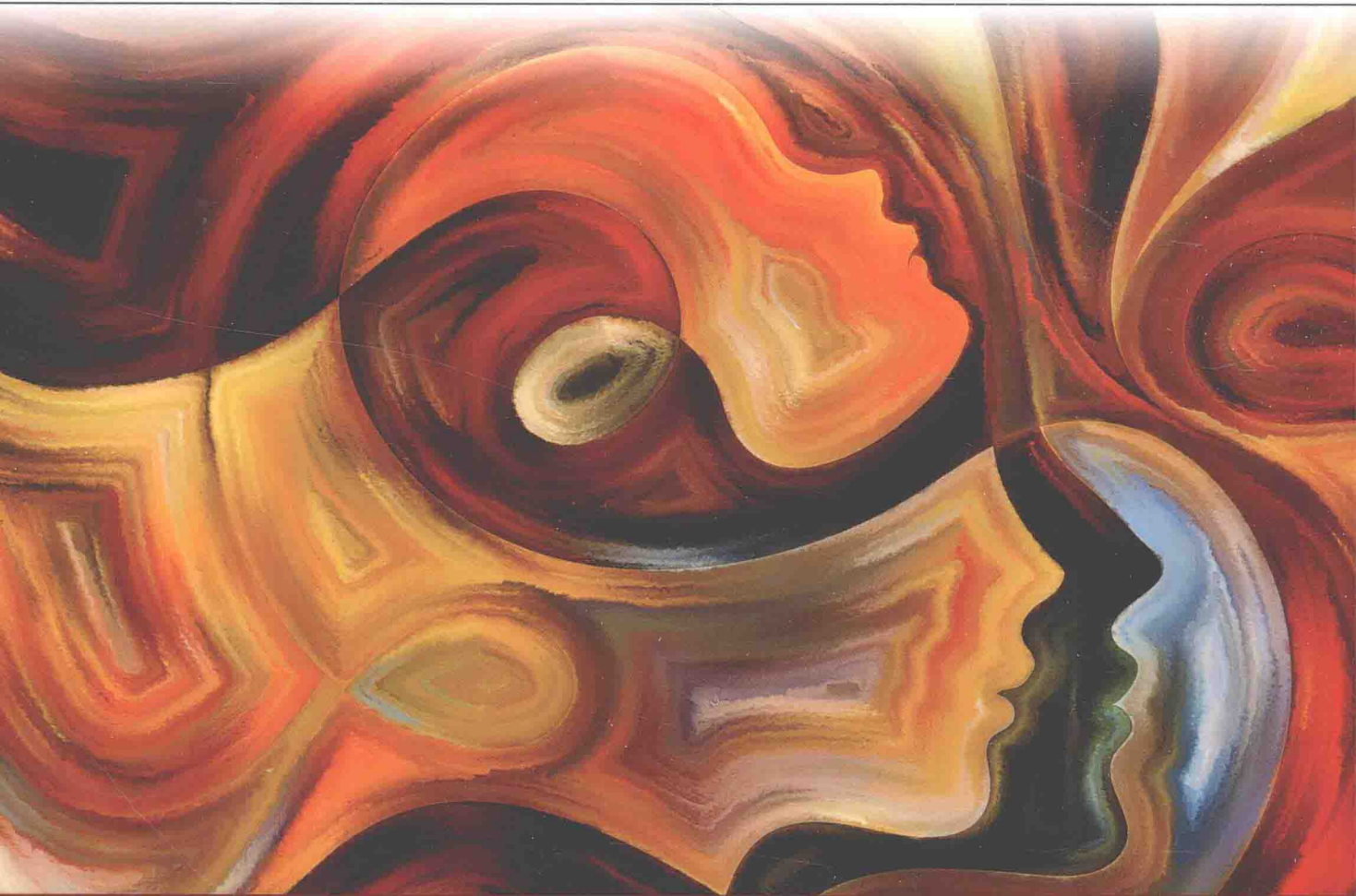


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FUNDAMENTALS OF FAMILY LAW



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ASPEN COLLEGE SERIES



Fundamentals of Family Law

J. Shoshanna Ehrlich

Professor of Women's and Gender Studies
College of Liberal Arts
University of Massachusetts—Boston



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To Alan, Emma, my father, and the memory of my mother



Preface

Welcome to the study of family law. This book is intended to provide you with a thorough working knowledge of this exciting area of the law. Along with its in-depth topical coverage, the book also addresses the important skills that a family law paralegal is likely to need in an active law office, such as client interviewing and legal drafting. However, in my view, it is not enough for a textbook simply to cover the topics and skills that a student will need in order to work effectively in a law office. Accordingly, the book also introduces you to some of the critical and often controversial issues in the field today so that you can be an informed and engaged member of the legal community.

This book is divided into 13 chapters, each of which follows the same basic format. Most chapters begin with a brief introduction to the covered topic, and the material is then presented in headed subsections. Throughout each chapter, key terms are bolded and then defined in the margins of the text. At the end of the chapters, you will find a chapter summary, list of key terms, review questions, discussion questions, and assignments. To help orient yourself, you may find it helpful to read the summary before you read the chapter. The review questions follow the order of the chapter and are designed to help you determine how well you understood the chapter. They are a useful self-testing device. The discussion questions frame some of the more controversial and less settled aspects of the law discussed in the chapter. The assignments are designed to help you apply and further develop your understanding of the law.

The companion website for *Fundamentals of Family Law* at www.aspenlawschool.com/books/ehrllich_fundamentals includes additional resources for students and instructors.

In using this book, you should keep a few important points in mind. First, although every effort has been made to ensure that this book is current, the law is always changing, and that which is current today may be obsolete tomorrow based on a new court decision or statute. Second, this book is written for a national audience and is not geared to the law of any

particular state. In the course of your studies, you may want to learn more about the law of your state. Third, although I hope that this book will continue to be a resource for you when you leave school, it should be clear from the first two points that when working on an actual case, this book should not be your primary source of legal information. No book can substitute for the legal research required to ensure a current and comprehensive understanding of the applicable law in your jurisdiction. Good luck, and I hope you enjoy your entry into this fascinating area of the law!

July 2015

J. Shoshanna Ehrlich



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