Reviewer's report

Title: Influence of parental employment status on Dutch and Slovak adolescents health

Version: 1 Date: 30 June 2006

Reviewer: Aleck Ostry

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an under conceptualized and not well written paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
There is confusion between the notion of "employment status" and unemployment in this paper. For example, "being disabled or retired was considered as unemployment, among fathers and mothers alike, because it has similar negative economic and social consequences as unemployment". This approach is usually not taken in the literature. Being disabled or retired is very different than being unemployed. For example, unemployment usually means that someone is of working age, healthy, and either looking for work or has given up looking for work. Being disabled implies some kind of medical condition and retirement involves a different age spectrum. The assumption that disabled and retired study members are the same as unemployed is not tenable and for this paper to be published major re-analyses must be undertaken with the question of "employment status" clearly defined. In other words the authors must address the categories of employed, unemployed, disabled, retired, and housewife in a more analytically sophisticated manner. They cannot simply lump these categories as "unemployed". There is no basis for this type of approach in the literature.

If, as authors have mentioned the four health indicators are "very skewed" and required dichotomization, these data should be better described so that we have a better idea of the distributions. Otherwise it is unclear whether or not the dichotomization "fixed" the problem.

On page 8 under the heading Mothers Employment Status the authors claim that "no information about housewife status was available in the Slovak 2002 sample. Because odds ratios for housewives and unemployed mothers in the Slovak 1998 sample were very similar, we presume that these types of employment status are not distinguished in Slovakia and it is possible to consider them as one type." This is faulty reasoning. The authors cannot make this assumption it has no validity.

In the Discussion the second paragraph beginning "In our study the odds ratios for housewives etc etc" is completely confusing and unclear.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The writing of this paper is a bit too colloquial (casual) and imprecise and should be tightened up. For example, in the Conclusions section of the Abstract "our results suggest that it is worth to pay attention to the context in which parental unemployment has occurred because it can influence the results and its interpretation" This sentence is unclear.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes
Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests' below