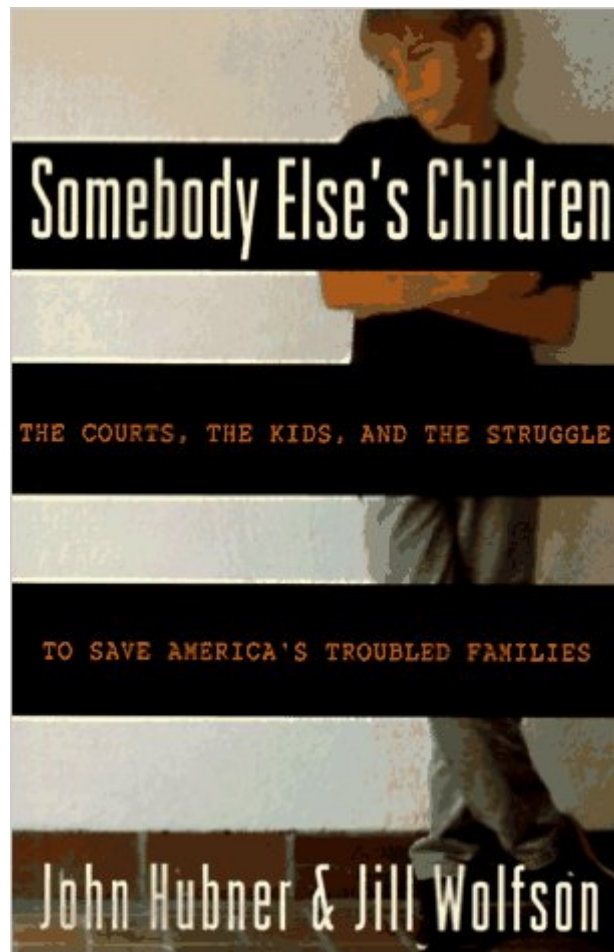


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Somebody Else's Children: The Courts, The Kids, And The Struggle To Save America's Troubled Families



Synopsis

With increasing urgency, the plight of the American family grips the national conscience. The family courts are often our society's last safety net to prevent disaster. In this penetrating expose of the inner workings of the U.S. family court system, two award-winning journalists provide an intimate look at the lives of the children whose fate it decides. 384 pp. Author publicity. 35,000 print.

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Customer Reviews

I randomly came across this book in the library while looking up something else. I thumbed through it a bit and then ended up checking it out and taking it home, where I have proceeded to read it almost constantly over the last couple of days (with occasional breaks for comparatively less compelling things like eating, sleep, class, and hanging out with friends). I'm always a bookworm and am used to becoming absorbed in what I read. However, this is the first time in quite awhile that I've been so caught up in a book, particularly a non-fiction book. I like this book so much because the authors worked hard at giving a thorough and unbiased look at the juvenile justice system and the kids stuck in that system. Of course, remaining completely unbiased is impossible; however, they tried to give a variety of points of view. They also tried to keep from vilifying any one group (parents, children, social workers, judges, police, the community, and so on), while still indicating the complexity of the problem. Case-studies were carefully chosen not to be sensational, but rather to exemplify the typical issues dealt with by kids in the justice system. Finally, they interspersed the information from the case studies with general information about the law, the way such cases are usually handled, and so on, then applied this new information that they had given back to the case

study. This made it possible to learn a great deal about the system in general, while keeping it interesting because you could see the immediate application to one particular kid that you had learned about. This added to the book's general readability. All in all, this book is an excellent, well-written book that has the possibility of moving us a long way towards an understanding of these complex issues.

Hubner and Wolfson do an excellent job of presenting the reader with the children's point of view of the juvenile court system. Children who are removed from their homes because of an abusive environment are often subjected to even worse treatment by the state-run system into which they are placed. Some of the problems that are brought to the reader's attention include: 1) Children are removed from the home based on hearsay evidence, 2) Parents must sometimes admit guilt (even if innocent) or they are accused of being in denial - this Catch-22 situation can be used to keep children separated from their parents regardless of the "facts", 3) Foster parents don't always receive adequate training, and are sometimes perpetrators of abuse. Some foster parents are only in it for the money. Yes, the system does benefit many children. But there is also a large number of children for whom the system is more abusive than the environment from which they were removed. Judge Edwards deserves a lot of credit, because he understands these issues and because he cares about the kids. Read this book at least twice.

This is a textbook of the juvenile dependency system that reads like a page-turner novel. I was unable to put it down for 2 days. The authors' treatment of their material is even-handed and true-to-life. I have worked for the past 4 years as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate and Guardian Ad Litem for these children in my local juvenile court and the cases featured in the book closely mirror the actual cases I've seen over and over again in the courts. The book raises problems in the system to which there are no easy answers, and the authors don't attempt to offer any simplistic solutions: What does the system do with severely emotionally disturbed kids who blow through one placement after another? How do you know when to give up on parents and terminate parental rights? Do you wait until the child's crucial childhood years are mostly over, waiting for the parents to get their act together? How do we place children in good homes when there is such a shortage of foster and adoptive families? I urge anyone interested to get involved with the system as a volunteer. There are over 700 advocate programs around the country and the minimum time commitment is only 12 hours a month.

I have been in the field for over 20 years and this is the most accurate account of the Juvenile Justice system. The stories are real and moving. I could not put this book down. I did not agree with everything in the book, however, if you want to know the real story then this is a must read.

This is a must read for anyone working in the Juvenile Court System, especially in California. I've been a Probation Officer for ten years most of it spent in juvenile matters. I've seen these exact kids and families in Tulare County. I've felt the same frustrations of everyone in the book who cares about these kids, but doesn't know how to fix it. I do however strongly disagree with Barry Krisberg (page 248.) My union is the weakest in this county, and Probation Officers in this county are among the lowest paid in the state. Probation Officers are also the lowest paid among all "law enforcement" persons. Our job is to protect the community, yet we are expected to also possess the skills of a social worker. Further Probation Officers in this county haven't sat around eating doughnuts since the eighties when case loads were small and money was abundant. Now, in the nineties, no one has time to eat lunch, let alone buy a doughnut. Case loads are overwhelming and the juveniles are more violent. In today's juvenile system Probation Officers must act as the police and social workers. It's an impossible balance to keep and eat doughnuts at the same time.

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