

MichaelLesher.com



The truth about the family courts gives the lie to some cherished American assumptions. Americans believe they are safe from arbitrary abuse of governmental power—yet child protective services, “law guardians,” and family court judges can cast aside the norms of due process . . .

From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts—and What Can Be Done about It (University Press of New England, 2005).

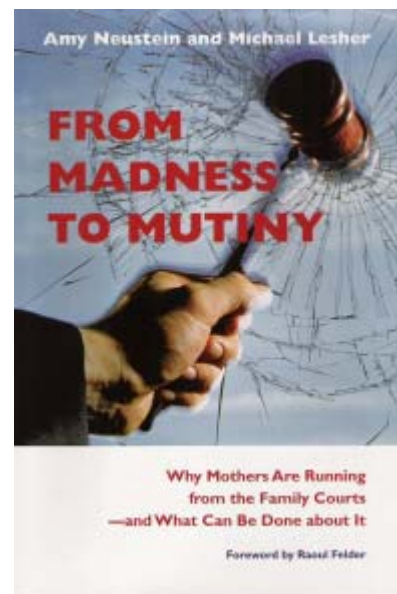
Michael Lesher, Esq. is a writer, journalist and attorney who provides unique legal services to mothers and children navigating the dangerous terrain of the family court system. He has performed legal work for *pro se* clients, and for other attorneys, in states all over the country, including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey and New York. Many of these cases involve mothers who have lost custody of their children because of their efforts to protect the children from alleged sexual abuse. Michael Lesher has also handled federal civil rights cases concerning freedom of speech and equal protection under the law.

Michael Lesher, together with sociologist Amy Neustein, Ph.D., wrote *From Madness to Mutiny*. The book, released in May 2005 as the lead title of the *University Press of New England*, is having a profound effect on the family court system. Professor Maureen Therese Hannah, Siena College, describes it as:

A groundbreaking new book that is perhaps the most highly readable scholarly work I've encountered in my 14 years in academia ...

Dr. Joy Silberg, in the *Family Violence & Sexual Assault Bulletin*, 21(2), 2005, calls it:

... essential reading for any health or mental health professional or legal advocate for children.



“This motion gives this Court an opportunity to undo a grievous wrong—one which no other tribunal has had the capacity to rectify. This Court finally has the benefit of a full record on which to base its judgment. In the light of that record, this Court—at last—has the opportunity to erase a tragic error that has tainted for too long a decision of this Court, not to mention the lives of a victimized mother and an innocent child.” —from legal papers written by Michael Lesher.

“Modified sole custody ... is modified to provide for [the mother] as the legal custodian ... I want this child to feel that she has a safe place where if necessary she can talk about her feelings, about what is going on in her life ... without having to worry about being a go between [the parents].” —from a decision granted in favor of a mother who had lost custody due to suspected sexual abuse by the father, and whose legal papers were prepared by Michael Lesh.

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Michael Lesher



Michael Lesher (M.A., J.D.), writer, journalist and attorney, provides unique legal services to parents who have lost custody of their children for trying to protect them from alleged sexual abuse, and others who have been unjustly penalized by family court or Child Protective Services. He has fought for mothers and children in states all over the country, including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey and New York. He has also handled federal civil rights cases concerning freedom of speech and equal protection under the law.

Michael Lesher is also a published poet and short story author whose journalism has appeared in such publications as *Forward*, *The New York Jewish Week*, *The Village Voice*, *North Jersey Herald & News* and New York's *Daily News*.

As a legal writer, Michael Lesher has contributed to *Moore's Federal Practice*, *Weinstein's Evidence*, and *The Federal Litigation Guide Reporter*.

Michael Lesher has been actively involved with family court problems since 1996, when he published major articles on the outrages committed in the case of Amy Neustein, Ph.D., in *The Village Voice* (co-authored with Adam Fifield) and *The New York Jewish Week*. After years of research and legal work on other cases in which the family court system has betrayed children—and the parents who try to protect them—he joined with Amy Neustein to co-author *From Madness to Mutiny*. This is the first book to dissect the ways the family court system abandons protective parents, and the first to recommend significant and plausible reforms. It has now been acquired by over 220 law school and university libraries internationally, including Yale, Princeton, Stanford and McGill University in Canada.

With co-writer Amy Neustein, Michael Lesher continues to produce important articles on the family court system that have appeared in academic publications and in the mainstream press. He is an Advisory Board member of the Family Court Reform Coalition and has been invited to deliver a keynote address to the third annual Battered Mothers Custody Conference near Albany, New York in January 2006.

As an author, he was awarded the University of Virginia's Wagenheim Prize for fiction in 1979, and has published work in *Oasis*, *Scholia Satyrica*, *Cimarron Review* and *Virginia Literary Review*.

The common themes in Michael's work are an abiding concern with the power of the written word (whether in a story or in a legal brief) and a passionate commitment to truth. This has led to a unique career of service to parents and children who are struggling in an imperfect system.

Curriculum Vitae

for Michael Lesh, Esq.

Education

- Juris Doctor, Brooklyn Law School, 1988
- Master of Arts (Fiction Writing, American Literature), University of Virginia, 1982
- Bachelor of Arts, University of Virginia, 1980
- Judaic Studies, Ohr Somayach (Monsey, New York), 1988 – 1990

Honors and Awards

- Juris Doctor *cum laude*, Brooklyn Law School, 1988
- Selected for International Moot Court team, Brooklyn Law School, 1987
- Masters degree awarded *with honors*, University of Virginia, 1982
- Wagenheim Writing Prize, University of Virginia, 1979
- Echols Scholar, University of Virginia, 1976 – 1980
- Richmond Scholarship, University of Virginia, 1976

Legal Work History

- Cozen and O'Connor, 1995 – 1998
- Sheft & Sheft, 1994 – 1995
- Matthew Bender & Co., 1982 – 1988 (as legal writer, contributed to such publications as *Moore's Federal Practice*, *Weinstein's Evidence*, and *The Federal Litigation Guide Reporter*)

Professional Affiliations

- Member of the New York Bar since 1989
- "Of counsel" to the New York firm of Lauterbach Garfinkel Damast & Hollander LLP
- Member of Advisory Board, Family Court Reform Coalition

Other

- Radio Amateur, Extra Class, WB4KWU

Legal Work

Following is a sampling of the legal work performed by Michael Lesh, Esq. For reasons of confidentiality, names of cases and individuals are omitted.

State Courts

Arizona

A mother's four children had been summarily removed from her custody into foster care after the father's "expert" accused the mother of suffering from Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy and of "coaching" the children's sexual abuse reports against the father. Michael Lesh drafted all the legal papers defending her from the accusation and pointing out the deficiencies in the methods and conclusions of the "expert." The expert has been largely removed from the case, and the mother expects the return of two of her children soon; the others will presumably follow.

Colorado

Even after a court concluded that a divorced father had committed acts constituting child abuse, the father sought expanded visitation and custody. Michael Lesh drafted motion papers and appellate papers opposing these efforts.

Connecticut

A mother gave up child support in exchange for her ex-husband's agreement to give her full custody of the couple's child. She had made the agreement out of concern for the child's welfare. Michael Lesh drafted an extensive research memorandum showing that the agreement was unenforceable to bar the mother from seeking appropriate child support, since as a matter of public policy the court could not endorse the father's trade of custody for a more favorable financial "agreement."

Idaho

A father credibly accused of sexual abuse by two of his children sought a reduction in child support as a result of the ensuing litigation. The trial court granted his request. Michael Lesh wrote the appellate briefs seeking reversal of this ruling, demonstrating that the litigation could not be blamed on improper actions by the mother.

District of Columbia

Two small children were removed from a mother's custody without appropriate evidence and based upon apparently improper actions by the child's guardian ad litem. Michael Lesh drafted a thorough research memorandum demonstrating grounds invalidating the order.

Michigan

Michael Lesh prepared direct examination and cross-examination of all witnesses, and prepared written closing statements, on behalf of a mother seeking to prevent unsupervised visits between her young daughter and the girl's allegedly abusive father.

Maryland

Michael Lesh prepared direct examination and cross-examination of witnesses, wrote motion papers and a letter brief, and prepared litigation strategy on behalf of a mother who was accused of interfering with visitation by an allegedly abusive father.

New Jersey

A mother had lost custody of her young daughter to a father she suspected of abuse. Michael Lesh wrote the successful motion papers that enabled her to regain custody of her daughter. He also wrote the appellate brief successfully defeating the father's attempt to reverse the result.

A mother's visits with her son were suspended after the father accused her of neglecting the child. Michael Lesh wrote the successful papers resulting in the lifting of the suspension.

A mother's children were summarily removed following accusations made against her. Michael Lesh wrote motion papers on the mother's behalf, and prepared an expert witness for a court hearing at which the motion was heard. As a result, the proceeding against the mother was dismissed.

A mother had lost custody of her children to their father in a proceeding in which she was penalized for having been critical of the behavior of Child Protective Services personnel. She was not even allowed visits with the children except with the father's permission. Michael Lesh wrote a complex motion for the mother, seeking a change of this arrangement; as a result, she obtained increased visits and a revision of the terms of the custody/visitation order.

New York

A young child had accused her father of sexually abusing her. Family Court penalized the mother for her supposedly "delusional" belief that the abuse occurred; however, critical evidence confirming the abuse incident was suppressed. Michael Lesh wrote a motion brief seeking to invalidate this ruling based on a previously unused "error coram nobis" theory.

After fundamentalist Jews took possession of a 13-year-old girl against her mother's wishes, they sought to validate their actions by filing a custody petition with Family Court. Michael Lesh wrote the mother's papers opposing the petition. Ultimately the case was resolved through settlement.

Michael Lesh wrote all pleadings and motion papers in a woman's action against a large investment company, seeking damages for the company's disclosure of a client's private information to a man who had allegedly threatened her. These papers defeated the company's attempts to dismiss the action and a settlement was obtained.

Virginia

Michael Lesh was consulted by a mother who was involved in a divorce from a politically-connected man who may have allowed the couple's daughter to be sexually abused. Over several months, she was able to avoid pitfalls that could have resulted in her losing custody.

Federal Courts

A parent had filed a civil rights complaint against Child Protective Services officials after they improperly detained children in foster care. A federal magistrate recommended dismissal of the action on various complex grounds. Michael Leshner drafted the brief objecting to the recommendation and seeking reinstatement of the action against CPS.

Michael Leshner drafted all motion papers, and appellate briefs, in a federal civil rights action against state officials alleging violations of the right of free speech. (The appeal is now pending.)

Michael Leshner drafted the pleadings, and all motion papers, in a federal equal-protection action challenging the constitutionality of a law limiting the time in which a child abuse survivor could commence an action against her alleged abuser.

Michael Leshner drafted all litigation documents in a federal action seeking damages due to record tampering in a child custody proceeding.

Endorsements

It is clear you are doing wonderful work!

Helen L. McGonigle, Esq.
Attorney at Law

I was impressed with the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and good writing... Great work.

Loren Pankratz, Ph.D.
Psychologist and Expert Witness

I just wanted to let you know how wonderful I thought your book was. I thought you tackled the problems of family court very incisively. I was interested to see some horror stories that even rivaled the ones that I have been working on.

Joyanna Silberg, Ph.D.
Psychologist and Child Abuse Expert

Publications

Partial listing.

Books and Professional Literature

Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner (1999). Legislative Solutions to the Protective Parent Backlash. *Family Violence and Sexual Assault Bulletin*, 25(2-3): 19-26

Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner (2002). The Silence of the Jewish Media on Sexual Abuse in the Orthodox Jewish Community. In D.S. Claussen (Ed.), *Sex, Religion, Media*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (pp. 79-87)

Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner (2005). *From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts—and What Can Be Done about It* (Gender, Crime and Law series, Northeastern University Press/University Press of New England, May 2005)

Journalism

October 4, 1995 "Mixed Marriage, Mixed Message," by Michael Leshner. *Jewish Community News of Clifton/Passaic*

November 17, 1995 "Exile in Orthodoxy," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week*

December 29, 1995 "The Rhetoric About 'Rhetoric,'" by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 7)

February 9, 1996 "Of Bagels and Believers," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 22)

April 5, 1996 "When the Apple Falls Far From the Tree," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 19)

May 3, 1996 "Defending Judge Duckman," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 32)

June 2, 1996 "The Goldstein Syndrome," by Michael Leshner. *Canadian Jewish News*

June 28, 1996 "The Rabbi and the Runaway," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 24)

July 17, 1996 "Mideast Fundamentalism Can Easily Infect New Jersey, America," by Michael Leshner. *North Jersey Herald & News*

August 2, 1996 "Palestine, the Jews and the Olympics," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 18)

October 1, 1996 "A Child's at Stake: A Custody Fight Becomes a Political Nightmare," by Adam Fifield and Michael Leshner. *Village Voice* (pp. 10, 12-13)

October 4, 1996 "Face Facts: Jerusalem Is Divided," by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 28)

November 1, 1996 "Speaking with Their Silence: A Troubling Child Sex Abuse Case in Orthodox Community Raises the Question, Where Are Our Leaders?" by Michael Leshner. *The Jewish Week* (pg. 28)

January 31, 1997 "Proudly Orthodox - and Gay," by Michael Leshner. *Forward* (pg. 7)

January 16, 1998 "An Orthodoxy Afraid of Unraveling," by Michael Lesh. *Forward* (pg. 7)

1998 "Cheapening a Sacred Vocabulary," by Michael Lesh. *Forward*

November 13, 1998 "Two Weddings and a Boycott," by Michael Lesh. *Forward* (pg. 23)

May 30, 2002 "Does the Jewish Community Sacrifice Victims of Sexual Abuse?" by Amy Neustein and Michael Lesh. *Jewish Exponent* (pg. 37)

June 21, 2004 "Courts See Moms as Guilty till Proven Innocent," by Amy Neustein and Michael Lesh. *New York Daily News* (pg. 39)

Fiction

Michael Lesh, Michael Corrado, Stephanie Selice (eds.) (1978) *The Discordian Review*, The Discordian Society, Spring 1978

Michael Lesh, "Deucalion and the Fat Lady," *Virginia Literary Review*, 2(2), Fall 1980 (pp. 28-35)

Michael Lesh, "The Waiting Room," *Virginia Literary Review*, Spring 1982

Michael Lesh, "The Satirist," *Scholia Satyrica*, Spring 1980 (pp. 29-36)

Michael Lesh, "At the Voice of a Bird," *Cimarron Review*, April 1997 (pp. 54-69)

Michael Lesh, "Love Story," *Oasis*, October-December 1999 (pp. 9-12)

Poems

Michael Lesh, "Night Music," "For My Corpse," "Eve's Prayer," "Vampire," *Oasis*, October-December 2000 (pp. 45-51)

Michael Lesh, "Soul's Beloved," "Broadcast News," "Chopping Trees in North Carolina - Midnight," *Oasis*, July-September 2001 (pp. 41-43)

Press and Presentations

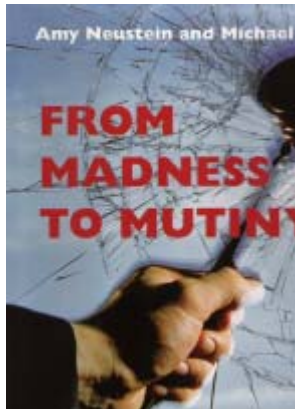
Partial listing.

- March 11, 2000 "Rabbis' Ruling May Nix Bid To Indict Suspect in Kid-Sex Rap," by Al Guart. *New York Post* (p. 10) (Leshar quoted as source re: a secret rabbinic tribunal that purportedly cleared a tutor criminally charged with abusing a young pupil)
- April 13, 2002 "Orthodox Jews Have Faced Abuse Scandals as Well," by Karen Matthews. *Associated Press* (picked up in *Newsday*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Rockland Journal-News* (NY), *The Guardian* (UK), among others)
- May 29, 2003 "Tripping up the Prosecution," by Stephanie Saul. *Newsday* (pg. A6) (Leshar credited with unearthing government documents "embarrassing" to a District Attorney responsible for pursuing a fugitive wanted for alleged child sexual abuse)
- July 20, 2004: Presentation, "Do's and Don'ts in Dealing with Child Protective Services," New Jersey Parents Against DYFS, New Jersey
- November 30, 2004: Presentation re: family court problems to Justice Jacqueline Silberman, Statewide Administrative Judge for Matrimonial Matters, Supreme Court of New York, New York, NY
- March 2005 (Adar II 5765) "A 20-Year-Old Custody Battle Brings Charges of Abuse to the Orthodox Community: In Edgewater, a Mother Waits for Her Daughter To Come Home [Waiting for Sherry Part I]" by Rachel Bluth and Susan Rosenbluth. *The Jewish Voice and Opinion* (pg. 30) (Leshar quoted as authority)
- May 2005 (Iyar 5765) "Waiting for Sherry Part II: Who Doesn't Want *From Madness to Mutiny* Published ... and Why?" by Susan Rosenbluth. *The Jewish Voice and Opinion* (pg. 3)
- May 10, 2005 "*From Madness to Mutiny*," an interview with Amy Neustein and Michael Leshar. Nitebeat with host Barry Nolan, CN8 (Comcast Cable Network)
- May 27, 2005 "Locals Co-Author New Book" Community News section. *New Jersey Jewish Standard* (pg. 13)
- May 29, 2005 An interview with Amy Neustein and Michael Leshar. NewYorkOne News, New Jersey segment
- May 31, 2005: Presentation of *From Madness to Mutiny* with co-author Amy Neustein at Jewish Book Network of the Jewish Book Council at the Kraft Center for Jewish Life, Columbia University, NY
- June 2005 (Sivan 5765) "Waiting for Sherry Part III: Was That Really Sherry Orbach Writing in *The Jewish Press*?" by Susan Rosenbluth. *The Jewish Voice and Opinion* (pg. 22)
- June 3, 2005 "*From Madness to Mutiny*" Community News section. *Jewish Community News of Clifton/Passaic* (pg. 11)
- June 3, 2005: Signing of *From Madness to Mutiny* with co-author Amy Neustein, at the Book Expo of America, Javits Center, New York, NY
- June 5, 2005: An interview with Michael Leshar and Amy Neustein. "The Week in Review" hosted by Bob Pickett and Charles Etheridge, III, KISS-FM

- June 23, 2005: Signing of *From Madness to Mutiny* with co-author Amy Neustein, at Clifton Commons Barnes and Noble, Clifton, NJ
- Autumn 2005 "Book Review: *From Madness to Mutiny*" by Helen Grieco, Executive Director, California NOW, in *California NOW Activist* (pg. 6)
- September/October 2005 "Groundbreaking Book: *From Madness to Mutiny*," *Bergen County The Magazine* (pg. 61)
- September 19, 2005 "Playboy Mom Speaks" with Harris Faulkner, reporting. "A Current Affair" (FOX TV) (*From Madness to Mutiny* shown in connection with a notorious protective-parent case)
- November 2, 2005 "OCA Opens Files to Counter Judge's Critics," by John Caher. *New York Law Journal* (pg. 1)
- November 2, 2005 "Custody Ruling Protested: Mother, Supporters Decry Judicial System amid Battle Over Child's Fate" by Michele Morgan Bolton, *Albany Times Union* (pg. 1) (referring to *From Madness to Mutiny*)
- December 2005 (Kislev 5766) "Dr. Amy Neustein: Battered Mothers Custody Conference 'Woman of Valor' " by Susan Rosenbluth. *The Jewish Voice and Opinion* (pg. 3) (refers to *From Madness to Mutiny* and to the invitation to the authors to speak at the Battered Mothers Custody Conference in January 2006)
- December 15, 2005 "Award for Activist, Author Neustein at Siena Conference on Mothers Custody." *The Jewish World* (Albany) (pg. 5)
- December 30, 2005 (29 Kislev 5766) "Dr. Amy Neustein: Woman of Valor" by Susan Rosenbluth. *The Jewish Press* (pg. F1) (reprint of *JVO* article above)
- December 30, 2005 "Judging Amy" by Jacob Berkman. *The Jewish Standard* (pg. 3)
- January 6, 2006 "State Delegates at Family Court Talk." *The Jewish Advocate* (Boston) (pg. 2)
- January 8, 2006 Delivered keynote address at third Battered Mothers Custody Conference, a symposium of lawyers, judges, mental health professionals and others (with Amy Neustein)
- January 20, 2006 (20 Tevet 5766) *The Jewish Press* (pg. 9) (photo of Michael Lesh, Amy Neustein and Professor Mo Hannah at the Battered Mothers Custody Conference, January 8, 2006; photo at right by Joe Lombardo)



From Madness To Mutiny



Michael Leshner, together with sociologist Amy Neustein, is co-author of *From Madness To Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts—and What Can Be Done about It*. The book was published in 2005 by Northeastern University Press/University Press of New England, ISBN 1-58465-462-7, in their Gender, Crime and Law series, with a Foreword by Raoul Felder.

From Madness to Mutiny is the first in-depth treatment of the scandalous behavior of the family courts in cases in which parents—usually mothers—make good-faith allegations of sexual abuse against a child's father. This book, popularly called **M2M** by growing numbers of readers, sold out 90% of its initial print run in the first three months. It can now be

found on the shelves of over 200 university and law school libraries across the country from Yale Law School to Stanford University in the United States, and internationally at the University of Alberta in Canada, and even at two universities in Australia.

What makes this well-documented book so popular among mental health professionals, lawyers, and lay readers? It has hit a nerve. All too often family courts turn against the very parent who tries to protect the child from abuse. Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner have revealed the roots of this problem, combining sociology, legal scholarship, and painstaking research, to produce a rigorously documented, lucidly written *j'accuse* of America's family court and child welfare system.

From the Foreword by matrimonial attorney Raoul Felder:

What I have seen as a practitioner, this book reveals in punishing detail... Neustein and Leshner ... believe that until the system is reformed and rethought at every level, it will continue to be a dangerous one -- dangerously malfunctioning, dangerously betraying its critical task.

Professor Maureen Therese Hannah, Siena College:

A groundbreaking new book that is perhaps the most highly readable scholarly work I've encountered in my 14 years in academia ... The very first to provide the historical and contextual chronology of this system's steady decline into chaos and corruption over the past two decades. It is eminently accurate and rigorously documented -- a book that will hit scholars, professionals, and lay persons right between their eyes. This is the book that mothers have been waiting for ... I consider this book among the most important of the decade.

Randy Burton, Esq., former Texas prosecutor:

From Madness to Mutiny offers an unexpurgated view of our nation's criminally dysfunctional family court system.

Professor Kathleen Coulborn Faller, School of Social Work, University of Michigan:

This book describes how systems and professionals fail sexually abused children... Neustein and Leshner champion these children and their mothers and intend that their voices will be heard and heeded.

Lee Grant, child advocate and award-winning actress:

A book for all mothers crushed by an unfair system.

Professor Daniel Pollack, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University:

From Madness to Mutiny is a book whose ... effect is to jolt us with an illuminating barrage of riveting descriptions, information, commentary and philosophy.

Reviews of *From Madness to Mutiny*

Click on the name of each reviewer for the full review (when available).

"Make sure everyone knows about the incredible new book available from Barnes and Noble entitled *From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts--and What Can Be Done about It* by Amy Neustein and Michael Lesher. If every one of us sent one copy of this book to our local Family Law Judge we would see a huge change in how these cases are handled. I sent one copy to one judge who cares, and he sent 25 copies to 25 other judges, on his own steam and at his own expense! Please try this." Meera Fox, Executive Director, Child Abuse Solutions, Inc., Berkeley, CA, in post to email list, October 18, 2005.

"This book is a must read for every feminist, especially mothers." Helen Grieco, Executive Director, California NOW, in the *California NOW Activist* (Autumn 2005).

"Groundbreaking Book: *From Madness to Mutiny*... offers a comprehensive set of legislative and policy changes that, if adopted, could help to transform our family courts from instruments of punishment to true institutions of justice." In *Bergen County, The Magazine* (September/October 2005).

"When you study large numbers of cases as the authors have done, however, it becomes apparent that the fault is not with the mother but with the system. The same mistakes are made repeatedly by judges, lawyers, law guardians, mental health professionals, child protective workers and other players in the system. The authors' contribution is to help us see this pattern of abuse in the courts." Barry Goldstein, on *Amazon.com* (June 19, 2005).

"This is not light reading. Sociologist Neustein and attorney Lesher have written a shocking indictment of the U.S. family court system. After studying over a thousand cases, they find a clear pattern of abuse by the system itself, directed against sexually-abused children and the parents who try to protect them." Jeremy H. Griffith, on *Amazon.com* (June 13, 2005).

"The same judgment that fell on the Catholic hierarchy for exposing children to sexual abuse by clergy is storming the door of our nation's family courts." Anne Grant, *Providence Journal* (June 12, 2005).

"*From Madness to Mutiny* is the first scholarly and comprehensive study to date of the phenomenon. The book documents case after case where accusations of sexual abuse resulted in forced contact with the alleged abuser, and sometimes complete termination of parental contact with a loving parent who seeks only to protect the child." Joyanna Silberg, Ph.D., *Family Violence & Sexual Assault Bulletin*, 21(2), 2005.

"I highly recommend *From Madness to Mutiny* as required reading in family law courses in our law schools as well for trainings for judges, therapists, social workers,

child protective services and law enforcement as well as for anyone who is writing seriously about child abuse. Most of all, I applaud Neustein and Leshner for putting a book into the hands of so many protective mothers (or other protective relatives) that will let them know that they are not alone and that they are not crazy for wanting to do everything in their power to protect their precious children." Eileen King, *Sexual Assault Report* (May/June 2005).

"*From Madness to Mutiny* ... the culmination of 20 years of research, studies the cases of 1,000 women across the country who reported that their children had been the victims of sexual abuse, only to find themselves attacked by the family court system, often losing custody of their children." Shira Schoenberg, *The Jewish Advocate*, Boston (May 27, 2005)

"... a book shining an unflinching light on the abuses [mothers] have suffered at the hands of misguided family court judges with too much absolute power and too little critical oversight is the only Mother's Day gift that matters. And while it is often tempting to look away from the unvarnished truth, you will find this a hard book to put down, because it is a book that matters." Jesse Rosenthal, *The Residential*, Edgewater, NJ (May 2005)

"Neustein and Leshner's well-documented and eminently readable book rips the curtains off the abject degeneration into madness of today's family court system. In searing detail, the book points a much deserved finger of blame at the actors in this legal nightmare--the attorneys, law guardians (lawyers for the children), judges, custody evaluators, and other court 'auxiliaries'." Mo Hannah, Ph.D., psychology professor, Siena College, on *BarnesAndNoble.com* (April 22, 2005).

Reviews: *Amazon.com*

*Review by Barry Goldstein
on June 19, 2005, 5 out of 5 stars*

Scandal in our Family Courts

Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner have written an important book which exposes a scandal in our family and divorce courts. It is a scandal that is well-known to victims and advocates trying to help them. The authors studied over 1000 cases in which alleged sexual abusers of children are granted custody and the protective mothers receive supervised visitation. They chronicle the kinds of mistakes which create such outrageous outcomes. The scandal has become so widespread because of the secrecy the courts promote and the blame the victim strategy so often encouraged in the courts. If you look at individual cases the abuser has successfully denigrated the protective mother so that a casual reader or journalist can believe that there was something wrong with the particular mother that created such an extreme outcome. When you study large numbers of cases as the authors have done, however, it becomes apparent that the fault is not with the mother but with the system. The same mistakes are made repeatedly by judges, lawyers, law guardians, mental health professionals, child protective workers and other players in the system. The authors' contribution is to help us see this pattern of abuse in the courts. The media have been willing to publicize individual cases but have failed in their obligation to expose the pattern. If the custody courts reformed their practices to stop making children live with abusers it would do more to reduce crime than every crime bill passed in our lifetime. This book shows the mistakes that are made that cause outrageous results. The same mistakes are made in other child abuse and domestic violence cases. There are thousands of these Custody-Visitation Scandal Cases throughout the country. This book is an important start to making the public aware of the scandal and the harm it causes. I hope the national media will end its timidity and go after this critical story.

*Review by Jeremy H. Griffith
on June 13, 2005, 5 out of 5 stars*

An Indictment of the Family Court System

This is not light reading. Sociologist Neustein and attorney Leshner have written a shocking indictment of the U.S. family court system. After studying over a thousand cases, they find a clear pattern of abuse by the system itself, directed against sexually-abused children and the parents who try to protect them.

Many people are already stunned by the systemic abuse of children—and the coverups—revealed in the Catholic Church scandals. This one is a thousand times worse. It's not just a few bad eggs, it's the whole egg farm. All across the country, corrupt judges are handing sexually-assaulted children over to the very people who abused them, every day. It's a policy. They get away with it because they do it in secrecy, often calling the protective parent (usually the mother) "crazy" despite a total lack of evidence against them... and frequently in the face of strong, substantiated evidence against the abuser, which they ignore. Like the Church.

It's unbelievable. Yet it really is happening, maybe to someone you know. Neustein and Lesher document it thoroughly and calmly, in full academic form (with 30 pages of footnotes and 10 pages of references at the end). There is no "hysteria" here; the facts speak for themselves. Read it... then go out and change it. The last three chapters tell you how. Our children need us to restore integrity to the family courts.

Buy it now, while you still can. The first printing is almost sold out, and detractors from New York with their own special agendas are trying very hard to suppress it. Don't let them win.

Review: *BarnesAndNoble.com*

*Review by Mo Hannah, Ph.D., psychology professor,
Siena College, on April 22, 2005, 5 out of 5 stars*

This book busts wide open the myths about how mothers and children fare when in the clutches of the family court system.

Neustein and Leshner's well-documented and eminently readable book rips the curtains off the abject degeneration into madness of today's family court system. In searing detail, the book points a much deserved finger of blame at the actors in this legal nightmare--the attorneys, law guardians (lawyers for the children), judges, custody evaluators, and other court "auxiliaries." Yet more compelling is the book's dissection of the interactions among these legal actors that generate a perverse, upside down reality, one in which what is truly bad for children is deemed to be "in the best interests of the child." Using the sociological framework of ethnomethodology, the authors outline the "meaning-making" processes by which normal, fit, and loving mothers are labeled as delusional, hysterical, or otherwise mentally deranged, and are ultimately judged unfit to be the custodian of--and, in many cases, have any further contact with--their child--all because the mother made a good-faith report to the court of her child being sexually abused by his or her father. Rather than relying, as they could, on the shock value of this truly despicable scenario to sell their book, the authors include a painstaking and realistic plan for true reform. Absent the massive revisions called for by Neustein and Leshner, the current family court system is a ship captain gone mad, with mutiny its only hope of redemption.

Review: *Family Violence & Sexual Assault Bulletin*

*Review by Joyanna Silberg, Ph.D.
in Family Violence & Sexual Assault Bulletin, 21(2), 2005*

The Real Madness Revealed: Book Review of *From Madness to Mutiny*
(Northeastern University Press, 2005)

As a child psychologist who treats abused children, I have become familiar with dozens of children who have been ordered by courts to live with or spend significant time with parents who are sexually abusing them. In addition, a growing number of parents desperate to protect their children are contacting the Leadership Council on Child Abuse & Interpersonal Violence, where I serve as executive vice president. In case after case, the parent who brings the allegation to light is accused of making it up, the child not believed, and in spite of compelling evidence along with numerous disclosures to multiple professionals, the children are forced against their will to live with the abusers. These children suffer the deep demoralization of knowing that there is no one they can count on, no one who will protect them from violence and exploitation.

As one 11-year-old girl said to me in a particularly poignant therapy session, a year after achieving safety from years of sexual torture at her father's home, "We don't need to work on anger towards my father, I know he is a child molester, but what about my anger towards the Judge who made me live there after I told him in chambers how bad it was! How will I ever get over that?"

While the problem has been covered by the occasional newspaper article, the book *From Madness to Mutiny* is the first scholarly and comprehensive study to date of the phenomenon. The book documents case after case where accusations of sexual abuse resulted in forced contact with the alleged abuser, and sometimes complete termination of parental contact with a loving parent who seeks only to protect the child.

The book's authors, Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner, make this madness comprehensible by exposing the system of closed logic, self-reinforcing ideas, and the scientific fallacies employed to justify placing children with the person they most fear. The authors also examine the professionals who have betrayed their ethical responsibilities by joining in the madness. For instance, chapters are devoted to the judges (Robed Rage), the law guardians (Lawless Law Guardians) the social service agencies (Anti-Social Services) and the mental health professionals (Mental Health Quackery) who collude either wittingly or unwittingly in this conspiracy against abused children.

Neustein and Leshner describe how rather than being rescued by the social agencies mandated to care for them, abused children were instead further victimized. As a result, from the child's viewpoint, the criminal acts of his or her perpetrator are now sanctioned by societal authority figures including lawyers, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and judges. In some cases court orders were written that expressly interfered with the possibility that any help could ever be received. For instance, some judges enacted orders forbidding any professionals from contacting social service authorities to report new allegations of abuse.

As someone who has long struggled to understand how family courts in our nation could fail children so completely, I found the book very helpful. I was particularly intrigued with the authors' explanation of how "maternal fitness" takes on a new definition within the family court context and comes to refer to the mother's behavior as a "litigant" rather than her ability to parent. The authors also provide a new perspective on judicial court orders noting that they are often used as "explicative transactions" that serve to bolster the role or authority of the judge rather than to mete out justice.

The book closes with the authors' recommendations for how to reform the family court system. Recommendations include increasing the status and importance of family court, emphasizing the importance of due process rights, improving judicial understanding of child sexual abuse, and avoidance of mental health labels that obscure the truth.

For abused children and protective parents, the reforms needed cannot come quickly enough. This book is essential reading for any health or mental health professional or legal advocate for children. Only by understanding the complexities of court sanctioned child abuse, can we work together as a society to stop it. I have begun to send the book to colleagues, friends, and professionals, and I urge every professional dedicated to child welfare to read this book and share it with professionals and lawmakers within your own jurisdiction.

Author's Note:

Dr. Joyanna Silberg is the Executive Vice-President of the Leadership Council on Child Abuse & Interpersonal Violence <<http://www.leadershipcouncil.org>>. She is also co-editor of *Misinformation Concerning Child Sexual Abuse and Adult Survivors* (Haworth Press), and editor of *The Dissociative Child* (Sidran Press). She presents workshop nationally and internationally on treating traumatized children and protecting children in the court system. She has a private practice in Baltimore, Maryland.

Review: *Sexual Assault Report*

Review by Eileen King,
in *Sexual Assault Report*, May/June 2005

Review of *From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts -- and What Can Be Done about It*

Our awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse has increased so that we now know that it affects roughly one in 3-5 girls, one in 6-8 boys. Similarly, the literature on the consequences and treatment of child sexual abuse has burgeoned in the last decade. Yet the family courts are doing surprisingly little to protect child victims from sexual abuse, particularly in cases of incest. How can this failure have received relatively little sociological, medical or legal analysis? Amy Neustein, Ph.D. and Michael Lesh, J.D. have co-authored a book that lays out in an impassioned yet scholarly manner the numerous systemic failures and, at times, sheer corruption and malfeasance that routinely place children in the hands of their (alleged) abusers -- despite competent evidence of child sexual abuse.

The book's description of the family courts' tragic inability to recognize incest and protect children reminds me of the doctors between 1890 and 1940 who blamed mothers as the source of their children's gonorrheal infections instead of the unfaithful fathers who infected their children through incestuous sexual contact.

Traditionally, a "veil of secrecy, of privacy" was drawn when matters of domestic violence or child abuse were raised. Women and children were expected to keep quiet. Being "good" meant not betraying your family, so both women and children suffered violence and abuse in silence. In our culture of heightened awareness, the effects of being left to the mercies of one's (alleged) abuser may be worse now than in the past. Children are told today that they do not deserve to be hurt, that no one is allowed to touch them sexually, and that they should tell if anyone hurts them. However, once abused, they soon learn even their own mothers can't help them. In the cases I see on a daily basis, the consequences of the double betrayal -- first by the abusive parent and then by the system -- are deep, pervasive and traumatic.

I should note that my organization, Justice For Children, advocates for the children in these situations and has worked on cases brought to our attention by protective fathers, grandfathers, brothers and uncles who are struggling to protect a child. However, in our experience the majority of these system failure cases are brought by mothers. This is not surprising when we consider that one in seven girls is abused by a father, step father, or mother's boyfriend. However, in my caseload I also have a surprisingly high number of male children who have disclosed sexual abuse by their fathers or step-fathers.

The authors follow in the footsteps of Phyllis Chesler's *Mothers on Trial: The Battle For Children and Custody* (1985), Lee Grant's documentary "Women on Trial" (1992), Louise Armstrong's *Rocking the Cradle of Sexual Politics: What Happened When Women Said Incest* (1994), Karen Winner's *Divorced From Justice* (1996), John E.B. Myer's *A Mother's Nightmare -- Incest* (1997) and Garland Waller's film documentary "Small Justice: Little Justice in America's Family Courts" (2002). The Massachusetts, California NOW and Arizona Battered Women's Testimony Projects have also helped lay the foundation for *From Madness to Mutiny* as have a number of outstanding papers and legal treatises by Joan Pennington, Richard Ducote, Cheri

Woods, Carol Bruch and others. And although the *Boston Phoenix* was sued for libel by a father (he won and the Phoenix will appeal) mentioned in Kristen Lombardi's excellent article "Custodians of Abuse" (2002), it nevertheless remains the best in-depth investigation of the crisis in our family courts by a newspaper.

Neustein and Leshner use a form of sociological inquiry called "ethnomethodology" to trace what happens from the moment a child abuse report is made and throughout the course of a case as it travels through the family court system. After reviewing over a thousand cases, they describe in detail "the new legal landscape" created by developments intended to improve the family courts but which have had the opposite effect: for example, the appointment of auxiliary personnel. Judges often resort to appointing an attorney who is supposed to represent the child's best interests or, in some cases, the child him/herself (here called the "law guardian"). Judges may appoint a forensic psychologist to perform a custody or psychological evaluation of the whole family. At some point in the case, child protective services will be involved as will law enforcement personnel. Visitation supervisors may also be brought into the mix. These professionals may be testifying before the same judge on other cases throughout the year, so judges tend to rely on their recommendations rather than the facts of the cases before them.

The authors trace the misery wrought by pseudo-scientific theories like "Parental Alienation Syndrome" and "Malicious Mother Syndrome" created respectively by Richard Gardner, M.D. (deceased) and Ira Turkat, Ph.D. as well as the misuse of Munchausen's by Proxy, none of which are in the DSMIV, the "bible" of mental health diagnosis. In case after case, judges have ignored or minimized solid evidence of abuse in favor of these unsupported theories. It is not unusual that single allegation of "coaching" or "parental alienation" against a mother is enough to trigger a change in custody to the alleged abuser.

Judges and the auxiliary personnel -- law guardians, social services, mental health experts -- each have their own chapter. Brief quotes from these chapters will give the thrust of Neustein and Leshner's trenchant observations:

Judges: "Generally, ... an abuse case is transformed, unofficially, into an inquisition into the complaining mother's character, with a judge apparently finding so many reasons to criticize the mother that he has no time to investigate whether her charges are justified."

Law guardians: "In the cases we have studied, law guardians have committed acts including lying to the family court and to higher courts; suppressing evidence of sexual abuse; and communicating false or incomplete information to state prosecutors and child protective caseworkers who were trying to investigate claims of sexual abuse."

Child protective services: "First, they can bring bogus petitions against the mother, charging her with "brainwashing" her child into believing she was sexually abused; then the agencies can come into court and argue so vigorously against the mother that she will lose custody to the ex-husband, even when substantial evidence exists that he sexually abused the child."

Mental health experts: "Most of all, perhaps, mental health quackery functions as the theoretical glue that holds together all the elements of malfunction we have been examining: judicial overreaching, unregulated law guardians and social service agencies, misplaced priorities, systemic prejudices, and unchecked power."

Proposals for Change

Neustein and Leshner offer far-reaching proposals for change. They recall a special White House Women's Office meeting in 1997 (at which I was also present) when SAR Editor Joan Zorza explained that what we really need is a "radical shift in the attitudes and perceptions of judges, law guardians, mental health experts, and others connected with the system."

In the chapter "Rebirthing the Family Court System" Neustein and Leshner are adamant that family courts and their appointees must rethink the concept of "parens patriae" that turns the court into a "superparent" who can act to limit the parent's right to live with and make decisions on behalf of his or her child. Deprivation of this right without proper legal procedure violates the 14th Amendment "due process of law."

The authors provide compelling information about the general validity of child sexual abuse reports, countering the myths that women make up such reports to gain an advantage or that children are easily coached into lying. They observe that both lawyers and judges are strikingly ignorant about the realities of how abused children actually disclose their experiences. They also advocate for an "elevation" in the status of family court; many judges consider this a demeaning job or at best, a stepping-stone to a better position. In addition, judges are not doing their job and deciding the case on the merits if they fall back on the "expertise" of mental health evaluators who produce pseudo-scientific or catch-all mental health labels that reflect their own bias, rather than the actual mental health status of the mother.

The chapter "Reforming the Courts" addresses the secrecy of some family courts and calls for an open court policy. Neustein and Leshner argue that gag orders, secret proceedings with secret records harm children and hide the actions of those who otherwise would be exposed to public outrage. It goes beyond the scope of this review to go into details, but they also propose changes in policy regarding "surprise removals/change of custody; punitive rulings; judges' powers of contempt and propose reviews of sitting judges as well as the possibility of a higher court review for some cases." Neustein and Leshner emphasize training for judges, both in the arena of child abuse as well as domestic violence.

"Reforming the Auxiliaries": In practice, Law Guardians are nearer to being a judge than an attorney and who have the power to "manage" a case from beginning to end. Are they really serving the children whose best interests they represent when they suppress evidence, never meet with the child, enjoy quasi-judicial immunity and as such, are unregulated? Among other suggestions, Neustein and Leshner propose ethical guidelines for Law Guardians as well as the enforcement of these guidelines by a subcommittee of the bar association empowered to discipline for violations. These committees would also accept complaints from any party involved in the litigation. Many additional suggestions are supplied for enhancing the work of child protective services.

In my opinion, this shift would have to be radical indeed: in its current state, this family court system works very well for those who have found a niche within it, either as a judge, attorney, law guardian or mental health expert. The participants who benefit from the dysfunction have little impetus to become the sources of change. Calls for reform and accountability may have to come outside of the system itself.

I highly recommend *From Madness to Mutiny* as required reading in family law courses in our law schools as well for trainings for judges, therapists, social workers, child protective services and law enforcement as well as for anyone who is writing seriously about child abuse. Most of all, I applaud Neustein and Lesher for putting a book into the hands of so many protective mothers (or other protective relatives) that will let them know that they are not alone and that they are not crazy for wanting to do everything in their power to protect their precious children.

Review: *Providence Journal*

*Review by Anne Grant,
in The Journal, Sunday, June 12, 2005*

An angry indictment of family courts

FROM MADNESS TO MUTINY: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts -- and What Can Be Done about It, by Amy Neustein and Michael Lesh. University Press. 276 pages. \$26.

The same judgment that fell on the Catholic hierarchy for exposing children to sexual abuse by clergy is storming the door of our nation's family courts. Like the Church, the Court cloaks its authority figures in secrecy and black robes.

Although this book does not highlight comparisons to the Church, it delivers a salvo against the courts. Sociologist Amy Neustein and lawyer Michael Lesh point out that judges operate with something close to divine right under the doctrine of *parens patriae* from English common law, that considers the state, "the true parent, while mothers and fathers hold only a 'trust' that the state has agreed to grant them."

They write that family courts have an appalling record for punishing children who complain of sexual abuse by sending them directly into the arms of the parent who has harmed them and by criminalizing the parent who tries to protect them. Furthermore, many states give law guardians and judges immunity from prosecution (just as the Church wanted immunity for its priests).

They describe flawed concepts like psychologist John A. Gardner's "Parental Alienation Syndrome," which has been widely discredited in his own field, but remains influential in some courts. Before his suicide two years ago, Gardner testified as expert witness, asserting that children who claim to be sexually abused by their fathers are generally lying and should be punished severely. He held mothers responsible for putting these ideas into children's heads.

Mothers with no history of legal or psychiatric problems, only trying to protect their children, are accused of suffering a long list of maladies and are ordered to pay for expensive evaluations, while abusive fathers rarely get examined before claiming custody of their children.

Mostly the authors blame judges and do not document the role of lawyers in urging divorce clients to use their children as bargaining chips in protracted litigation. This sordid business delivers a significant stream of revenue as long as lawyers, psychologists and judges take turns stalling, then punting the ball back into play.

But it's not a game. The devastation lasts a lifetime and is even now taking its toll on numerous children in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and their protective parents. The damage done is incalculable.

This book will not convert those who profit from such a lucrative business. But it is an important beginning for the work ahead now that the Rhode Island Senate has established a Study Commission on Child-Safety in Custody and Visitation.

Anne Grant is doing research on custody and visitation cases in the Rhode Island Family Court.

Review: *The Residential*

Review by Jesse Rosenthal in May 2005

Edgewater resident, sociologist Amy Neustein, has turned her own devastating experiences, and almost two decades of extensive research and study of the plight of mothers attempting to protect their children from sexual abuse by their spouses, partners or exes, into a startling and convincing expose of the family court system in the United States. Neustein's book, co-authored by attorney Michael Leshner and entitled *From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts —and What Can be Done about It* (University Press of New England) offers a thorough and meticulous accounting of both court cases and academic studies spanning twenty years and coming from all over the US. The authors supplement exhaustive research with many harrowing, all-too-real-life anecdotes. Most importantly, Neustein and Leshner propose a sane, realistic and comprehensive set of legislative and policy changes that, if adopted, could finally help to transform our family courts from instruments of punishment to true institutions of justice.

Though it will be appearing in bookstores around Mother's Day, this disturbing and haunting examination of a family court system that one mother describes as "a bad dream that you can't wake up from" is anything but a sweetness and light-filled Mother's Day greeting card. While most mothers will be absolutely delighted to celebrate with a bouquet of flowers and a family brunch at the local IHOP, for hundreds of victims throughout the US, a book shining an unflinching light on the abuses they have suffered at the hands of misguided family court judges with too much absolute power and too little critical oversight is the only Mother's Day gift that matters. And while it is often tempting to look away from the unvarnished truth, you will find this a hard book to put down, because it is a book that matters. It matters if you care about mothers and the children they must sometimes be willing to do anything, and sacrifice everything, to protect. It matters if you care about justice, and are ready to pull back the curtain to reveal the ugly truth of how justice can be distorted, and how the victims of this most insidious form of sexual abuse are further victimized while the perpetrators are rewarded. And it matters if you want to know what this dark secret about our family court system tells us about our culture, and what can be done to rectify and change that awful message.

Review: *California NOW Activist*

*Review by Helen Grieco, Executive Director,
in Autumn 2005, page 6*

Book Review

From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running From the Family Courts -- and What Can Be Done about It

Authors Amy Neustein and Michael Leshner analyze family court documents and case studies in this groundbreaking study, and conclude that systematically, perfectly fit mothers are losing custody of their children, especially when abuse is alleged. The authors' examination of the courts highlights many common injustices, including biased judges and extra-judicial personnel, as well as the use of pseudo-scientific theories (like Parental Alienation Syndrome).

The reforms the book calls for should be demanded in every state, including opening up court proceedings to public review, prohibiting ex parte changes of custody, mandating review of abuse evidence, requiring judicial training and better regulation of lawyers, law guardians, evaluators and social service agencies when dealing with abuse allegations.

This book is a must read for every feminist, especially mothers.

Review: *Bergen County, The Magazine*

Review in September/October 2005

Groundbreaking Book

From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts—and What Can Be Done about It, by sociologist Amy Neustein and attorney Michael Lesh, explores how our family court system deals with child sex abuse charges, and shows that the child welfare bureaucracy often abets the evils it exists to correct. It offers a comprehensive set of legislative and policy changes that, if adopted, could help to transform our family courts from instruments of punishment to true institutions of justice.

Review: *The Jewish Advocate*

Review by Shira Schoenberg on May 27, 2005

The Jewish Advocate Meets: Author Amy Neustein

Mothers protect children from family courts

Author Amy Neustein uncovers the craziness of family courts in her new book "From Madness to Mutiny"

The U.S. family courts' unfair treatment of mothers is second only to slavery in the history of American oppression. This is the claim that sociology Ph.D. Amy Neustein and attorney Michael Leshar make in their book, published this month, *From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers Are Running from the Family Courts — and What Can Be Done about It*.

The book, the culmination of 20 years of research, studies the cases of 1,000 women across the country who reported that their children had been the victims of sexual abuse, only to find themselves attacked by the family court system, often losing custody of their children. Neustein said, "Mothers were retaliated against by the courts and social service agencies for doing everything in their power to protect their children." Often, mothers would then rebel, or "mutiny," against the system, even going so far as to run away with their children and live as fugitives.

Neustein's passion for the subject was born out of her own personal experience. In 1986, she was a successful professional woman, on the faculty of a national judicial college in Nevada. She had recently published an article on expert witness testimony in a prominent judge's journal, and also testified for the New York City Bar Association in front of 1,000 trial attorneys. Neustein said, "I felt confident that I was a competent person who had the respect of the judiciary."

All that changed when she reported that her daughter had been sexually abused. Despite evaluations from leading experts confirming the abuse, the young girl was taken from Neustein and put into the custody of the person her daughter accused of abuse.

Neustein said, "I lost everything—my dignity, respect and, what was most precious to me, my daughter."

Since then, Neustein, who lives in New York, has discovered that she is far from alone. She estimated that between 20 and 25 percent of family courts nationwide are infected with what she terms "madness." Massachusetts is no exception. In the introduction to her book, Neustein cites a study of 39 mothers in Massachusetts, which found that local family courts "are violating internationally accepted human rights laws and standards and are violating Massachusetts law and policy." One of the first "mutineers," Virginia Lalond, who made headlines by going to jail rather than giving custody to her child's father, was from Massachusetts.

Among the main problems with the courts, Neustein claimed, is that judges operate with unbridled power and no oversight. The appellate courts, which are supposed to serve as watchdogs, often "fail miserably."

Since all family court cases are confidential, Neustein claimed judges are able to "turn good faith complaints by the mother into an inquisition into the mother's

character. The mother is ridiculed in court as a liar, a vindictive ex-wife. She is punished with loss of custody and visitation."

Neustein said: "That veil of secrecy becomes a breeding ground for heinous violation of human rights. What I've seen happening to mothers in court is one of the worst forms of oppression in the history of this country, akin to slavery."

The unfairness to mothers is not confined to judges or attorneys. Neustein labeled the phenomenon a "conspiracy," which includes mental health experts, law guardians, social service agencies, child welfare workers, and others who she claims will often illegally talk to one another about a case and prejudge its outcome.

After painstaking research, Neustein does not claim to know definitively why this "madness" exists. Her job, she writes, is to chronicle how it functions.

For Neustein, her Judaism has played an important role in both her work and her personal struggle. "Judaism gave me the strength and fortitude to fight this. I come from a history of people who have suffered persecution, and they have survived and not become defeated. They have a strong spirit that is geared toward reform and elevation of mankind from the depths of despair and degradation."

The four Jewish women in her book faced some of the most tragic outcomes, and Neustein noted that observant Jews caught in the family court system faced unique challenges. "It's very hard for Orthodox women to survive on the run. Many Jewish women had more respect for the justice system than their counterparts, and it took them longer to catch on that the system wouldn't help them." Additionally, Orthodox women often live in sheltered environments, and are not aware that others suffer the same problems. "They feel completely secluded, adrift."

University Libraries

acquiring From Madness to Mutiny, partial list, as of January 20, 2006

1. Adirondack Community College Library Queensbury, NY 12804
2. Allegheny College Meadville, PA 16335
3. Arizona State University Tempe, AZ 85287
4. Australian National University Canberra, Australia
5. Ave Maria School of Law Ann Arbor, MI 48105
6. Ball State University Library Muncie, IN 47306
7. Bates College Lewiston, ME 04240
8. Boston College, Law Library Newton, MA 02459
9. Boston University School of Law Boston, MA 02215
10. Bowling Green State University Library Bowling Green, OH 43403
11. Brandeis University Library Waltham, MA 02454
12. Brigham Young University Library Provo, UT 84602
13. Brigham Young University, Law School Provo, UT 84602
14. British Library Wetherby, W Yorkshire, UK
15. Brooklyn Law School Brooklyn, NY 11201
16. Bryn Mawr College Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
17. Bunker Hill Public Library Bunker Hill, IL 62014
18. California State University, Fullerton, Pollak Library Fullerton, CA 92834
19. Calvin College & Theological Seminary Grand Rapids, MI 49546
20. Catholic University, Judge Kathryn J. Dufour Law Library Washington, DC 20064
21. Central Lakes College Library Brainerd, MN 56401
22. Central Michigan University Mt Pleasant, MI 48859
23. Claremont College Claremont, CA 91711
24. Clemson University Clemson, SC 29634
25. College of William & Mary, Law Library Williamsburg, VA 23187
26. Colorado State University Ft Collins, CO 80523
27. Columbia University Libraries New York, NY 10027

28. Concordia College Library	Moorhead, MN 56562
29. Cornell University	Ithaca, NY 14850
30. Creighton University, Law Library	Omaha, NE 68178
31. Denison University	Granville, OH 43023
32. DePaul University, Law Library	Chicago, IL 60604
33. Drake University, Law Library	Des Moines, IA 50311
34. Duquesne University, School of Law Library	Pittsburgh, PA 15282
35. East Carolina University	Greenville, NC 27858
36. Eastern Michigan University	Ypsilanti, MI 48197
37. El Paso Community College	El Paso, TX 79904
38. Elon University	Elon, NC 27244
39. Emory University	Atlanta, GA 30322
40. Evergreen State College Library	Olympia, WA 98505
41. Faulkner University, Jones School of Law	Montgomery, AL 36193
42. Florida A&M University College of Law	Orlando, FL 32801
43. Florida Atlantic University	Boca Raton, FL 33431
44. Florida Gulf Coast University	Ft Myers, FL 33965
45. Florida International University College of Law Library	Miami, FL 33199
46. Florida State University, Law Library	Tallahassee, FL 32306
47. Fordham University, Law Library	New York, NY 10023
48. Franklin & Marshall College	Lancaster, PA 17604
49. George Mason University	Fairfax, VA 22030
50. George Mason University School of Law, Law Library	Arlington, VA 22201
51. George Washington University	Washington, DC 20037
52. George Washington University, Law Library	Washington, DC 20052
53. Georgetown University	Washington, DC 20057
54. Georgetown University, Law Library	Washington, DC 20001
55. Georgia State University, Law Library	Atlanta, GA 30303
56. Gonzaga University School of Law, Chastek Library	Spokane, WA 99220
57. Grand View College	Des Moines, IA 50316
58. Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago-Kent College of Law	Chicago, IL 60661
59. Indiana University, Purdue University, Indianapolis	Indianapolis, IN 46202
60. Indiana University, Ruth Lilly Law Library	Indianapolis, IN 46202
61. Indiana University, School of Law Library	Bloomington, IN 47405

62. Iowa State University	Ames, IA 50011
63. Jacksonville State University	Jacksonville, AL 36265
64. John Jay College of Criminal Justice Library	New York, NY 10019
65. Johns Hopkins University Libraries	Baltimore, MD 21218
66. Kent State University, Stark Campus	Canton, OH 44720
67. Kansas State University Libraries	Manhattan, KS 66506
68. La Trobe University, Borchardt Library	Melbourne, Australia
69. Lewis and Clark College, Northwestern School of Law	Portland, OR 97219
70. Library of Congress	Washington, DC 20540
71. Lincoln Land Community College	Springfield, IL 62794
72. Los Angeles Public Library	Los Angeles, CA 90071
73. Louisiana State University	Baton Rouge, LA 70803
74. Loyola University of Chicago, Law Library	Chicago, IL 60611
75. Loyola University, Law School	New Orleans, LA 70118
76. Loyola-Notre Dame Library	Baltimore, MD 21212
77. Marquette University, Law Library	Milwaukee, WI 53201
78. Marquette University, Raynor Memorial Libraries	Milwaukee, WI 53233
79. McGill University Library	Montreal, QC H3A 1Y1
80. Michigan State University	E Lansing, MI 48824
81. Mount Holyoke College	S Hadley, MA 01075
82. New England School of Law Library	Boston, MA 02116
83. New York State Library	Albany, NY 12230
84. New York University Law School Library	New York, NY 10012
85. North Carolina State University	Raleigh, NC 27695
86. Northeastern University	Boston, MA 02115
87. Northeastern University, School of Law Library	Boston, MA 02115
88. Northern Illinois University	DeKalb, IL 60115
89. Northwestern State University of Louisiana	Natchitoches, LA 71497
90. Northwestern University, School of Law Library	Chicago, IL 60611
91. Nova Southeastern University, Law Library	Ft Lauderdale, FL 33314
92. Oakland University Library	Rochester, MI 48309
93. Ohio State University, Michael E. Moritz Law Library	Columbus, OH 43210
94. Ohio University, Alden Library	Athens, OH 45701
95. Old Dominion University	Norfolk, VA 23529

96. Pace Law School Library	White Plains, NY 10603
97. Pasadena City College	Pasadena, CA 91106
98. Pennsylvania College of Tech Library	Williamsport, PA 17847
99. Princeton University	Princeton, NJ 08544
100. Purdue University	W Lafayette, IN 47907
101. Queens University of Charlotte	Charlotte, NC 28274
102. Richard Stockton College of New Jersey	Pomona, NJ 08240
103. Rutgers University	New Brunswick, NJ 08901
104. Saint Louis Public Library	St Louis, MO 63103
105. Sam Houston State University	Huntsville, TX 77341
106. San Diego State University Library	San Diego, CA 92182
107. San Francisco State University Library	San Francisco, CA 94132
108. Seton Hall University, Law Library	Newark, NJ 07102
109. Siena Heights University	Adrian, MI 49221
110. Skokie Public Library	Skokie, IL 60077
111. South Dakota State University	Brookings, SD 57007
112. Southern Illinois University, School of Law Library	Carbondale, IL 62901
113. Southern Methodist University, Underwood Law Library	Dallas, TX 75275
114. Southwestern Law School, Law Library	Los Angeles CA 90005
115. Stanford University, Robert Crown Law Library	Stanford, CA 94305
116. Stephen F Austin State University	Nacogdoches, TX 75962
117. Stetson University, College of Law	St Petersburg, FL 33707
118. Suffolk University, Law Library	Boston, MA 02108
119. SUNY at Buffalo, Law Library	Buffalo, NY 14260
120. SUNY at Oswego	Oswego, NY 13126
121. SUNY at Stony Brook	Stony Brook, NY 11794
122. Syracuse University	Syracuse, NY 13244
123. Temple University Law Library	Philadelphia, PA 19122
124. Texas A&M University	College Station, TX 77843
125. Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi, TX 78412
126. Texas Tech University, School of Law Library	Lubbock, TX 79409
127. Thomas M Cooley Law School Library	Lansing, MI 48901
128. Touro College, Jacob D Fuchsberg Law Center Library	Huntington, NY 11743
129. Tufts University	Medford, MA 02155

130. Tulane University	New Orleans, LA 70118
131. UNISA: Muckleneuk Main Campus	Pretoria, South Africa
132. University of Alabama	Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
133. University of Alabama, Law Library	Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
134. University of Alberta Library	Edmonton, AB T6G 2J8
135. University of Arizona	Tucson, AZ 85720
136. University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Law Library	Little Rock, AR 72202
137. University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, CA 94720
138. University of California, Irvine	Irvine, CA 92623
139. University of California, Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA 90024
140. University of California, Riverside	Riverside, CA 92517
141. University of California, San Diego	La Jolla, CA 92093
142. University of California, Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara, CA 93106
143. University of California, Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz, CA 95064
144. University of Chicago, Social Science Administration Library	Chicago, IL 60637
145. University of Colorado, Law Library	Boulder, CO 80309
146. University of Connecticut, Hartford	W Hartford, CT 06117
147. University of Connecticut, Law Library	Hartford, CT 06105
148. University of Connecticut, Torrington	Torrington, CT 06790
149. University of Delaware	Newark, DE 19717
150. University of Denver, College of Law, Westminster Law Library	Denver, CO 80220
151. University of Florida, Law Library	Gainesville, FL 32611
152. University of Georgia Library	Athens, GA 30606
153. University of Georgia, Alexander Campbell King Law Library	Athens, GA 30602
154. University of Idaho Law Library	Moscow, ID 83844
155. University of Illinois-Chicago Library	Chicago, IL 60680
156. University of Iowa, College of Law Library	Iowa City, IA 52242
157. University of Kansas, Law Library	Lawrence, KS 66045
158. University of La Verne, College of Law Library	Ontario, CA 91764
159. University of Louisville, Law Library	Louisville, KY 40292
160. University of Maryland, College Park	College Park, MD 20742
161. University of Maryland, School of Law	Baltimore, MD 21201
162. University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Amherst, MA 01003
163. University of Miami	Coral Gables, FL 33124

164. University of Miami, Law Library	Coral Gables, FL 33146
165. University of Michigan Law Library	Ann Arbor, MI 48109
166. University of Minnesota, Law Library	Minneapolis, MN 55455
167. University of Mississippi, School of Law Library	University, MS 38677
168. University of Missouri, Columbia	Columbia, MO 65203
169. University of Missouri, Law School	Columbia, MO 65211
170. University of Missouri, Miller Nichols Library	Kansas City, MO 64110
171. University of Montana, Wm J Jameson Law Library	Missoula, MT 59812
172. University of Nebraska at Lincoln	Lincoln, NE 68588
173. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Law Library	Las Vegas, NV 89154
174. University of Nevada, Reno	Reno, NV 89557
175. University of New Hampshire	Durham, NH 03824
176. University of New Mexico, School of Law	Albuquerque, NM 87106
177. University of New South Wales	Sydney, NSW, Australia
178. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill, NC 27514
179. University of North Carolina, Charlotte, J. Murrey Atkins Library	Charlotte, NC 28223
180. University of North Carolina, Law Library	Chapel Hill, NC 27599
181. University of North Texas	Denton, TX 76203
182. University of Notre Dame	Notre Dame, IN 46556
183. University of Notre Dame, Law School, Kresge Law Library	Notre Dame, IN 46556
184. University of Oklahoma	Norman, OK 73019
185. University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia, PA 19104
186. University of Pennsylvania, Law Library	Philadelphia, PA 19104
187. University of Pittsburgh School of Law	Pittsburgh, PA 15260
188. University of Portland	Portland, OR 97203
189. University of Richmond, Law School Library	Richmond, VA 23173
190. University of Rochester	Rochester, NY 14627
191. University of South Alabama	Mobile, AL 36688
192. University of South Carolina, Law Library	Columbia, SC 29208
193. University of South Dakota, Law Library	Vermillion, SD 57069
194. University of Texas at Arlington	Arlington, TX 76019
195. University of Texas at Austin	Austin, TX 78713
196. University of Texas at San Antonio	San Antonio, TX 78285
197. University of Texas, Pan Am	Edinburg, TX 78539

198. University of Toledo	Toledo, OH 43606
199. University of Tulsa, College of Law Library	Tulsa, OK 74104
200. University of Utah	Salt Lake City, UT 84112
201. University of Utah, S J Quinney Law Library	Salt Lake City, UT 84112
202. University of Vermont, Bailey Library	Burlington, VT 05405
203. University of Virginia Libraries	Charlottesville, VA 22904
204. University of Virginia, Law Library	Charlottesville, VA 22901
205. University of Wisconsin, Madison Law Library	Madison, WI 53706
206. University of Wisconsin, Stout	Menomonie, WI 54751
207. Utah State University	Logan, UT 84322
208. Valencia Community College	Orlando, FL 32811
209. Valparaiso University, Law Library	Valparaiso, IN 46383
210. Vermont Law School	S Royalton, VT 05068
211. Virginia Commonwealth University	Richmond, VA 23284
212. Washington and Lee University, Law Library	Lexington, VA 24450
213. Washington College of Law	Washington, DC 20016
214. Washington College, Clifton M. Miller Library	Chestertown, MD 21620
215. Washington University, Law Library	St Louis, MO 63130
216. Wayne State University	Detroit, MI 48202
217. Wellesley College, Margaret Clapp Library	Wellesley, MA 02481
218. Wesleyan University	Middletown, CT 06459
219. Western New England College, School of Law Library	Springfield, MA 01119
220. Western State University College of Law	Fullerton, CA 92831
221. Wichita State University	Wichita, KS 67260
222. Widener University School of Law	Wilmington, DE 19803
223. Widener University School of Law, Harrisburg Cam	Harrisburg, PA 17110
224. William and Mary School of Law, Marshall-Wythe Law Library	Williamsburg, VA 23187
225. William Mitchell College of Law Library	St Paul, MN 55105
226. William Woods University, Dulany Library	Fulton, MO 65251
227. Yale University Library	New Haven, CT 06520
228. Yale University, Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library	New Haven, CT 06520
229. Yavapai College Library	Prescott, AZ 86301
230. Yeshiva University	New York, NY 10033

Contact

Michael Leshner offers legal writing and consulting services to clients representing themselves in court, and to other attorneys who need assistance in complex litigation. He specializes in cases involving a protective parent who is trying to protect a child from suspected abuse — or is being penalized for having tried. He also has expertise in civil rights issues, particularly those raised by the interference of government agencies between children and protective parents.

Michael Leshner's services are available at reasonable rates, with an initial retainer to be paid at the commencement of each professional relationship.

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The site page layout and color usage are designed by Valerie Promise, of Promised Land Productions. Type design and typography are by Jeremy H. Griffith, of Omni Systems. The content is maintained in Adobe FrameMaker 7.1 and converted to HTML as needed using Omni's Mif2Go. PDFs are produced using Adobe Acrobat. The site is available as:

- **PDF** (447K), with graphics
- **HTML** in a .zip file (485K), with graphics

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