

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue of Religions—“Religion and Family Life”

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Family and religion are inherently intertwined social institutions. Religious institutions stress the importance of families, provide family advice and guidance, and even define appropriate family forms in some instances (Edgell 2006). Additionally, families often incorporate religion as a way of finding meaning in family relationships. Furthermore, in their daily lives, families serve as the primary source of religious socialization (Cornwall 1989; Smith and Denton 2005; Stolzenberg et al. 1995). However, despite this clear link, the breadth of research focusing on the intersection of religion and family life is not as extensive as one might expect given the broad societal importance of these two social institutions (Mahoney 2010).

The aim of this special issue is to increase and extend our understanding of the intersection between religion and family life. I believe that the articles included in this special issue fulfill this goal, and demonstrate the diversity of research in this area. These articles incorporate a range of methodological strategies (qualitative interviews, large-scale secondary survey data, cross-national studies, survey data that was independently collected); focus on both positive and negative consequences of various aspects of religion for families; take approaches that have national, international, and denomination-specific scopes; and emphasize various themes within the broad area of religion and family life.

I believe that the contributions in this special issue increase our understanding of the complex, diverse and important ways in which religion and family life are interconnected. My hope is that this body of research inspires future research to continue to advance our understanding of the various ways in which religion and spirituality may influence family life and family processes.

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