



Living in two worlds: a German case study on children in post-separation families

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Methods and the Example of Post-Separation Families”
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1. Multi-local families after separation and divorce

Conceptualisation

- Separation and divorce \Rightarrow spatial-temporal reorganisation of family life
- Family = multi-local familial network dispersed across two households
- Focus: multi-local familial networks in which children commute frequently between the mother's and father's home

1. Multi-local families after separation and divorce

Legal and normative background in Germany

- Child law reform 1998:
 - Automatic joint custody after divorce established shared parenthood as the norm
 - Primary residence model is still the favoured living arrangement today
- Concept of fatherhood:
 - Change towards the image of actively involved father

⇒ Number of children living multi-locally after separation and divorce is expected to increase

1. Multi-local families after separation and divorce

Number of children commuting between parents in Germany

- No official statistical figure for Germany
- Approximation based on the DJI-survey AID:A:
 - 12% of all underage children have biological parents who are separated or divorced
 - 60% of these children commute between the familial worlds

2. Theoretical background: Children's management of everyday life in multi-local post-separation families

- Theoretical frame: concept of everyday life conduct
- Also applicable to children living in two familial worlds after separation and divorce

Research questions:

- ⇒ What challenges do children face when managing life in two familial worlds?
- ⇒ What practices do they develop in order to overcome these challenges?

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Database

- Theme-centered narrative interviews with 12 multi-local living children as well as their parents
- Visual methods (autofotography, socio-spatial network game) with children
- Participant observation (partly video recorded)

Sample structure

- 5 girls and 7 boys aged 6-17 years
- 4 pairs of siblings
- All parents have been separated for at least two years
- Diversity regarding living model, distance, human constellation

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Challenges and practices of multi-local everyday life

- Everyday life at two places as well as commuting within the familial network becomes normality
- The multi-local living children develop:
 - **Multiple place references and patterns of belonging**
 - Practices of **emotion management**
 - *Management of their own emotions*
 - *Management of parent emotions or their new partners*
 - *Management of sibling emotions*
 - Practices of **creating continuity**
 - *Continuity within the familial worlds*
 - *Continuity between the familial worlds*

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Patterns of everyday life management - Overview

- 4 patterns of how children manage their multi-local everyday lives
 - Pattern 1: "Here I keep to the rules, there I enjoy freedoms!"
 - Pattern 2: "I can use the best from both worlds!"
 - Pattern 3: "My everyday life is the same whether I am at my father's home or my mother's!"
 - Pattern 4: "I have the same leisure time at two different places!"

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Pattern 1: "Here I keep to the rules, there I enjoy freedoms!"

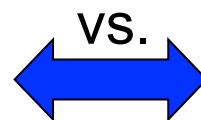
- Basis: Contrast

"Burdened world " _

- Strong structures
- Limitations
- Conflicts
- Heteronomy
- "Everyday situation"
- Negative evaluation

Practices

⇒ Children: Practices of adjusting to rules and structures



"Unburdened world"

- Freedoms
- Harmony
- Autonomy
- "Holiday situation"
- Positively exaggerated evaluation

Practices

⇒ Children: Practices of using freedoms
⇒ Parents: Keeping visiting weekends free

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Pattern 2: "I can use the best from both worlds!"

- Basis: Contrast related to
 - Spatial structure
 - Preferences and skills of the parents
- Familial worlds complement each other positively
- Desire for more proximity

Practices

- ⇒ Children: Complementary use of both familial worlds
- ⇒ Parents: Enforcement of activities according to own interests and skills

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Pattern 3: "My everyday life is the same whether I am at my father's home or my mother's!"

- Basis: Similarities due to continuity through constant institutional and social integration
- Enabled through proximity

Practices

- ⇒ Children: Following the unvarying spatial-temporal structure
- ⇒ Parents: Allowing or encouraging overlaps of the familial worlds



3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Pattern 4: "I have the same leisure time at two different places!"

- Basis: Similarities due to similar parent priorities

Practices

⇒ Children:

- Leading the same leisure life at two places
- Specific communication practices to create continuity within the familial worlds

⇒ Parents:

- Normal everyday life in both familial worlds despite weekend visits

3. Empirical findings: The management of everyday life of multi-local living children after separation and divorce

Summary

- Requirements on the children vary
- Children develop different practices of everyday life management
- Patterns of everyday life management are based on complex constructions of influencing factors
- Statements on the structural framework conditions of different patterns require further studies with larger samples

4. Conclusion - Benefit of a sociological-geographical perspective on families after separation and divorce

- Links across households and the time spent "being there" are important for children
- Benefit over previous research on families after separation and divorce
 - Concept of multi-locality makes interconnections and the integration in two familial worlds visible
 - Framing of everyday life conduct focuses on the everyday doing of the children



Thank you for your attention!

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Patterns of everyday life conduct and case examples

Basis 'Contrast'		Basis 'Similarities'	
<u>Pattern 1:</u> "Here I keep to the rules, there I enjoy freedoms!"	<u>Pattern 2:</u> "I can use the best from two worlds!"	<u>Pattern 3:</u> "My everyday life is the same whether I am at my father's place or my mother's!"	<u>Pattern 4:</u> "I have the same leisure time at two different places!"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrea (PSF 3), 17 years, 560 km • Anna (PSF 4), 10 years, 230 km • Alex (PSF 4), 12 years, 230 km • Paolo (PSF 11), 12 years, 374 km • Felix (PSF 11), 14 years, 374 km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophia (PSF 2), 8 years, 2 km • Melanie (PSF 2), 10 years, 2 km • Sebastian (PSF 10), 12 years, 22 km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rafael (PSF 6), 9 years, 0,7 km • Hannes (PSF 7), 6 years, 1 km • Tom (PSF 12), 16 years, 0,5 km 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lara (PSF 3), 13 years, 560 km



Detailed Sample Information (1/3)

Girl(s)	Boy(s)	Age
1	2	6 - 9 years
3	4	10 - 14 years
1	1	15 - 17 years

Detailed Sample Information (2/3)

	Living arrangement	Distance between households
3	Shared residence with equal parenting time (PSF 2, PSF 6, PSF 7)	Same village or city, distance < 1 km
3	Primary residence with the mother (PSF 4, PSF 10, PSF 11)	22 km; 230 km; 374 km
1	Primary residence with the father (PSF 12)	Same village, distance < 1 km
1	One child resides with the mother, the other with the father (PSF 3)	560 km

Detailed Sample Information (3/3)

	Human constellations of the post-separation families
0	Simple multi-local family system
4	Multi-local family system with LAT-patchwork family due to children of a new partner on the mother's or father's side (PSF 3, PSF 7, PSF 11, PSF 12)
1	Multi-local family system with new partnership on the mother's or father's side (PSF 4)
1	Multi-local family system with patchwork family due to child with the new partner on the mother's or father's side (PSF 10)
2	Multi-local family system with patchwork family due to child of the new partner on the mother's or father's side (PSF 2, PSF 6)
0	Multi-local family system with patchwork family due to child of the new partner AND common child with the new partner on the mother's or father's side

Legal frame in Germany

Child Law Reform 1998 - Central principles

- Centred around the best interest of the child
- Norm of joint parental responsibility after divorce ⇒ major decisions concerning the child must be made jointly by parents
- Sole custody as the exception
- Determination of the residence of the child not a legal issue, determination of the child's place of abode has to be decided between parents
- Legal decision is only made if parents are not able to come to an agreement

Joint custody for unmarried parents

- Unmarried parents are also able to gain joint custody: fathers must first accept paternity, then joint custody can be applied for at the youth welfare office
- If a father is denied joint custody by a mother, he can take legal action