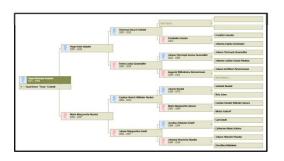# FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION:

AN UPDATED LOOK AT KINSHIP DETERMINATION

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JUDY G. RUSSELL, JD, CG®, CGLSM
https://www.legalgenealogist.com
legalgenealogist@gmail.com

Overview: With one fewer document to analyze, more stringent page limitations, and added standards for DNA evidence, much has changed in the BCG portfolio requirements since the last look at the Kinship-Determination Project in 2014. Despite the changes, the heart of the project remains the same: documenting families from generation to generation in the context of their time and place. And it's still a portfolio element that can—and *should*—be fun.

BCG CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT 6— KINSHIP-DETERMINATION PROJECT (KDP):

Submit a narrative genealogy, narrative lineage, or narrative pedigree that documents and explains linkages among individuals through three ancestral generations—ascending or descending. Use a documented proof statement, proof summary, or proof argument, as appropriate, to establish each relationship. Include proof summaries or arguments justifying your kinship conclusions for at least two parent-child relationships in different generations.

— Board for Certification of Genealogists,
The BCG Application Guide (2019), at p. 7.

THE REQUIREMENTS

The sixth and final element of a BCG Application Portfolio is the Kinship-Determination Project (the "KDP"). It has four essential components:

➢ It must be a narrative presentation.
➢ The narrative must document the generational linkages between the selected generations, and document the kinship of all persons included.
➢ The narrative must discuss three ancestral generations.
➢ The narrative must include at least two proof summaries or arguments justifying the kinship conclusions for at least two parent-child relationships in different generations.

Narrative. The instructions call for a narrative presentation: a narrative genealogy; a narrative lineage; or a narrative pedigree, ascending or descending. The key word here is *narrative*. Charts, family group sheets, and the like **will not** satisfy the requirement.

Document and Explain Relationships. The key skill demonstrated in the KDP is the ability to document and explain the kinship of the persons included. The best-written, most interesting family history won't meet standards if it doesn't accurately document relationships, including that critical linkage from generation to generation.

Three Ancestral Generations. The KDP calls for the inclusion of "three ancestral generations"—and no more. In reality, the KDP will include members of ***four*** generations to incorporate the "names and vital data of the children ***of each couple.***"

Proof Discussions Justifying Kinship Conclusions. The KDP must include proof discussions (summaries or arguments) justifying the applicant's conclusions as to the kinship linkages from generation to generation.

KEY RESTRICTION

The KDP has a key restriction, set out in the *BCG Application Guide*: "This project may use your own family but may not include you or your siblings." This means that if you use your own family, the first generation must be your second great grandparents or a generation even further back.

DOING THE KDP RIGHT: THE ELEMENTS

To meet standards, the narrative needs to show six fundamental elements:

- ➢ Sufficiently broad research to ensure that evidence is adequately tested. [Standards 12, 14, 17, 19, 41 and 58]
- ➢ Accurate placement of each individual within the family. [Standards 37–50]
- ➢ Descriptive biographical information for each couple included. [Standard 73]
- ➢ Documentation of every statement of fact that is not common knowledge. [Standards 1-8]
- ➢ Names and vital data of the children of each couple included.
- ➢ A clear, comprehensive format that follows an appropriate style. [Standard 72]

Sufficiently Broad Research. The bottom line for the KDP is reasonably exhaustive research. Standard 17 reminds us that: "Thorough research attempts to gather all reliable information potentially relevant to the research question, including evidence items conflicting or consistent with other evidence items." That starts with a broad context (Standard 12) and topical breadth (Standard 14) in research planning and in data collection (Standard 19), extends through reasoning from evidence (Standard 41), and ultimately shows that our research was reasonably thorough, that we used all sources and information a competent genealogist should use and we used original records and primary information where we could (Standard 58).

Accurate Placement of Family Members. The KDP requires that each member of each family be accurately placed within that family based on reliable, source-cited evidence. Key considerations in determining reliability and sufficiency of evidence are set out in Standards 37-50 and emphasize reliance whenever possible on original records and reliable information, the recognition that even original records may be unreliable and the need to weigh evidence from independent information items.

Descriptive Biographical Information. The KDP isn't just the begats; we need to include "sufficient information about each person's or family's activities, residences,

circumstances, contributions, and lifestyle to identify them uniquely within the context of their historical era, society, and geographic place." Standard 73.

Documentation of Facts. Source-cited documentation must be provided "for every statement of fact that is not common knowledge." See Standards 1–8.

Names and Vital Data of the Children. We don't need a full biography on everyone we include. Unless we've opted for a narrative genealogy, we only need the names and vital data of the children of each ancestral couple.

Clear Comprehensive Format. We need to use a standard genealogical format. Standard 72 tells us that genealogies "use either *NGSQ*-system or *Register*-system formatting and numbering"; pedigrees "use the Sosa-Stradonitz ahnentafel-based numbering system"; and lineages "need not be numbered."

DOING THE KDP RIGHT: LINKING GENERATION TO GENERATION

The KDP requires two proof discussions linking generation to generation, and "justifying the kinship conclusions for at least two parent-child relationships in different generations." The required proof discussions can be two proof summaries, two proof arguments, or one of each. They don't have to be complex or contradictory, but they do have to meet all applicable standards. Every other relationship in the entire KDP must be documented by at least a proof statement. (These are defined terms in the glossary of *Genealogy Standards*, and the differences explained in Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof*, at 84-88.)

It's not enough just to say, for example, that John was the son of David. We have to document and explain our conclusion and why we think it's valid. Our discussion doesn't have to be extensive or lengthy. If birth, marriage and death records all identify the same parents and reasonably exhaustive research hasn't turned up any contradictory evidence, that won't require a lot of discussion.

DOING THE KDP WRONG: COMMON MISTAKES

Unsuccessful applicants make some common mistakes: they consistently fail to meet standards: their submissions don't show an ability to meet the Genealogical Proof Standard; they don't demonstrate reasonably exhaustive research; they don't use the best available evidence. Sometimes elements are missing. Remember that a portfolio that's severely inadequate or missing required pieces will be returned without being judged.

And there are some really common mistakes folks make in KDP submissions, gauged by the judging rubrics, including:

> ➢ Missing or incomplete documentation
> ➢ Bypassing commonly used sources
> ➢ Using unreliable sources
> ➢ Insufficient analysis and correlation
> ➢ Many problems with numbering format

The biggest mistakes: Almost half of all portfolios that are marked "does not meet standards" for the KDP are missing the required proof summaries or arguments and almost half either don't include the required biographical context for the ancestral couples or the information provided is superficial.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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    c. "Numbering Adoptees in a Genealogy." http://bit.ly/legalgen0414
    d. Part 3: "Adoptions and Children of Multiple Marriages." http://bit.ly/legalgen0415
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Sample Family Histories: https://bcgcertification.org/learning/skills/genealogical-work-samples/#FH

All URLs verified as of 1 October 2020.