

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Defining points and transformative turns in family violence, parenting and coparenting disputes

Michael A. Saini¹  | Robin M. Deutsch² | Leslie M. Drozd³

¹Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work,
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada

²Clinical Psychology, William James College,
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

³Private Practice, Seattle, Washington, USA

Correspondence

Michael A. Saini, University of Toronto,
246 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON, M5S
1A1, USA.

Email: michael.saini@utoronto.ca

Abstract

Family violence is a multifaceted issue encompassing various harmful behaviors within familial relationships. This paper explores the definitional problems presented in this special issue on family violence and its impact on parenting and coparenting. By examining the shifts and expansions of concepts related to family violence over time, we highlight the transformative turns in this special issue that have helped us to clarify our understanding of family violence. We explore the transformative expansions of family violence by situating this exploration within a “concept creep” analysis. We make a note of the underlying assumptions associated with these concepts. Through an analysis of concept creep, we elucidate how the expansions and redefinition of violence-related terms have influenced our understanding of family violence. By differentiating family violence, intimate partner violence, and maltreatment, we emphasize the necessity of unpacking these terms to avoid oversimplification or overlooking certain forms of violence that may go unnoticed under narrow definitions. The authors further highlight the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to address the complexities of family violence and its impact on parenting and coparenting. By acknowledging and responding to expansions of concepts in family violence, we can strive to protect and support children in these

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2023 The Authors. *Family Court Review* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

challenging circumstances, ultimately promoting their well-being and creating safer family environments.

KEYWORDS

child safety, concept creep, coparenting, family law, family violence, parenting

Key points for the family court community

- Family violence is a hypernym for various forms of violence and abuse that can impact intimate relationships.
- Concept creep provides a framework for understanding family violence concepts' horizontal and vertical expansions over time and its impact on parenting and coparenting.
- Due to the complexity of family violence, a systematic approach must thoroughly screen, assess and intervene to ensure the safety and well-being of all family members.
- An ecological approach to family violence emphasizes the various interrelated levels that impact and influence the consequences of violence within families.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW, is a Full Professor, holds the endowed Factor-Inwentash Chair in Law and Social Work, is the Co-Director of the Combined J.D. and M.S.W. program, and is cross-appointed with the Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto, Canada.



Robin M. Deutsch, PhD is a Diplomate in Couple and Family Psychology and Professor of Clinical Psychology at William James College. She was the founder and the Director of the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law at the William James College.



Leslie M. Drozd, PhD is a licensed psychologist who works clinically with families in the various stages of divorce including family systems therapy with families with parent-child contact problems, coparenting therapy, and parent coordination.