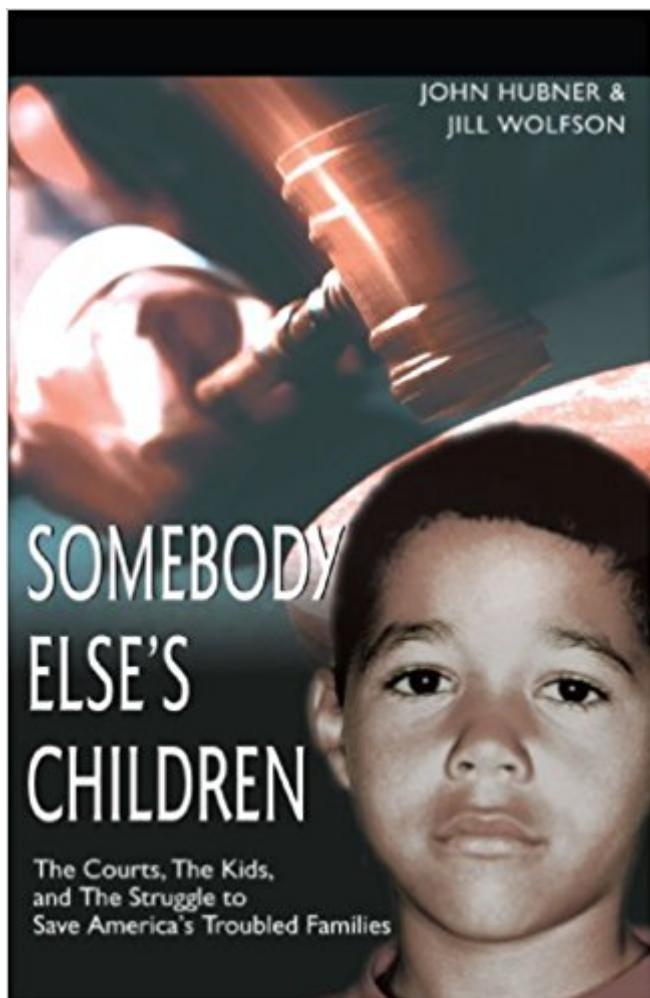


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# Somebody Else's Children: The Courts, The Kids, And The Struggle To Save America's Troubled Families



## **Synopsis**

With the narrative force of an epic novel and the urgency of first-rate investigative journalism, this important book delves into the daily workings and life-or-death decisions of a typical American family court system. It provides an intimate look at the lives of the parents and children whose fate it decides. A must for social workers and social work students, attorneys, judges, foster parents, law students, child advocates, teachers, journalists and anyone who cares about our nation's children.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Award-winning California reporters Hubner and Wolfson were given unusual access to the confidential proceedings of family court in their hometown of San Jose, Calif. The raw, unmediated portrait of the machinery of juvenile justice, which includes the voices of the families and children as well as of service providers, reveals how intricate and interconnected the problems are. In the courtroom of a juvenile judge, we view the day-to-day routine of welfare, delinquency and child-placement hearings. Writing with admirable conviction and convincing urgency, the authors make the point that the press usually ignores the system until a crisis erupts. Here their aim is to follow children and their families through shelters, courts and foster homes to see how the system really works. The thrust of this graphic report is a push for more government programs for juveniles and a plea for personal commitment through volunteering "to make somebody else's children all our children." Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hubner, a former probation officer, and Wolfson, news columnist for the San Jose Mercury News, tackle here the complexity of the American juvenile justice system. Granted unusual access to the records of the Santa Clara County (California) Probation Department of Family and Children, they were also allowed to interview the social workers, children, and families involved in confidential court proceedings. The result is a gripping narrative of juvenile case stories, "the ordinary drama that...reflects the day-to-day working of the system." It's a story of the often well-intentioned counselors, legal constraints, substance abuse, deprivation, and child and family protection gone awry. More descriptive than prescriptive, the book's overarching theme is the lack of responsible community recognition of the necessity for commitment to the healthy development of "our" kids in our society. Especially appropriate and thoughtful reading for our times; recommended for professionals, academics, politicians, and the general public. Suzanne W. Wood, SUNY Coll. of Technology, Alfred Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a superb, eminently readable, and balanced overview of the child welfare system. It contains true, compelling, and representative stories of children and families which were caught up in the system for various reasons. The names of the children and their families were changed in order to protect their privacy. It's a miracle this book could ever be published, due to the strict protections of privacy in the law. In the process of telling the stories, the authors explain how the child welfare system works (or doesn't work). It turns out, like any human institution, the system has its flaws, but there are almost always very valid reasons for why things are done the way they are. Myths are debunked, and the system is shown for what it is - a sometimes flawed, but nonetheless vitally important support for children whose parents and society have failed them. There are numerous references in the back of the book to support the assertions in the text. The book is about 20 years old, but I believe it should still be pertinent and relevant today. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in children or the child welfare system. If you would like to make a difference, please consider volunteering as a CASA or Guardian Ad Litem.

The book I ordered was shipped promptly and was in great condition as promised, thank you! I would order again. Very economical way to purchase books that have been recommended.

I could not put this book down. If you are interested in learning how the system can help, or hinder, this is the book to read.

This book is overly critical of social workers. It should never have been written.

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.

I've become an almost compulsive reader about our juvenile justice system and foster care since it seems the vast majority of the students I teach have some contact with at least one. In one school I taught at, at least 70% of the students were either in foster care, group homes or had a juvenile justice caseworker. For many of these kids, their child advocate (CASA is a fantastic organization) was the only person with their best interests at heart. The more books I read, the more I realize that I'm reading the same thing over and over again, and seeing it in my classroom. The problem is that there doesn't seem to be a whole answer... One answer could be books like this that require the courts, and the system to open up their books so that outsiders can see what is going on. In this book, it seems as if services the children received were better than average, but that may be a perception I have from working in inner city areas where services are going to be less accessible to families in crisis. This book presents a fair, mostly even-handed look at the system, and the issues. It doesn't blame a particular group, but seeks to share the problems with everybody interacting in the system. This is a nice change from the often one-sided books that play the blame game.

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.

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.

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