

Till death do us part... Everyday life practices of 50-64 years old couples with at least 20 years' of common life practices experience

According to psychological and sociological research, only a small number of the fifty-year-olds admit to experiencing the so called „empty nest" syndrome. Part of them declares that when the nest becomes empty and the children leave home, the level of life and marriage satisfaction even grow.... As researchers interested in study of couples and everyday life, we believe that intimate relationships in late modernity can be perceived as a microcosm of global changes, e.g., every third couple has been divorced in Poland according to statistics. After 20 years of marriage the number of divorced couples it is reduced by half.

We find that the decision about engagement, cultural patterns (including the „till the day I die" commitment) play the key role when the couple is starting to live „alone" once again - when children leave the home. Our research offers a complex picture of „re-living" of pairs in empty nests, in the contexts of two dominant visions of love: romantic and pragmatic one. The management of an abandoned nest become an another important "microproject" in the life of a couple that can lead to its consolidation, or to the dissolution of the nest. We find it a challenge to have a closer look into this phenomena also including the respondents' perspective (100 couples aged between 50 and 64 who have adult children (including 20 French couples living in France). For comparison, the study will also cover 40 people who, after at least 20 years of living together, have decided to divorce or separate.

Our goals are:

1. to analyse changes in **everyday life practices** of couples in the “empty nest” stage of their life cycle, is “empty nest” a difficult or liberating stage?
2. to investigate the material (spatial changes, living conditions) and emotional (communication, involvement, conflicts) aspects of relations in the “empty nest” stage;
3. to map differences between the couples whose female members are/have been professionally active and those in which they have not. Couples that are active in religious practices and those who are not religious. Couples living in big urban areas and small cities.
4. To compare outcomes of Polish study with study done in France.

The project methodology includes an autoethnographic study, two in-depth semi-structured joint (dyadic) interview scenarios, one individual interview scenario and psychological study on gender roles conflict will be carried out using questionnaire technique. The study will be conducted by a team which has previous experience in interviewing couples, including involvement of French Co-Investigator.