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Sommario/riassunto	The role of the law in settling family disputes has been a matter of particular debate over the past twenty-five years. In keeping with the general public perception, the media has been largely critical about the role of lawyers in family law matters, sustaining a general lack of confidence in the legal profession, and a more specific feeling that in family matters lawyers aggravate conflict or even represent a female conspiracy. The climate in which family lawyers practise in England and Wales is therefore a harsh one. The authors of this path-breaking study felt it was time to find out more about the contribution of barristers in family law cases. They therefore embarked on a careful study of the Family Law Bar, its characteristics, what its members do, and how their activities contribute to the management or resolution of family disputes. Much of the study is comprised of an in-depth examination of the day-to-day activity of members of the family law bar through

observation of individual barristers as they performed their role in the context of a court hearing, In attempting to answer questions such as whether our family justice system is excessively adversarial, or whether family barristers earn too much from human unhappiness, or indeed whether those working in the front line of child protection earn enough, the authors reach some surprising conclusions.'The barrister is both mentor and guide for the client' is how they begin their conclusion; 'we hope that we have shown that society should value their contribution better' is how they finish
