

Introduction to the Inaugural Issue

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The inaugural issue of the *International Journal for Family Research and Policy* is a result of selecting thematic articles from the Senator Cools' Roundtable and Symposium on Family Dynamics that was held in Ottawa, Canada from May 13-15, 2011. I would like to thank the Honourable Senator Cools and the Senate of Canada for allowing the journal to publish papers presented at the symposium. Senator Cools made possible the Roundtable and Symposium on Family Dynamics, as well as the referred proceedings that are the basis of this special issue. The authors have to be thanked for their academic work as well as providing valuable research, insights, and policy implications for understanding family dynamics. There were also others who were invaluable in terms of making this issue possible. This includes the hard work of both the journal's executive and editorial boards as well as others who work in the background to ensure that the journal and the inaugural issue came to fruition.¹

The journal highlights current academic trends and findings within the context of the family related to children and parents, domestic violence, gender paradigms, mental health stresses, custody, and related issues. These articles bring together multidisciplinary North American academics and researchers in order to underscore how these topics overlap impact on children and the family.

This issue is organized into two parts. The first section connects family violence to the impact it has on children and parents. The second section highlights family dissolution, the predicaments of parents, and the influence of family law, culture, and other factors on divorce. Overall, the articles examine interrelated themes that are academic inquiries into research, policy, and other scholarly considerations concerning family dynamics.

The first article by Donald Dutton discusses connections to child custody assessments and domestic violence, critiquing the gender paradigm for examining family violence. His work provides empirical support for why the gender paradigm does not exist. He provides a careful analytic review of the literature that reveals different patterns of intimate partner violence (IPV), making the case for why assessment in custody disputes has to be reconsidered to eliminate the bias against males and to encourage family courts to "operate fairly" and ensure a balanced approach.

Stack, Serbin, Mantis, and Kingdon consider intergenerational cycles of family poverty and childhood adversity. Their longitudinal 35-year study of Montréal families from lower-income neighborhoods examines family violence, fathers' presence versus

¹It is often those in the background who bring these issues to fruition. They often are unknown in terms their ongoing contributions and essential role. Brian Jenkins' commitment and invaluable help throughout the process of building the journal from the ground up was invaluable. He contributed to the success of the proceedings and the launching of this inaugural issue. Members of Senator Cools' staff were also indispensable for ensuring the success of the proceedings in order for them to more into an inaugural issue. The proceedings and the launch of the journal were possible with the assistance of Anna Slavina, Midila Anton, Dallas Draper, Peggy Silman, Erica Tucciarone, and other Research Assistants at York University.

absence in the home, and the impact of parental mental health problems on children's health and development. They identify the environmental, social, educational, and behavioural factors that predict positive outcomes for many children and highlight the importance that parents play in this process, as well as examining how negative intergenerational patterns may be broken by positive parenting, cognitive stimulation, and environmental support across childhood.

Hines highlights intimate partner violence (IPV) that men can sustain from their female partners as well as the patriarchal model that assumes that perpetrators of IPV are men and victims are women. Her article discusses research completed based on the first large-scale study of 302 men who sustained severe IPV from their female partners and sought help. Various questions are addressed in the study pertaining to IPV and the impact it has on these men. This research is compared with findings from smaller-scale studies of male victims and research on female IPV victims, concluding with a discussion of the policy and practice implications.

Kruk reviews the literature related to his qualitative study that examines similarities and differences between divorced non-custodial mothers and fathers in Canada. He focuses on a number of post-divorce parenthood issues. His findings indicate that there are many similarities in women's and men's experiences regarding the difficulties they each encounter when parenting at a distance. One of Kruk's key findings is that both parents experience the harmful effects of existing child custody law and policy, pointing to the need for child custody law reform to include joint physical custody presumption.

Kenedy's article begins with the question: Do fathers matter after separation or divorce? The initial purpose of his study was to examine the activism of 208 fathers, mothers, grandparents, and adult children and their post-divorce perceptions of the family law system. One of the unexpected findings that emerged was how frequently separated and divorced fathers reported personal mental health issues and suicide ideation associated with their perception of being dismissed in the courts as disposable "social" post-separation/divorced parents and influencing their activism in the shared parenting movement.

The cultural indifference toward, as well as the confused, trivialized and politicized notions of fatherhood, are discussed by Young and Nathanson. They argue not only that children need fathers, but also that men need fatherhood. This article examines fatherhood in the larger cultural context of reproduction regarding the family, with the hope of broadening and deepening discussions of both sex and gender within the humanities.

Fabricius discusses findings on the associations between parenting time with fathers and father-child relationships in young adulthood. He also analyzes the association between father-child relationships in young adulthood and serious physical health problems in later adulthood. Fabricius notes the strong public support for equal parenting time and the belief that family courts are biased toward awarding parenting to mothers. Fabricius points out that in the Arizona courts, there is support for equal parenting time, and that the public belief suggesting that the bias toward mothers in family courts may be unwarranted in Arizona and elsewhere in the United States. His chapter concludes with a discussion of how custody policy can be reformed to legitimize equal parenting time without sacrificing necessary oversight and individualization.

Overall, this inaugural issue highlights the complexities of family violence and the ideological pitfalls of the gender paradigm and related perspectives. It also emphasizes the impact that the family law system has on parents, children, and family dynamics.