

SHELY POLAK
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CURRICULUM VITAE

March 2018

EDUCATION

- 2011- April 2017 **Doctor of Philosophy**
Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
Focus: Strained Parent Child Relationships and Reintegration
Therapy Post Separation and Divorce
Supervisor: Dr. Ramona Alaggia, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of
Social Work
- 2008-2010 **Master of Social Work**
Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
Special Interests: Children and Families, high conflict
separation/divorce, family mediation
- 2002-2006 **Honours Bachelor of Science (Psychology/Biology)**
York University Faculty of Science
Thesis: Meta-Analysis on the differences in high expressed
emotion in relatives of patients with schizophrenia.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
Ontario Association of Social Workers
Ontario Association of Family Mediators: Accredited Member
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) and AFCC Ontario Chapter

COMMUNITY/PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

- AFCC-Ontario Chapter Board of Directors - Executive Member October 2015-Present
- AFCC-Ontario Chapter Board of Directors Oct 2013- Present
- AFCC Ontario Communications Committee Chair Sept 2012-Present

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Winner of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Ontario Nicholas Bala Award for Excellence in Children & Family Law (2016)

- Recipient of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (2012-2013; 2014-2017).
- Recipient of School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Conference Grant (Winter/Spring 2013)
- Recipient of University of Toronto Graduate Award for the Doctoral program on the basis of high academic achievement (2011)
- Recipient of University of Toronto Graduate Award on the basis of high academic achievement (2009)
- Recipient of Factor-Inwentash entrance scholarship on the basis of high academic standing (2008)

CURRENT POSITIONS:

Independent Practice
Shely Polak Professional Social Work Services

Team Member of *Families Moving Forward*
www.familiesmovingforward.ca

Therapy:

- Individual (child, adolescent, adult)
- Co-Parent
- Family
- Reunification therapy for parent-child contact problems including intensive multi-day family intervention
- Therapeutic Access

Family Mediation & Parenting Coordination

- Accredited Family Mediator (OAFM)
- Mediation/Arbitration services
- Parenting Coordination

Assessments:

- Custody/Access Assessments (S.30 C.L.R.A)

Voice of the Child

- Meet with children to help provide their views and preferences in separated/divorced families.

Mediate 393, Ministry of the Attorney General

On/Off-Site Court Mediator

November 2012-Present

- Conduct family mediation for high conflict court docket cases at Ontario Superior Court of Justice and Ontario Court of Justice (311 Jarvis & 47 Sheppard).

Office of the Children's Lawyer, Ministry of the Attorney General,

Agent of the Children's Lawyer

March 2011-present

- Conduct clinical custody/access investigations and write reports pursuant to S112 of the *Courts of Justice Act*
- Collaborate with legal counsel providing clinical formulations for legal positions pursuant to S.89 of the *Courts of Justice Act*

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Sept. 2014- present

Affiliated Faculty- Adjunct Instructor

- Social Work with Groups **September 2017- Present**

Course Instructor

- Theoretical Foundations of Social Work **Sept. 2014- April 2017**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Clinician at *The Clinic on Dupont* June 2013 – January 2015

- Provided psychological services and support

Overcoming Barriers High Conflict Divorce Camp Vermont, USA
Group Facilitator July 2014, July 2013

- Co-lead psycho-educational group for court mandated children and adolescents who resist/reject contact with a parent post-separation
- Involved in all family interventions and aftercare planning

Jewish Family and Child Services

Here-to-Help Program Facilitator **March 2008-January 2013**

- Lead group therapy program for children ages 4-14 who witnessed and/or been exposed to domestic violence.
- Lead group therapy program for women who were involved in abusive relationships
- Designed and prepared therapeutic activities to assist members' emotional growth and problem solving skills.
- Participated in weekly supervision
- Developed assessments and recommendations for each member

Ministry of the Attorney General, Office of the Children's Lawyer

In-House Regional Supervisor **April 2010-April 2011**

- Responsible for evaluating intake files and assessing files requesting OCL involvement
- Conduct clinical investigations and write reports pursuant to S112 of the *Courts of Justice Act*
- Collaborate with legal counsel providing clinical formulations for legal positions pursuant to S.89 of the *Courts of Justice Act*

- Conduct interviews with parties in dispute, their children and collaterals including: school principals, teachers, day care supervisors, Children’s Aid Societies, Police services, physicians and others pertinent to the family
- Chaired the Provincial Fall Training for Clinical Agents in Ontario

Jewish Family and Child

Facilitator of “Picking up the Pieces”

March 2009-June 2009

- Led therapy group for children aged 7-11 in dealing with feelings surrounding separation/divorce.
- Discussed topics in a manner for children to develop realistic expectations and attitudes about separation/divorce
- Supported children to communicate their feelings surrounding the separation and educate them on the importance of communicating their needs clearly to their parents.

Toronto Rehab Institute, Rumsey Site

Neuro-Rehab Stroke Outpatient Unit - Student Internship

Jan 2009-June 2009

- Conducted individual counseling with stroke survivors to help treat emotional/behavioral changes and adjustment to life post-stroke.
- Conducted caregiver and couple counseling to discuss role changes, emotional/behavioral changes, coping to life with a disability, and self-care strategies.
- Developed psychosocial assessments, progress reports and discharge reports.
- Participated in weekly rounds, Inter-Professional Care Meetings, and Family Care Conferences to discuss patient progress and challenges.

PUBLICATIONS:

PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS:

- Polak, S. (2018). Mental health professionals practice of reintegration therapy for parent-child contact disputes post-separation: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. (In Press).
- Polak, S. & Saini, M. (2018). The complexity of families involved in high conflict disputes: A post-separation ecological transactional framework. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. (In Press)
- Saini, M. & **Polak, S.** (2018). The benefits, drawbacks and safety considerations in digital parent-child relationships: An exploratory survey of the views of legal and mental health professionals in family law. *Family Court Review* (In Press).
- Birnbaum, R., Bala, N., **Polak, S.** & Sohani, N. (2016). Shared parenting: Ontario case law and social science research. *Canadian Family Law Quarterly*, 35(2), 139-179.
- **Polak, S.** & Saini, M. (2015). Children Resisting Contact with a Parent Post Separation: Assessing this Phenomenon Using an Ecological Systems Framework. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 56(3). 1-28.
- Saini, M., & **Polak, S.** (2014). The ecological validity of parent-child observations: A review of empirical evidence related to custody evaluations. *Journal of Child Custody*. 11(3), 181-201.

- Saini, M., Mishna, F., Barnes, J., **Polak, S. (2013)**. Parenting Online: Virtual parenting time in the context of separation and divorce. *Journal of Child Custody* 10(2), 120-140

BOOK CHAPTERS:

- Deutsch, R., Fidler, B., & **Polak, S. (2018)**. *Interventions with children who resist-refuse contact with a parent*. In L. Greenberg, B. Fidler & M. Saini (Eds.), *Evidence-Informed Interventions for Court Involved Families: Promoting Coping and Healthy Child Development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- **Polak, S. & Moran, J. (2016)**. *The current status of outpatient and residential approaches to parent-child contact problems*. In A. Judge, R. Deutsch (Eds.), *Family Based Interventions for Children’s Resistance, Rejection, Alienation: Overcoming Barriers and Other Clinical Approaches*. New York: Oxford Press.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS:

- **Polak, S.,** Sharma, M. & Saini, M. (2014). Examining the role of interim parenting plan custody evaluations. *Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, May 28-31st, 2014 Toronto: ON.*
- **Polak, S.** Saini, M., Deutsch, R., Sullivan, M., Fidler, B., Ward, P. (2014). An evaluation study of the Overcoming Barriers Family Camp. *Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, May 28-31st, 2014, Toronto: ON.*

JUSTICE CANADA REPORTS:

- Saini, M., Redmond, M., **Polak, S.,** Yadeta, E. (2010). Prevalence of high conflict separation and divorce and associated factors: A multi-method approach to map the evidence. *Department of Justice Canada*

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

- **Polak, S. (2017)** Guest Speaker for Dr. Barbara Fidler’s Training: *Children Resisting Post Separation Contact: Concepts, Controversies, Assessment and Intervention*. December 8, 2017. Toronto, ON.
- **Polak, S. (2017)** Guest Speaker for Dr. Barbara Fidler’s Training entitled: *Parenting Coordination: Foundations*. November 2017. Toronto, ON.
- **Polak, S. (2017)**. *S.112 Reports and S.89 Investigations in the Context of Parent-Child Contact Problems. What’s an OCL Clinician to do?* Ministry of the Attorney General, Office of the Children’s Lawyer. November 3, 2017. Toronto, ON
- **Polak, S. & Bala, N. (2017)**. *Children Resisting Contact: What’s a Judge to Do?* *Ontario Court of Justice Judicial Development Institute*. January 12, 2017. Toronto, ON.
- **Polak, S. (2014)**. *Impact of Separation and Divorce on Children*. Royal St. George’s College, Toronto, Canada.
- **Polak, S (2012)**. Guest speaker for “Issues in Domestic Violence,” Riverdale Mediation: Toronto, ON.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

- **Polak, S.** (2018). *Unpacking S.30 Assessments and Parent Coordination*. Advanced Family Law. Faculty of Law, University of Toronto.
- **Polak, S.** (2017). *Developing Parenting Plans*. Family Mediation: Theory and Practice. University of Toronto, Canada.
- **Polak, S.** & Saini, M. (2016). Family Mediation in Social Work Education: Using Simulation to Develop Clinical Skills and Competencies. *Council of Social Work Education, November 3-6, 2016, Atlanta: USA*.
- **Polak, S.,** Birnbaum, R. & Finlyason, A. (2016). Same Sex Parenting: The experiences of professionals involved with parents navigating the family justice process. *Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, June 1-4 2016, Seattle: USA*.
- **Polak, S.,** Hon. John R. Harper, Mamo, A. (2014). *Children's Justice Resource Center: Promoting an Early Intervention Initiative*. Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, May 28-31st, 2014, Toronto: ON
- **Polak, S.** (2014). *Developing Parenting Plans*. Family Mediation: Theory and Practice. University of Toronto, Canada.
- **Polak, S.,** Fidler, B., & Popielarczyk, L. (2013). *Children resisting parental contact post-separation*. Los Angeles, CA: AFCC Conference May 28-June 1, 2013.
- **Polak, S.** (2013). *Working With High Conflict Couples*. Guest speaker for “Advanced Social Work Practice with Couples”. University of Toronto. Canada.
- Saini, M. & **Polak, S.** (2012). *Youth experiences of virtual visitation with parents after separation and/or divorce*. AFCC Conference, Chicago, USA.
- Saini, M. & **Polak, S.** (2010). *Prevalence of high conflict separation and divorce and associated factors: A multi-method approach to map the evidence*. Presentation to Justice Canada, Ottawa, ON.

ADR QUALIFICATIONS/CONTINUING ED

- **Accredited Family Mediator**, Ontario Association of Family Mediators (OAFM)
- **Trained in Reintegration Therapy**, Overcoming Barriers: High Conflict Divorce Camp (July 2013)
- **Update on Family Violence in Family Law, Mediation and Arbitration**
Riverdale Mediation (2015)
- **Basics of Family Law**
Hilary Linton, Riverdale Mediation (2013)
- **Advanced Family Mediation**
Lisa Emms Wice and Claudette Reimer, (2012).
- **Parenting Coordination: Foundations**
Dr. Barbara Fidler and Linda Chodos (2012)
- **Fundamentals of Arbitration**
Hilary Linton, Riverdale Mediation, (2011)
- **Children Resisting Post-Separation Contact**
Dr. Barbara Fidler and Jacqueline Vanbetlehem, (2011)
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Direct Service Workers**
Dr. Amanda Beaman, (2010)
- **Children Caught in the Crossfire**
Linda Chodos and Howard Hurwitz, (2010).

- **Domestic Violence/Screening DV in Mediation**
University of Toronto, (2010); Riverdale Mediation, (2011)

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Languages:** Bilingual Spanish and English.