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The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance. Rolf Wiggershaus.

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The authors are to be commended for producing an original and interesting book. While the section on the policy implications of their findings is sadly too brief, their analysis is incisive and compassionate. This book will make a major contribution to understanding both the causes and experience of homelessness in American today.

Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994. \$60.00 hardcover. (Translated by Michael Robertson).

The Frankfurt School has exerted a profound influence on sociology and the social sciences generally over the last fifty years. Its founders and their successors are today recognized for their diverse contributions to social thought and for injecting into mainstream Anglo-American sociology new perspectives that challenged conventional approaches.

This scholarly volume traces the origins and subsequent history of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. It focuses on the writings of its leading personalities whose collective work later became known as the Frankfurt School. It also examines their key theoretical contributions. The chapters dealing with the School's early history in Germany and subsequent move to the United States during the Nazi period make for fascinating reading. They demonstrate how like-minded individuals can collaborate to create a new and powerful intellectual perspective with profound implications for social science endeavor. They also show how major theoretical innovations in turn spawn new ideas which modify the original approach and take it into new and intellectually stimulating directions. The author's account of the later history of the Institute from the time of its return to Frankfurt and the reformulation of critical theory by Habermas and others is equally arresting. The use of narrative is particularly effective.

However, Wiggershaus is not only concerned with historiography but with the analysis of the major theoretical contributions of the Frankfurt School. He shows how the original Marxist proclivities of the School's founders were augmented by psychoanalytical thought, by anti-authoritarianism and a pessimistic assessment of the supposed achievements of modernity. The account of Adorno's extensive contributions in so many fields is

comprehensive and incisive. Throughout, analysis is linked to narrative so that conceptual contributions are always traced to real people and events, facilitating comprehension and appreciation. While the history of the Institute and its leaders is compelling reading, the book also constitutes an important piece of sociological inquiry in its own right. It will take its place among other major commentaries of the history of the social sciences. It should be read not only as a definitive account of the Frankfurt School but as an interesting analysis of the production of knowledge.