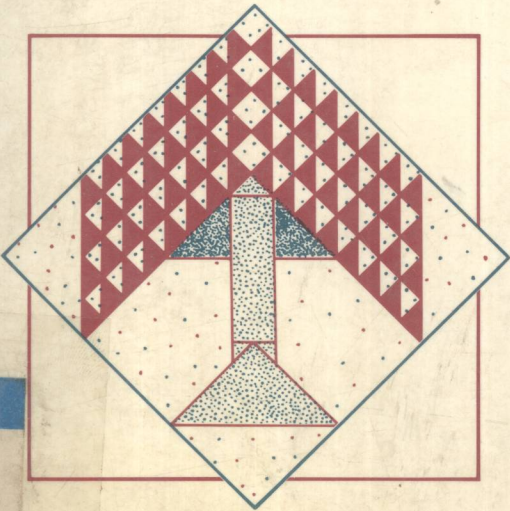
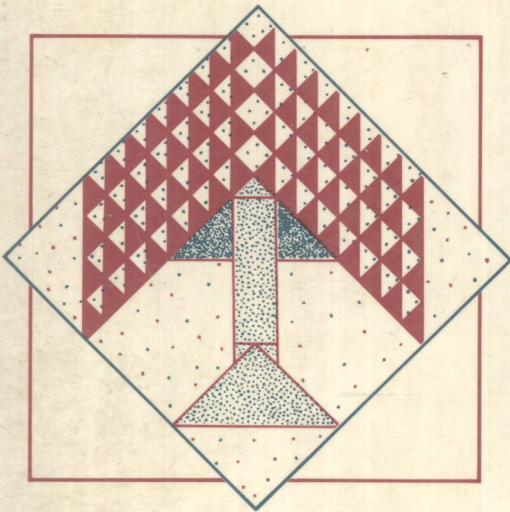
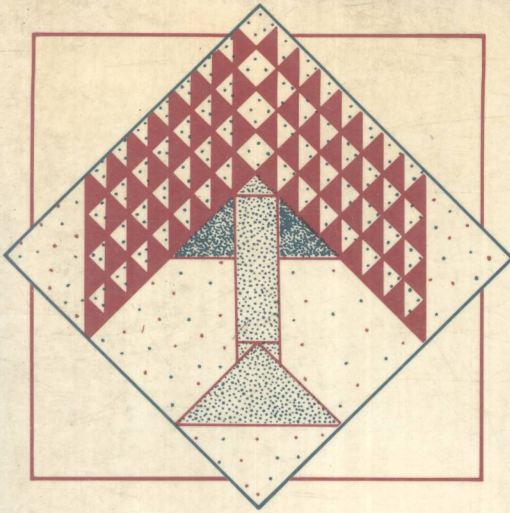


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# FAMILY RELATIONS

*A Reader*

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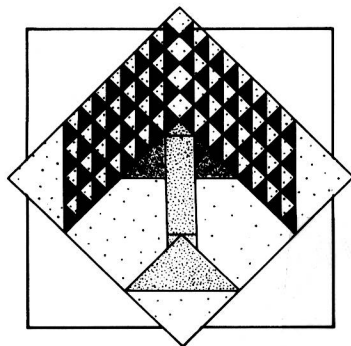
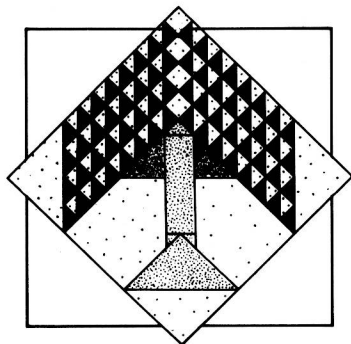
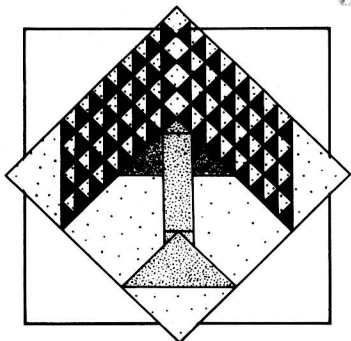
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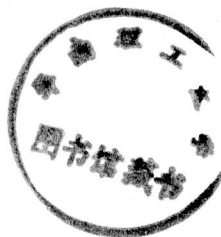
Marion Tolbert Coleman

*Both of the University of Texas at Austin*



# FAMILY RELATIONS

*A Reader*



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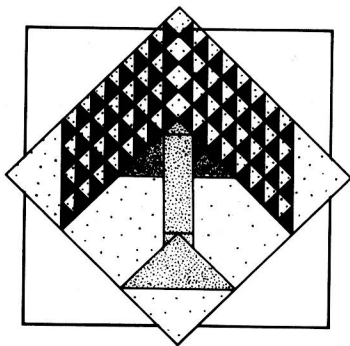
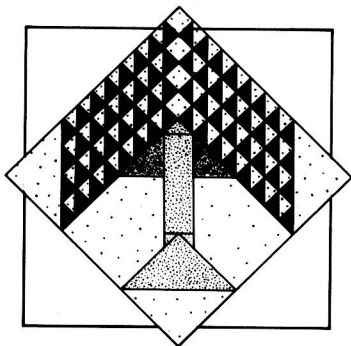
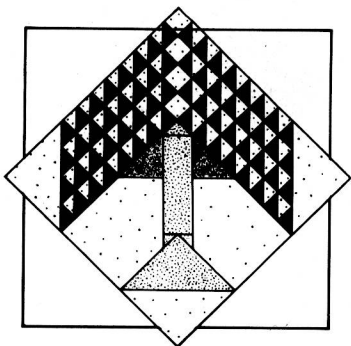
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# FAMILY RELATIONS

*A Reader*

**The Dorsey Series in Sociology**

**Consulting Editor**

**Charles M. Bonjean**

*The University of Texas at Austin*

# Preface

This book grew out of our experience in teaching the general undergraduate course in the sociology of the family. In these classes we have found that a reader, used in combination with a textbook, can enormously enhance a course by enlarging upon the survey information offered in the textbook and by broadening the kinds of sociological material to which students are exposed beyond that dictated by the textbook format. We have drawn upon our prior, positive experiences with readers in compiling this one. Its design reflects our own teaching needs and preferences, which we believe are similar to those of many other instructors in the family course. We hope instructors will find our organization to be flexible, the subjects compatible with those they feel to be important, and the readings of high scholarly content and value. At the same time, we believe that the readings will be of interest to students and will provide them with insights into both the family as a social institution and their personal family experiences.

The selections are grouped into several parts or sections. With three exceptions (Sections One, Two, and Eight), the organization reflects a life cycle approach to family, an approach compatible with most family texts. The first two sections on historical and comparative family systems are important because these tend to be areas that family texts deal with only in generalities, if at all. We believe that we can understand the contemporary family in the North American culture only when we understand the historical and comparative contexts.

The final section (Eight) is an eclectic group of recent writings that are particularly intriguing because of their controversial viewpoints. We believe that students should be exposed to differing views on major issues, so these and many of the other selections throughout the book present views with which not all family social scientists agree. It is also important that students in the family course be exposed to materials written from a variety of theoretical and ideological perspectives, and the selections have been chosen accordingly. They are not consistently "functionalist," or consistently "feminist," or consistently anything else. However, we have tried to identify controversial views for what they are rather than to present them as "truth." Our goal is not to propagandize for particular points of view, but rather to encourage students to think for themselves.

In our main departure from existing readers, each selection has been given its own introduction rather than writing one overarching introduction for each section or part. This arrangement allows instructors to assign the readings in any sequence, since each selection and its introduction can stand alone. The

introductions attempt to set the stage for the piece rather than to summarize its content. For instance, students are advised when the argument presented in a selection is highly controversial. The addition of these introductions should greatly enhance students' understanding of and appreciation for the readings.

Finally, our objective has been to include materials that conform to high scholarly and intellectual standards while remaining understandable to students who lack strong backgrounds in sociology and statistics. Therefore, selections that are either journalistic and simplistic or filled with jargon and arcane statistics have been avoided. We have tried to include interesting selections, but only those that will stimulate students to think about family issues in a sophisticated manner.

We find the study of the American family to be fascinating, and if this book helps to engender a similar fascination on the part of students, we will consider our efforts in producing it to have been successful.

*Norval D. Glenn*  
*Marion Tolbert Coleman*

# Acknowledgments

The work on this volume was a challenging and enriching experience due to the involvement and support of a number of individuals. We would like to thank Chuck Bonjean, Sociology Editor for Dorsey Press and our colleague, for asking us to take on this project. His enthusiasm and guidance from the earliest conversations about the book kept our energy levels high. Paul O'Connell, Senior Editor at Dorsey Press, was both persistent and patient with us. The reader was greatly improved by the suggestions of our critical readers, Mary Ann Lamanna, The University of Nebraska at Omaha; Patrick McHenry, The Ohio State University; Steven L. Nock, The University of Virginia; and Jill Sobel Quadagno, Florida State University. Finally, we thank Annamarie Sergi for her diligent clerical assistance. Her careful attention to the myriad details involved in compiling this text saved us many hours and much sanity.

*N.D.G.*

*M.T.C.*



# Contents

<b>Section One</b>	<b>A Historical Perspective</b>	<b>1</b>
1.	The Family of the Ancient Romans, <i>Stuart A. Queen, Robert W. Habenstein, and Jill S. Quadagno</i>	2
2.	The Oneida Community, <i>William M. Kephart</i>	17
3.	The Puritans and Sex, <i>Edmund S. Morgan</i>	26
4.	The Emergence of the Modern American Family, <i>Carl N. Degler</i>	38
5.	Sexual Cruelty and the Case for Divorce in Victorian America, <i>Robert L. Griswold</i>	54
<b>Section Two</b>	<b>A Comparative Perspective</b>	<b>67</b>
6.	Courtship in Russia and the USSR, <i>Wesley A. Fisher</i>	68
7.	What Is Happening to the Family in Sweden? <i>David Popenoe</i>	92
8.	Marriage, Family, and the State in Contemporary China, <i>Margery Wolf</i>	100
9.	Restoring the Traditional Black Family, <i>Eleanor Holmes Norton</i>	118
<b>Section Three</b>	<b>Premarital Relationships and Mate Selection</b>	<b>127</b>
10.	Romantic Beginnings, <i>Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher</i>	128
11.	The Courtship Game: Power in the Sexual Encounter, <i>Naomi B. McCormick and Clinton J. Jesser</i>	150

12.	The Theoretical Importance of Love, <i>William J. Goode</i>	173
13.	The Feminization of Love, <i>Francesca M. Cancian</i>	187
14.	Designer Genes: An Immodest Proposal for Sexual Realignment, <i>Dave Barry</i>	204
<b>Section Four Marriage—Selected Issue</b>		<b>209</b>
15.	Women's Work and Family Decisions, <i>Kathleen Gerson</i>	210
16.	Rethinking Family Power, <i>Marion L. Kranichfeld</i>	230
17.	The Sexual Dilemma, <i>Lillian B. Rubin</i>	242
18.	The Commuter as a Social Isolate: Friends, Kin, and Lovers, <i>Naomi Gerstel and Harriett Gross</i>	257
<b>Section Five Marriage—The Middle and Later Years</b>		<b>277</b>
19.	Parent Care as a Normative Family Stress, <i>Elaine M. Brody</i>	278
20.	Styles and Strategies of Grandparenting, <i>Andrew J. Cherlin and Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr.</i>	300
21.	Surviving and Doing It Well: Options for Older Women, <i>Marion Tolbert Coleman</i>	317
<b>Section Six Divorce and Remarriage</b>		<b>325</b>
22.	Moving toward Separation, <i>Graham B. Spanier and Linda Thompson</i>	326
23.	A Social Psychological Perspective on Marital Dissolution, <i>George Levinger</i>	342
24.	Child Support: The National Disgrace, <i>Lenore J. Weitzman</i>	349
25.	Working Your Fingers to the Bone, <i>Marion Graham</i>	375

<b>Section Seven</b>	<b>Family Influences on Human Development</b>	<b>379</b>
26.	Anger and Tenderness, <i>Adrienne Rich</i>	380
27.	The Powers and Limitations of Parents, <i>Jerome Kagan</i>	393
28.	The Only Child in America: Prejudice versus Performance, <i>Judith Blake</i>	406
29.	The Effects of Family Dissolution and Reconstitution on Children, <i>E. Mavis Hetherington and Kathleen A. Camara</i>	420
<b>Section Eight</b>	<b>Controversial Perspectives on the Contemporary Family and the Future</b>	<b>433</b>
30.	The Flight from Feeling: Sociopsychology of the Sex War, <i>Christopher Lasch</i>	434
31.	A Child Is Born, <i>Germaine Greer</i>	446
32.	<i>Playboy</i> Joins the Battle of the Sexes, <i>Barbara Ehrenreich</i>	460
33.	Two Cheers for the Moral Majority, <i>William Martin</i>	469

*Section One*

# A Historical Perspective

STUART A. QUEEN, ROBERT W. HABENSTEIN, AND JILL S. QUADAGNO

## The Family of the Ancient Romans



*The family of the ancient Romans, and the changes that occurred in that family as the Republic gave way to the Empire and Roman civilization reached its zenith, inspire special interest because many observers have noted similarities between the changes in the Roman family and changes in the family systems of modern Western civilization in the past century. In both cases, authority weakened within the family, movement toward equality of men and women took place, the enforcement of restrictive sex norms broke down, and a historically rare condition emerged whereby either husband or wife could divorce the other at will.*

*Some cyclical change theorists believe that civilizations evolve through predictable stages of development and decline analogous to those of a biological organism. Some of these theorists, in turn, consider the changes that occurred in both the Roman and Western civilizations to characterize a rather late stage of the life cycle of civilizations and thus to indicate the incipient decline and impending death of a civilization. However, not all of these changes have occurred in other great civilizations—or at least the changes have not been well-documented. One important divergence between the seemingly parallel changes in the family structure in the Roman and modern Western civilizations is that they occurred only in the patrician (upper) class in Rome but have occurred at all social levels in the modern West.*

*Studying parallel changes in the Roman and Western families may or may not provide insight into the rise and fall of civilizations, but it does suggest that*

*affluence and attendant liberation from a struggle for subsistence tend to engender a hedonism—a pleasure orientation—that permeates family relations, as well as other aspects of life.*

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The Roman family in early times was like that of the ancient Hebrews in being primarily a household or a kinship group dominated by a male head, yet the two peoples differed sharply in that the early Romans were strictly monogamous, never approving polygyny or concubinage. In both cultures, important changes occurred. Among the Jews, these were associated with the destruction of their nation, among the Romans, with successful wars of conquest, called the Punic Wars, and accumulated wealth.

Of course, there was no sudden change in customs, traditions, and mores in either Judah or Rome, but there are many reasons for considering the Punic Wars as a turning point in the history of the Roman family. Long absences of men serving in the army, growth of the capital city, rise of a leisure class, importation of slaves, and other changes in the structure of Roman society inevitably led to changes in family life. Many of the innovations were regarded as vicious and degenerate, both by Roman satirists and later by Christian apostles. Hence it may be held that early Christian standards of family life drew heavily on the patriarchal tradition represented by the Jews and the Romans, but they also constituted a reaction against the innovations and the disorganization evident especially in the upper classes of imperial Rome.

## THE ROMAN FAMILY BEFORE THE PUNIC WARS

### Family Structure

Before the Punic Wars, which were fought in the third and second centuries B.C., the Roman family was patrilineal, patrilocal, and patriarchal. Dominance of the *paterfamilia* (father of a family) was not identical with that of the head of a Hebrew family, but it was no less complete.

The Roman *familia*, or household, included all those persons who were subject to the authority of the *paterfamilias*. These might be wife; unmarried daughters; sons and adopted sons (whether married or not) and their wives, sons, and unmarried daughters; and even remoter descendants, but always counted in the male line. In later centuries, *familia* included slaves and clients. Such a household usually broke up only on the death of its head. When this occurred, there might be as many new *familiae* as there were males directly subject to the *patria potestas*, a term meaning that the *paterfamilias* had absolute power over the members of the family. Individuals could become de-

tached from the household by marriage, adoption, or emancipation without destroying the group as a whole.

The Roman *gens*, which we have called "clan" in the description of other cultures, was a group of households tracing their descent through males from a common ancestor. Membership in the Roman *gens* was indicated by the *nomen*, usually the second of three names that a citizen commonly possessed. Certain *gentes* were supposed to be descended from *patres* who in the days of the kings constituted the senate. Others had a later origin. The *gens* seems to have been much more than a listing of kinsmen, as frequently is the case in our culture. It was a group that provided guardians for minor children, the insane, and spendthrifts; it took over property left by members who died without any heirs; it conducted certain religious services and sometimes had a common burial plot; it even passed resolutions that were binding on its members.

As in ancient Judah, there was no place in early Roman society for detached persons. Everyone was supposed to belong to a household and to be under the control of its *paterfamilias*. When the *paterfamilias* died, each of the adult males under his direct control might become the head of a new household, inheriting a share of the estate. Estates sometimes were kept intact instead of being divided. This was managed by agreement of the heirs or, in later years, by provisions in the father's will. Minor children who were left orphans or half-orphans and unmarried grown daughters were commonly placed under a guardian (*tutor*) selected by their *gens*. In later times, when daughters sometimes inherited property, they were not permitted to marry without consent of the *gens*, nor could their share of the family lands be alienated from the *gens*. If there were no immediate heirs, property was supposed to be divided among the nearest *agnati* (relatives descended from a common ancestor through the male line).

In all this, we see again that early Roman society was organized in kinship groups—household and *gens*—that apparently were stable and not often broken up. However, individuals could be detached from these groups. When a girl married, she usually became a member of her husband's *familia* and *gens*. A boy or man might be emancipated or adopted.

### Family Cycle

**Mate selection.** In general, mate selection in Rome was arranged by the fathers of the young couple. As among the Greeks, Hebrews, and other ancient peoples, romance had little to do with the approach to marriage. Roman fathers chose wives for their sons and husbands for their daughters without necessary consideration of their children's wishes. If the young people knew and were fond of each other, certainly that was no obstacle, but neither was it essential. When the Roman law spoke on consensus (consent of both parties), it meant agreement of the fathers, not of the bride and bridegroom. However, the *patres* were not entirely free. Law and the mores required that both parties to a marriage be physically mature, unmarried, and not too closely related.

Formal betrothal, although not required by law, was considered good form. In the *sponsalia* (betrothal), the girl was promised by her *paterfamilias* or

*tutor* to the *paterfamilias* of her husband-to-be. Only if either party to the engagement was an independent person (*sui juris*) was the pledge made by or to him or her. There was sometimes a ceremony in the atrium of the girl's home: certain formulas were repeated; gifts were exchanged; perhaps the man gave the girl a ring to wear on the third finger of her left hand; and finally came congratulations, refreshments, and a "social hour." If there was later dissatisfaction with the engagement, it was most likely to be canceled by the girl's *paterfamilias*. If the boy's family wanted to break the engagement, they could not recover any of the presents. How regularly betrothal was followed by a wedding and how often engagements were broken we do not know, but we may suppose that in this early period such agreements were usually kept. We may also suppose that the formalities mentioned were observed in patrician rather than in plebeian homes.

Marriages were of two general kinds. If bride and bridegroom were both Roman citizens, their marriage was called *justae nuptiae* or *matrimonium justum* (regular marriage). The children would be citizens and possess all civil rights. If one of the mates was a Roman citizen and the other belonged to a group with *jus conubii* (privilege of marrying Romans) but without citizenship, the marriage was still called *matrimonium justum*, but the children acquired the civil status of the father. Marriage contracted between a man and a woman of different rank—for example, a patrician and a plebeian—was legal and the children were legitimate, but they took the civil status of the parent of lower degree. This second form of marriage was called *injustae nuptiae* or *matrimonium injustum*. The *jus conubii* was gradually extended, first to plebeians in 442 B.C., then to inhabitants of various Italian cities, and long after the Punic Wars to former slaves, or freedmen.

For the solemnization of a marriage, no legal forms were necessary in the sense of a license to be procured from a magistrate or ceremonies to be performed by persons authorized by the state. The only real essential was consensus—that is, agreement of both parties if they were *sui juris*, but usually of their *patresfamilias*. The acts considered most important in a wedding ceremony were the joining of hands in the presence of witnesses, the escorting of the bride to her husband's house, and, in later times, the signing of a marriage contract. Great pains were taken to select a lucky day. Auspices were taken and the results reported before the rest of the ceremonies proceeded. On the eve of her wedding day, the bride dedicated to the *lares*, or family gods of her father's house, her girlhood garments and ornaments. The next morning, she was dressed for the wedding by her mother. She wore a long, one-piece tunic fastened around the waist with a woolen band tied in the "knot of Hercules," which only the husband was privileged to untie. Over the tunic, she wore a brightly colored veil. Finally, there was a special coiffure and a wreath of flowers.

The ceremony associated with *matrimonium justum* could take one of several forms. The one most commonly used by patricians in early times was called *confarreatio*. In the girl's home, the bride and bridegroom were brought together by a once-married matron living with her husband in undisturbed wedlock. They joined hands in the presence of 10 witnesses, after



which the bride repeated the words *Quando tu Gaius, ego Gaia* ("Wherever you are Gaius, I am Gaia"). Then the bride and groom sat side by side on stools covered with the skin of a sacrificed sheep. An offering was made to Jupiter of a cake of spelt (*far*), from which the ceremony got its name. Then the cake was eaten by the bride and groom, and a prayer was offered to Juno and some other deities. The couple then was congratulated, and the main ceremony was over.

Another type of ceremony was called *coemptio*. This was a fictitious sale of the girl made in the presence of five witnesses. A coin was laid on some scales that had to be held ceremoniously. Then followed the joining of hands and word of consent, as in the *confarreatio*. A prayer was recited, perhaps a sacrifice was offered, and then came congratulations.

The third form of ceremony was called *usus*. We have very little information about its details, although it appears that hands were clasped, words of consent spoken, and congratulations offered. If the wife then remained in her husband's house, not absenting herself for as many as three nights in succession for a year, she came under his authority. *Usus* appears to have been the ceremony most frequently employed by plebeians, although they also used *coemptio*. Marriage through any of these forms was defined as marriage with *manus*, meaning that a husband had power over his wife and rights to her property. *Manus* was akin to *patria potestas*.

After the principal ceremony, the bridegroom, with a show of force, tore the bride from her mother's arms and set forth in a public procession to his own house. Accompanied by torchbearers and flute players, the couple passed through the streets amid singing and feasting. On the way, the bride offered one coin to the gods of the crossroads and gave two coins to the bridegroom—one as a symbol of her dowry, the other as a gift to his household gods. The groom scattered nuts through the crowd. When the procession reached the groom's house, the bride wound bands of wool about the doorposts, after which she was carefully lifted over the threshold. Only invited guests accompanied the couple into the house, the rest of the crowd dispersing. In the atrium, the husband offered his wife fire and water. With a torch, she lighted a fire on the hearth and then recited a prayer. Finally, she was placed by the attending matrons on the marriage bed, which stood in the atrium.

It seems to have been a matter of some importance for the Roman bride to bring her husband a dowry (*dos*). The dowry usually was provided by her paterfamilias and became the property of her husband or of his paterfamilias.

The customs involved in mate selection and marriage were not similar in all times or for all social levels. Among people of modest means, the betrothal and wedding ceremonies must have been much simpler than those described. Among slaves, there was probably little or no formality.

**Child rearing.** As among the ancient Hebrews, children were desired, especially boys, in order to continue the family line, religious ritual, and property. The first important event in the life of a patrician child was its acceptance as a member of the family. It was customary to lay the newborn baby at the father's