



Children of Katrina (Katrina Bookshelf)

Alice Fothergill, Lori Peek

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When children experience upheaval and trauma, adults often view them as either vulnerable and helpless or as resilient and able to easily “bounce back.” But the reality is far more complex for the children and youth whose lives are suddenly upended by disaster. How are children actually affected by catastrophic events and how do they cope with the damage and disruption?

Children of Katrina offers one of the only long-term, multiyear studies of young people following disaster. Sociologists Alice Fothergill and Lori Peek spent seven years after Hurricane Katrina interviewing and observing several hundred children and their family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, and other caregivers. In this book, they focus intimately on seven children between the ages of three and eighteen, selected because they exemplify the varied experiences of the larger group. They find that children followed three different post-disaster trajectories—declining, finding equilibrium, and fluctuating—as they tried to regain stability. The children’s moving stories illuminate how a devastating disaster affects individual health and well-being, family situations, housing and neighborhood contexts, schooling, peer relationships, and extracurricular activities. This work also demonstrates how outcomes were often worse for children who were vulnerable and living in crisis before the storm. Fothergill and Peek clarify what kinds of assistance children need during emergency response and recovery periods, as well as the individual, familial, social, and structural factors that aid or hinder children in getting that support.

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