

**FSR**

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**Family  
Science  
Review**

*Volume 2 • No. 4 • November, 1989*

# Family Science Review

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# Family Science Review

## Contents

Vol. 2, No. 4

November, 1989

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COMMENTS BY EDITORS ..... 283

### ARTICLES

Religiosity and Marital Commitment: 'Until Death Do Us Part' Revisited  
Lyle E. Larson ..... 285

Religion and Family Health: A Need for Study  
Elaine Shaw Sorenson ..... 303

Religious Addiction and the Family System: Implications for the Family  
Clinician  
Thomas W. Roberts ..... 317

Premarital Counseling by Clergy: A Key Link Between Church and Family  
J. Robin Summers and Jo Lynn Cunningham ..... 327

Clergy Family Satisfaction  
J. Elizabeth Norrell ..... 337

Religion and the Family: The Case of Christian Fundamentalism  
Richard A. Hanson ..... 347

Religion and Family Life Among Seventh-Day Adventists  
Roger L. Dudley and Margaret G. Dudley ..... 359

The Maintenance of the Hutterite Way: The Family and Childhood Life-Cycle  
in the Communal Context  
Max E. Stanton ..... 373

Mormon Marriage: A Review of Family Life and Social Change  
Bron B. Ingoldsby ..... 389

INDEX ..... 398

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## Special Issue Reviewers

We wish to thank those who consented to be reviewers for the articles that were submitted for this special issue on "Religion and Family Life." The reviewers did an outstanding job of evaluating and providing constructive criticism. Their time and effort is much appreciated. We also are grateful to the scholars who submitted manuscripts, whether or not they eventually were included for publication. Names of the reviewers are listed below. An asterisk (\*) indicates that the person is a member of the *FSR* editorial board.

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## Introduction

Religion has always played a major role in the structure and function of family life. In fact, in the Western world at least, the Christian religion probably has had a greater impact on marriage and family than any other social force. The marriage ceremony itself, along with grounds for divorce, annulment, regulation of sexual relations, number of children, degrees of kinship barriers for marriage, and other aspects of family life all have been determined in times past by the church.

This influence is so great that it is not possible to understand properly today's families without being aware of their connections with religious beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, in recent decades family social scientists and religious scholars have had very little to do with each other, and generally they are unfamiliar with each other's work.

In 1984, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) resurrected its Religion and Family Life section which previously had functioned from 1952-1962. Since 1984, seminars on religion and family held at Notre Dame and Brigham Young University also have resulted in two excellent books on the topic (D'Antonio & Aldous, 1983, and Thomas, 1988). We are pleased to add this collection to this recently revitalized area of study.

This special issue on "Religion and Family Life" is an attempt to bring studies on the impact of religion on families to family scientists. We are grateful to Ron Flowers and the Religion and Family Life section of NCFR for supporting this project, and to Geoffrey Leigh and *Family Science Review* for providing the forum for presentation.

This issue contains nine articles. The first two provide a conceptual and methodological introduction to our topic. Larson discusses religion as a research variable and how it relates to marital commitment, and has some suggestions for how we should go about this study in the future. Sorenson utilizes her training as a nurse to investigate the relationship between religion and physical health, raising questions about the role religious belief may play in family mental health.

These articles are followed by two articles with a clinical focus. Roberts raises the intriguing issue of religion as an addiction, its family causes and treatment, while Summers and Cunningham review the literature on the clergy as premarital counselors. Norrell then looks at the clergy from a different light--that is, how their own families function and how clergy perceive the pressures of their role. Hanson analyzes the right-wing fundamentalists and their political agenda as it relates to the quality of family life.

The issue concludes with three articles, each focusing on a particular religious denomination. Seventh-Day Adventists, Hutterites, and Mormons are all thriving as religious groups in North America today, and all have strong views about family life. Dudley and Dudley, Stanton, and Ingoldsby review the specific teachings on family life, and then discuss how well the members live up to those teachings and how the churches themselves deal with outside social pressures to change.

As a whole, these articles represent a summary of some recent work in the area of religion and the family. They serve to synthesize various research findings and raise issues that need clarification and further research. A comprehensive view of the religious

aspect of families, however, remains a challenge for the future. Religious families are made up of individuals who have taken sacred vows of matrimony and who have entered a covenant relationship. The Judeo-Christian heritage teaches that the covenant relationship is primary and supersedes individual needs. Persons adopting such a covenant work toward a commitment to the sacrament of marriage, embracing the ideal that "the two shall be as one." Into such a unit, children are seen as an extension of this commitment, and the family operates as a corporate body, with the primary goal of participating in the Kingdom of God. Theoretically, there should be more emphasis on group (family) decision-making and communication, and fewer power struggles and conflicts.

As scholars, we know that religious belief does not exempt families from strife and conflict. Yet, religion is not something which has no effect. We need to determine whether there are qualitative differences between families who look to religion for guidance, those who simply attend church out of social convention, and those who do not believe at all. We need to move beyond simple definitions of religion and statistical correlations to more comprehensive theories and methodologies.

B. Ingoldsby  
E. Norrell

#### REFERENCES

- D'Antonio, W. V., & Aldous, J. (Eds.). (1983). *Families and religions: Conflict and change in modern society*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, D. L. (Ed.). (1982). *The religion and family connection: Social science perspectives*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Journal of Family Issues* will feature a special issue on the theme, "Gender and Unpaid Work." The issue will include articles that examine gender and its relation to dependent care (to children, the elderly, the physically handicapped, the mentally ill, etc.), housework, kinkeeping, family-related volunteer work, and/or other family-related unpaid work. Manuscripts (including abstract, references, tables, etc.) should be no longer than 30 pages, double-spaced, and should follow American Sociological Association style. All manuscripts will be reviewed anonymously. To be considered, manuscripts must be received by 15 May 1990. Send four copies to:

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