

CFP: Open Kinship? Social and Legal Practices from Gender Perspectives (1450–1900)

Vienna, Sept. 2019

10th Conference of the European network “Gender Differences in the History of European Legal Cultures”

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26–28 Sept. 2019, University of Vienna

Deadline: 15 Dec. 2018

Over the past 20 years, historical kinship research has opened up numerous new perspectives: with regard to kinship as a concept and practice, to chronologies and transitions between differing logics of kinship, to kinship positions, figurations, and spaces, to kinship as a network of relationships and as an arena of conflict, and above all to kinship as a category of inclusion and exclusion. A central question is therefore: Who was actually included? Belonging was neither a fixed quantity nor a permanent status, but much rather situative. Belonging had to be repeatedly updated and renewed – and the perception of belonging could vary between those who defined it and those who claimed it. Belonging could be of differing strength, be limited to only certain contexts, be temporary and changeable, and/or be ambiguous and contested. Belonging was a matter of negotiation and was also fought over. And in structures of kinship, belonging is situated between claims, continuities, and all manner of conceivable breaking points. Furthermore, belonging – as well as inclusion and exclusion – was socially, legally, and gender-specifically coded.

In light of all the above, the objective of this conference is to ask as to the openness of kinship as a concept and practice across all social milieus from the late Middle Ages into the nineteenth century, as well as about changes that took place over time. Within this framework, the figurations and forms, contexts and parameters of ambivalent, contested belonging are to be debated with an eye both to legal contexts and discourses and to gender relations and spheres of action in the sense of empowerment and/or constraints. In doing so, a distinction should be made as to whether and in which situations and contexts women, men, or children were situated—or even actively situated themselves—in intermediate and transitional spaces between inclusion and exclusion in a legal, structural, social, or situative sense. This puts the focus on various positions: those of stepmothers, stepfathers, and stepchildren; foster children, adopted children, illegitimate children; children of mistresses, brother- and sister-in-laws, son- and daughter-in-laws; and also married daughters and wives or children who did not conform to parents’ expectations, had entered *mésalliances*, and/or had been disinherited, as well as their children. Ambivalence or disassociation as a consequence of conflicts could affect all manner of kinship positions, including those of siblings, uncles and aunts, etc. and a question of some significance in this context is as to the importance and logics of endogamous and exogamous marriage practices.

The question as to open kinship reaches beyond these positions: the Family History has focused on the social family, meaning the individuals living together in a household—which could include relatives outside the nuclear family as well as nonrelated individuals. In this regard, an additional question is as to the extent and the conditions under which the kinship space could be open toward individuals who were viewed as nonrelated according to conven-

tional definitions. In social anthropology, such processes are subsumed under the term “kinning”, while disassociation and separation are termed “de-kinning” (Signe Howell). This terminological pair and concept can also prove productive in historical kinship research.

Therefore, contributions to this conference should:

- explore the openness and limits of societal as well as personal notions of kinship,
- refrain from postulating belonging, instead asking as to how it was or was supposed to be created,
- reconstruct, contextualise, and analyse contexts and implications of contested belonging,
- relate contested belonging to gender and law,
- make visible ambivalences and ask as to the modes and mechanisms of agreeing upon belonging as well as, subsequently, as to the arguments with which it was negated or refused,
- and make a theme of fears and expectations along with investigating what was viewed as a danger and what was viewed as an opportunity.

Keynote: Michaela Hohkamp, University of Hanover

Please send your proposals for papers (approx. 1 page/300 words) together with a short academic CV by 15 December 2018 to:

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