

**SHELY POLAK**  
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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

**November 2017**

### **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](http://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:**

- Saini, M. & **Polak, S.** (2017). 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 CHAPTER:**

- **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 28-31<sup>st</sup>, 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 28-31<sup>st</sup>, 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*

### **ABSTRACTS:**

- **Polak, S. (2012).** Advice from a Social Worker. *Owl Magazine, June Issue.*

### **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. (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 28-31<sup>st</sup>, 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. Advanced Hebrew.