

Childhood after divorce. Joined shared custody in an anthropological perspective

The main goal of the project “Childhood after divorce. Joined shared custody in an anthropological perspective” is to analyse and describe new forms of practicing family on the example of families in which children live in so called joined physical custody. Joined physical custody means that, after parental separation, the child lives equal (or near equal) time with the mother and the father. The phenomenon of joined physical custody is new in Poland – it became an officially available solution in 2015, even though some families practiced it hitherto without a court order. The explicit goal of placing a child in joint shared custody is protecting his/her best interest – the child is supposed to benefit from being as close to both of the parents.

The research will mostly concentrate on the experiences of children who live in joined physical custody, following the conviction that children are able and resourceful social actors and their opinions on matters that concern them should be heard and taken into account. By using participatory methods developed in childhood studies – like drawing, making collages, storytelling, etc. – we will aim to understand the meanings children attach to family, kinship, relatedness, and the notion of home.

In addition to research with children, interviews with adults - parents and experts (e.g. psychologists, judges), as well as an analysis of media discourse about the well-being of a child in a divorce situation, and children’s/youth’s literature touching the subject of family and parental separation, will be conducted. It should allow deep understanding and describing the new phenomenon of joined physical custody, and more broadly – changes in how family is understood and practiced.