schonberg's photographs capture the scars of addiction, the social bonds between romantic pairs and drug-running partners and the concerted efforts at domesticity without a domicile. The collage of case studies, field notes, personal narratives and photography is nothing short of enthralling. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

“A deeply nuanced picture of a population that cannot escape social reprobation, but deserves social inclusion. . . . The collage of case studies, field notes, personal narratives and photography is nothing short of enthralling.” - Starred Review (Publishers Weekly 2009-04-13)

“Get this book and read it. . . . A hell of a story. . . . These people walk by you every day and should not remain invisible.” (San Francisco Bay Guardian 2009-08-19)

“Leaders and readers alike should pay attention to - and heed its warnings and advice. . . . Unflinching and objective. . . . Must be read - and seen.” (San Francisco Chronicle 2009-06-21)

“The authors dare you to ignore the subculture in their field notes and arresting black-and-white images, urging that our failed social systems need repairing and we cannot continue to let these outliers remain invisible.” (Utne 2009-07-01)

“Recommended.” (Choice 2010-07-08)

“One of the most original and important works of its kind. . . . A pathbreaking photo-ethnography, powerful in presentation, content and scope. . . . A must-read, [it] will rock the world of the sheltered middle class and shed new light on the pervasive structural inequalities plaguing contemporary society.” (Elijah Anderson, author of *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. Philadelphia Inquirer 2009-10-04)

“Truly remarkable book.” (Grazyna Zajdow Arena Magazine 2011-06-17)

“Powerfully candid.” (Zocalo (The Public Square Blog) 2009-06-01)

“With a combination of photographs, dialogue, field notes and critical theory, the book provides a detailed analysis of the social structure of an underground society in contemporary America.” (Roof Magazine 2009-05-01)

“This book offers as complete and disturbing a view as can be had of just how awful and intractable street life in San Francisco can get.” (San Francisco Chronicle 2009-12-10)

I was assigned this book for my Sociology 104 class at KU. Out of the five books we were expected to read, this book was definitely top 3 (with *Connected* and *Sidewalk*, thought the other two - *The Tender Cut* & *The Second Shift* - were also eye-opening as well). Though I still have trouble with remembering what terms belong to what principles, like hegemony, my understanding of what was taught in the class was paralleled. This book is an eye opener and you don't need to understand what all of the terms mean to get a feel for the point being made here. Yes, there are a couple of chapters that express the meaning of this study in terms that are difficult to take on, especially if you are not expecting to or interested in studying sociology beyond the basics or have studied, but don't let that affect your decision when ascertaining the truth. This book is amazing and nearly riveting. I did understand the professional terms, for the most part, while I read this book (since I was knee deep in the class at the time and soaking up as much 'goody' as possible) and I would just like to say that it is worth your time. This book focuses on a group of homeless heroine addicts (though many smoke crack and drink as well). This study/story shows a parallel of survival and social structure similar to that of 'normal' life, but, of course, with a bias of illegal dependency and the carelessness for others; the root of the human soul in some (maybe many) cases. Through a constant circus ride of highs and lows, this group of lost individuals will tear your heart out as they make blind, selfish choices, cleanse themselves of addiction and fall back into the arms of homeless hopelessness, scavenge for opportunities to make good to fix, and many other awful reasons that will hopefully deter any sane member of the human race from ever touching a drug that has been repeatedly proven as B.A.D. since 1918 (after its discovery in 1889... hm). That was a long sentence. :/Read it, love/hate it, & pass it on...If you do not find this review helpful, please comment as to why. Thank you!

Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg spent over twelve years in the field becoming intimately knowledgeable with the day to day lives and problems of homeless heroin addicts in this priceless ethnography. This work gives a real life look at complex social theories like biopower, habitus and symbolic violence that allows insights beyond what a student can glean from reading the works of Foucault and Bourdieu. As an added bonus, the publisher has allowed a kindle version making *Righteous Dopefiend* easily accessible wherever you are with great features like text-to-speech. I would still recommend picking-up a hard copy in addition to your kindle version Schonberg's striking photography which really brings the characters from along the Edgewater Boulevard to life and enriches the text.

Individualism in the United States causes its citizens to view the homeless, poor, and addicted as being "deserving" of their situations, that it is a product of their own lack of self control and responsibility. This book will give a new perspective to these dehumanized groups and allow the reader to better understand the forces that keep them locked in their position.

Well written and engrossing. Considering using this for a coming Anthropology course. Easy to read and interesting. The ethnographic work is set in theory quite well, with the theory being easily understood. Often ethnographies get so highfalutin that even seasoned anthropologists struggle through. This is approachable. In terms of the approach, I like the photographic component and the fact that the authors address the possibility of various misreadings/misuses of photographs in ethnographic works.

I had to read this for a class and it was super interesting to read about drug addicts

Required for a class, but it is a really good ethnography about "street people" in a study that was done over a 12 year period. Even though it's an ethnography, the writers really engage the reader and help the reader to more fully understand the subject matter, and the people. Definitely recommend.

This was a required book for a cultural anthropology course I took but I loved it. This was not a book I would have thought to pick up and read and this topic was something I had never really thought about. It was a great read and I will be keeping it for future reading.

Bought this book for my cultural anthropology class. The material is presented in a manner that keeps your interest (especially great for college students who have six books to read in a course like this.) Great insight into a culture that we typically just judge and cast off.

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