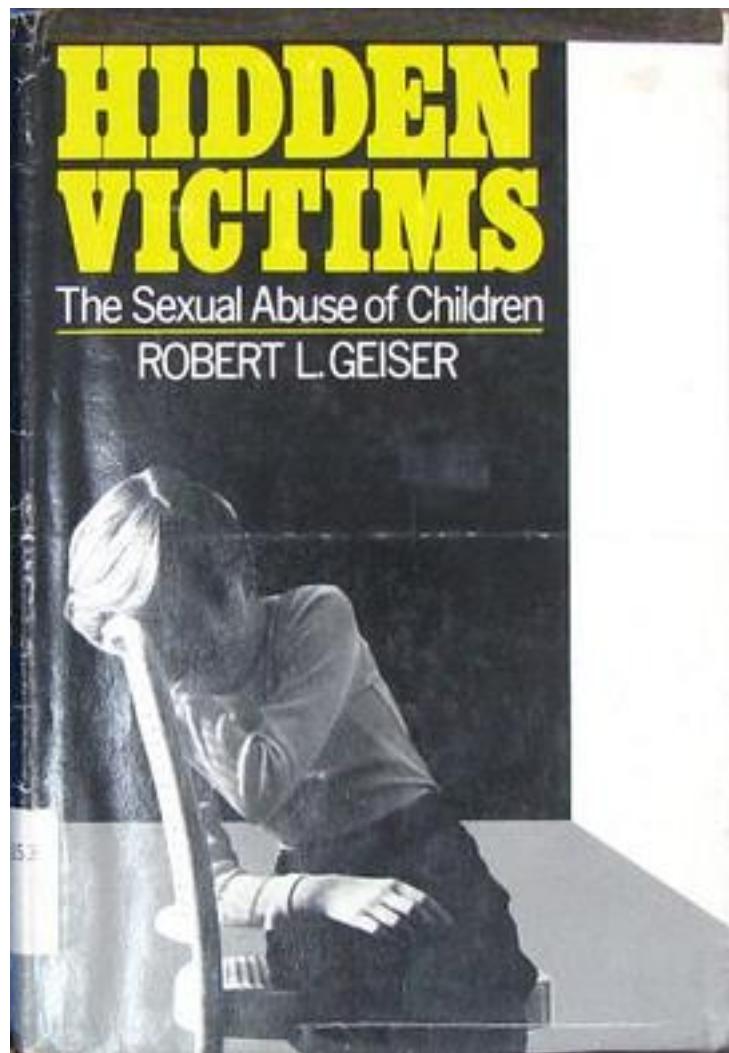


Hidden Victims



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著者:

出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9780807029558

Social problems have an uncanny ability to survive most attempts to remedy them. Their first line of defense is to hide from public awareness and then later to spring onto the scene as full-blown crises. As a result, everyone wonders why a problem wasn't recognized until it reached crisis proportions. Actually, looking back, one can usually find that there were voices warning the public about particular social problems in their early stages. For example, at pollution, the decimation of our natural resources, racial unrest, energy shortages, and the declining quality of education. But people pay little attention to warnings precisely because the situation is not yet a crisis or does not personally affect them. The public labels as an alarmist anyone who cries "Wolf" before the wolf actually puts in an appearance. Social problems remain hidden from public scrutiny through a variety of techniques. One is the ability to camouflage themselves to appear to be something other than what they are. For example, poverty is often attributed to laziness. It becomes the natural result of an unwillingness to work. To attack the social problem of poverty, ways are devised to force lazy people to work. Hence, most remedies for poverty are ineffective because the problem has more to do with economics and emotions than laziness. While the war is waged against the wrong enemy, poverty thrives. Progress cannot be made in solving disguised social problems until they are labeled by their right names. In order for that to happen, someone has to be able to overcome a mind set and dare to think the unthinkable—or the obvious.

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