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General Introduction

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## General Introduction

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The journal, *Kinship*, is dedicated to the study of kinship in all of its facets<sup>1</sup>, is international in scope and will publish original work in English, though publications in other languages, as is the case in this issue, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It offers a scholarly site for research publications dedicated to the ethnography and theory of kinship, and covers current systematic efforts using new data or new ideas, including revisiting and reworking earlier assumptions in the field, in its four sub-disciplinary components — the biological, the sociocultural, the archeological and the linguistic. Approached from the perspective of cumulative building of knowledge that is grounded in cross-cultural ethnography and comparative theoretical analyses, kinship is of primal importance in the four subfields — the sociocultural, the linguistic, the biological and the archeological.

*Kinship* is the only journal in the United States, and one of only a few worldwide, dedicated to the study of, and research on, the whole of kinship. It is not about Belonging, Identity, or Re-

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Giovanni Bennardo for suggesting to us during the 2019 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Vancouver, Canada the idea of starting a journal dedicated to kinship. We had previously published three special issues, *Back to Kinship* (Read and El Guindi [eds.] 2013), *Back to Kinship II* (El Guindi and Read [eds.] 2016) and *Back to Kinship III* (Read and El Guindi [eds.] 2019) in the eJournal, *Structure and Dynamics*, each based on talks given at kinship sessions we organized for the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association. The positive reception that each of these Special Issues received is confirmation of what gradually has become the lack of a formal academic venue devoted to the publication of kinship research.

latedness. Kinship is considered both as an experientially bounded, culturally identifiable sphere of human life differentiated from all other societal relations and as a construct with universal analytical value distinguishable by well-defined criteria.

This inaugural issue of the online journal *Kinship* appears on January 1, 2021 online and reaffirms the evident success of the study of kinship as a core anthropology subject of theory and ethnography despite dismantling attempts, starting with the Wenner-Gren Sponsored Meeting, held in August 1-6, 1982, at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center, Lake Como, Italy, originally organized as Feminism and Kinship Theory and ending up with the edited publication, *Gender and kinship: Essays toward a unified analysis* (Collier and Yanagisako 1987). Despite the distinguished contributors to the volume, this attempt has neither succeeded in hurting the serious study of kinship nor in contributing any unified analysis. Yet, unfortunately, it has hurt American anthropology since American students of anthropology have suffered from the absence of formal teaching of kinship theory and ethnography. Nonetheless, kinship study continues as a subject of research in the United States and is particularly thriving outside the United States (see El Guindi 2020: 3-46; also see Read [In Press]).

In this issue of *Kinship*, there are two articles which reflect the nature of kinship research in both its more traditional format with focus on the social context of kinship relations and in a cross-disciplinary attempt to find a common ground between kinship as it is understood from a social and cultural perspective with kinship as it is understood from a biological perspective.

The first article, *Genealogía de un pueblo fantasma: parentesco, matrifocalidad y adopción en Ayquina-Turi* (*Genealogy of a ghost town: Kinship, matrifocality and adoption in Ayquina-Turi*) by Pablo F. Sendón and Viviana Manríquez, addresses kinship in the Andes and how it relates to adoption and matrifocality in that area. Ayquina-Turi was, until recently, an agricultural community at 3,000 meters elevation in the Chilean part of the Andes, with an extensive irrigation system. The region has recently been heavily impacted by mining activity that has led to an out-migration from communities like Ayquina-Turi, turning them into ghost-towns.

The data for the article are from a genealogical survey conducted in 2016 and 2018, consisting of 27 genealogies (16 with female egos and 11 with male egos), covering 6 generations with a total of 627 persons. Temporally, the genealogies span about 130 years. Socially, the genealogies have extensive kin ties among the egos for the genealogies. For example, one of the egos is genealogically connected to 25 out of the 27 egos upon whom the genealogies are based. Adding to the connectivity of the persons in the genealogies, marriages tend to be endogamous at the regional level.

By genealogical data the authors mean “the genealogical connections just as they were communicated to us during the interviews. This, however, does not mean that such lines [in the genealogical graphs] coincide with biological links or kinship bonds among the individuals therein connected” (p. 8). Thus, if a woman adopts (see below) an offspring of her daughter and considers the adopted offspring to be her child and the offspring refers to her as “mama” the offspring will be recorded as a child of the adopting woman. Hence, the genealogical graphs are a record

of how kinship is lived and conceptualized their genealogical relations to one another in the communities in this region, thus are emic and not etic accounts.

Matrifocal families, in which a mother, or a group of mothers, reside together with their children but the biological fathers are not present in the household, are common in the area. At the same time, there are agnatic lines composed of the owners of the territory utilized by households. Yet while there are uterine groupings, such as matrifocal families, these have been considered by researchers as exceptional, given the strong tendency in this region to form groups that are agnatically based.

The authors consider, as the research topic for their article, whether the uterine groups revealed through the genealogies are the exceptional case, as has generally been assumed, or are they an integral part of the kinship fabric? Single women with children are not uncommon, and in cases like this, the genealogical data show that the biological father often does not recognize his offspring, as indicated by the main choosing to not give the offspring his surname. In cases like this, the offspring will have the mother's surname and she may become part of a matrifocal group of women.

A man who does not recognize his child at its birth may recognize the child by giving the child his surname some years later. The authors include cases like this under the term "adoption." By adoption, then, is not meant a legally recognized procedure for taking on a child as one's own, but one of the possible modalities in a situation where the biological father initially does not give the child his surname, but recognizes the offspring at a later time by giving the offspring his surname.

Adoption also occurs with the formation of matrifocal families, as may happen when, as the authors phrase it: "Single mothers with children not recognised by their male parents, whose children in turn are not recognised by their male parents either and are adopted by their 'grandmothers,' with everyone living in the same household" (p. 26) thus forming a matrifocal family. The authors view adoption in this sense, in conjunction with the formation of matrifocal families, as a recurring "complex," rather than an exception, and see it as maintaining family structure by forming families organized matrilocally in situations where males do not recognize their offspring. Adoption may also involve incest in the form, for example, of a man with the daughter of the woman who becomes his wife and when he adopts the daughter.

Overall, the authors consider the genealogical data to show that "in terms of kinship, humans do whatever they want but, as with the language, always subject to rules. In Ayquina-Turi, matrilocality and adoption are the rule and not the exception" (p. 28).

The second article, *Human kinship and the reproduction of sameness* by Carles Salazar takes up the perennial issue of the relationship between kinship as it is understood from a biological perspective versus a cultural perspective. While there is general agreement that neither the extreme of reducing kinship as it occurs in human societies to biological processes alone nor elevating kinship as it occurs in human societies to cultural processes freed from any biological underpinnings are valid, little else is agreed upon. Salazar begins with the biological perspective,

noting the success that the formal study of biological kinship systems has had with developing an evolutionary perspective for the properties found to characterize biological kinship. In particular, he is concerned with whether the mathematical framework for biological evolution expressed through the Price equation and Hamilton's Rule, each of which have proved to be especially useful for making sense of otherwise difficult evolutionary questions such as the thorny question of the conditions under which there can be evolutionary selection for altruistic behavior, can apply, in appropriately modified form, to cultural evolution of kinship systems. Without going into the mathematics behind the Price Equation and Hamilton's rule, the Price equation partitions the total change in allele frequencies (the measure of biological evolution) when going from one generation to the next into what portion can be attributed to fitness selection as opposed to all other factors that affect the change in allele frequency when going from one generation to the next. Hamilton's rule has been popularized by the idea that there will be selection for non-reciprocal altruistic behavior when the altruistic act has a fitness benefit to the biological kin recipient of the behavior greater than the fitness loss to the actor weighted by the (biological) coefficient of relatedness.

Non-reciprocal altruistic behavior, generally considered to be widespread in human societies, is taken as a hallmark of human societies since only in human societies is it frequently directed towards persons with little or no genetic relationship to the agent exhibiting the behavior. This also means that it is behavior outside of the purview of Hamilton's rule due to the coefficient of biological relatedness decreasing by a factor 2 with each step in the genealogical pathway leading from one individual to another. Hamilton's rule only applies to biologically grounded behavior directed towards close biological kin. Salazar's goal is to determine whether Hamilton's rule can be modified in such a way as to make it (and the Price equation) applicable to cultural and not just biological kinship.

His approach is to express the biological model for Hamilton's Rule and the mathematical form of the Price equation more abstractly so as to see if there is a meeting point between a more abstract version of Hamilton's Rule and kinship as it occurs in human societies. Salazar observes that Hamilton's rule is based on a shared property between agent and biologically related recipient, namely identity of an allele by descent. That is, there is sameness between agent and recipient determined by sharing an allele common by descent, and, critically according to Salazar, this sameness reproduces itself, in the sense that the coefficient of biological relatedness applies equally to the offspring of agent and recipient. Thus, Salazar, concludes. the key aspect of the model for Hamilton's Rule is sameness between agent and recipient — expressed in the biological case through the coefficient of relatedness — and reproduction of sameness — due to common descent of an ancestral allele in the biological case, applies equally to the generation produced from the current generation. It is here that Salazar finds connection between Hamilton's Rule and kinship as it is found in human societies

In Salazar's argument it is critical that sameness need not be a genetic characteristic, and the latter must also carry over to non-reciprocal altruism. Salazar poses the rhetorical question:

“[W]hy should non-reciprocal altruism be caused only by a biologically inherited proclivity?” (p. 10) and answers that there is no reason why it must be genetic. It can, instead, be learned. For Salazar, removing the assumption that non-reciprocal altruism has a genetic basis eliminates the difficulty with applying Hamilton’s Rule to human kinship when the coefficient of relatedness — that is, their degree of sameness — is directly tied to the genealogical closeness of actor and recipient. However, with learning the basis for non-reciprocal altruism, the measure of sameness no longer must decrease rapidly with genealogical distance between agent and recipient. If non-reciprocal altruism, according to Salazar, is not tied to genetics, then from a cultural perspective if the recipient of a non-reciprocal altruistic is referred to by the kin term “child,” it is no longer critical whether those persons referred to by the kin term, say, “classificatory child,” are genetically close or distant biological relatives when those persons learn to be non-reciprocally altruistic. This contrasts sharply with Hamilton’s Rule applied to genetically based non-reciprocal altruism where the recipient must be a close biological kin. As Salazar puts it: “The only condition that has to be satisfied for successful reproduction of this behavior is that the beneficiaries of altruistic acts are also themselves altruists ...” (p. 14).

Salazar observes that the free-rider problem that arises in the genetic form of Hamilton’s Rule, which leads to punishment of free-riders as a means to prevent a free-rider allele from invading the genetic pool takes on a different form in a human kinship contest. In that context, the free-rider problem now relates to whether teaching the next generation about non-reciprocal altruism is successful, which is of a very different character than punishing free-riders in the genetic case.

Finally, Salazar ties his argument to human kinship by observing: “Kinship is not just being the same as someone else. Kinship is the *reproduction* of this sameness” (p. 18, emphasis in the original). Here, by kinship, he is referring to kinship as found in human societies, not biological kinship. This, reproduction of sameness, he suggests, applies not only to human kinship but to all instances of creating social identities. What is critical for his argument is not just identifying a criterion of sameness in the case of human kinship, but that there is a means for the reproducibility of this sameness across generations. This theme is also addressed in the article by Sendón and Manríquez through their conclusion that matrifocality and adoption determine sameness in family organization and form a complex, hence “[i]n Ayquina-Turi, matrifocality and adoption are the rule and not the exception” (p. 28); that is, the rules lead to the reproducibility of the complex.

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