What does well-being mean when we talk about men and women in the past? Their sheer chances of survival, their protection from want, their social status, their individual agency and their self-esteem were all strongly mediated by the family, the predominant social institution. Family laws and customs of family formation created differences between insiders and outsiders in terms of well-being. Within families, there were strong differences in autonomy, status and freedom between the genders and generations. This book offers an exploration of gender differences in well-being in many regions of historic Europe, with some comparative perspectives. It explores how historic family systems differed with respect to choosing a marriage partner, transmitting property, living and care conditions of widows and widowers and the position of children born out of wedlock.

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