

Fellows

Stephanie Rieder

ÖAW/IFK_Junior Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. October 2020 bis 30. June 2021

Contact

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Stephanie Rieder

PROJECT-TITLE

Sexuality, Marriage, Court: Talking about Sexuality in Matrimonial Court Records, 1783–1938

PROJECT-DESCRIPTION

“In a marriage contract, two persons legally declare their will to live in an intimate community, bear children, educate them, and afford mutual assistance.” The definition of marriage in section 44 of the Austrian Civil Code (Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch) hints at a key area of marriage, marital sexuality, which is the main subject of this project. As early as the nineteenth century, court records make mention of various aspects of marital sexuality, ranging from the “conjugal duty” of sexual intercourse to sexually transmitted diseases. “Flashpoints” that shaped discourses about sex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—Foucault counted medicine, psychiatry, and criminal justice among them—should therefore be supplemented by civil jurisdiction. This interdisciplinary project examines matrimonial court records from the regions of Vienna and Lower Austria from 1783 to 1938

to investigate, e.g., how couples, judges, or even legislators talked about sexuality. With the help of new sources, this research contributes to our understanding of sexuality and its historical changeability. It sheds light, in particular, on continuities and discontinuities in the way people talked about sexuality over a period of 150 years.

CV

Stephanie Rieder studied law and history at the University of Vienna, while also working as a legal assistant at a corporate law firm for several years. Her interdisciplinary dissertation project addresses questions of sexuality in legal proceedings regarding divorces from bed and board as well as marriage annulment in Vienna and Lower Austria between 1783 and 1938. From June 2017 to July 2018 she was an intern for the FWF research project *Marriage Litigations from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*. In 2019 she was awarded a three-year DOC-team scholarship from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, which supports her collaborative work with historians and sociologists on the interdisciplinary project *Doing Divorce: Marriage Proceedings from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. She is also a research assistant in the Department of History at the University of Vienna.