Author’s response to reviews

Title: Family dissolution and children’s social well-being at school: A historic cohort study

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Version: 2 Date: 21 Oct 2019

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Reviewer reports:
Laura Di Manno (Reviewer 2): Thank you for taking into consideration the comments from the initial review process. After reading your revised manuscript, I would like to note that is is much improved. There are still some comments I have regarding some sections. I believe that making some additional changes would further strengthen the paper.
Authors reply: Thank you for the positive comment.

Abstract:
Your statement "The school may be an important setting for identifying and providing help and support in children experiencing family dissolution." is a good addition to the abstract.
Authors reply: Thank you for the positive comment.

Background:
You stated in your response to reviewer comments that the sentence "Conflict levels between parents before, during, and after the parental divorce may explain more about children's adaptation to parental separation than the actual event of divorce." has been rephrased, however, you have simply started the sentence with the word "indeed". Given that the reference to interparental conflict is in the very 1st paragraph of the paper, it would ideally not be presented as a brief addition to the points made about separation/divorce and school-related outcomes for children.
Authors reply: Thank you for the careful comment. We have added the following sentence to the 1st paragraph, referring to the reference: “Interparental conflict may engender attention problems, self-blaming attributions, elevated conflict with peers as well as general emotional and class-room difficulties leading to reduced academic performance in school children [8].”
You have added some references to support the hypothesis "From this perspective, it has been hypothesized that children have a higher level of social well-being if divorce occurs when they are older rather than younger because a considerable part of the socialization process takes place early in the child's life [6, 9, 10]." A couple of sentences describing the literature regarding the age at which children reach key social milestones would add weight to your arguments.
Authors reply: We have added the following sentence, substantiating the argumentation: “Parental dissolution seems to have relatively few consequences for children at college and university age level, presumably because of their maturity and independence from the family [6, 9, 10].”

You stated in your response to reviewer comments that you added two sentences about the relationship between well-being and academic performance and mental health later in life. In fact, you added one sentence that reads, "Poor social well-being has been associated with lower academic performance in school and higher risk of severe mental health problems." Some further description of the literature would be useful here. Have you cited cross-sectional or longitudinal studies? Age of participants? N of samples?
Authors reply: With respect to not rewrite the paragraph and that the manuscript is English proof read, we have added the following meeting the reviews comment: “Previous cross-sectional and prospective studies have examined the association between family dissolution and social well-being in children aged 11-18 years. The associations were estimated on sample sizes varying from 978 to 13 953 children and based on various measures reflecting social well-being, including popularity, cooperativeness, peer relations, loneliness, being bullied, perceived social disintegration, and lack of joy in school [6, 7, 11–18].” And further below: “In a prospective epidemiological study, poor social well-being was associated with lower academic performance in school and higher risk of severe mental health problems among a representative sample of 2790 adolescents [20].”

Methods:
You state that you assume there is only a minor part of your population where families are living apart for reasons other than separation or divorce. Are you able to include some statistics or references to support this assumption?
Authors reply: Statistics Denmark rate that approximately 5% of married couples live apart. Unfortunately, we have no valid information to what extent this percentage include couples with children. Therefore, we consider we have no valid reference to support this assumption.

Can you include the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the social-wellbeing scale?
Authors reply: We have added the Cronbach’s alpha: “The Ministry of Education has defined a social well-being scale, consisting of ten questions from the National Well-being Questionnaire (Cronbach’s alpha 0.85) [25].”

You have clarified that the information regarding step-parents and changes in family structure were gleaned from the available registry data. The way that participants were categorised as
having a step-parent/no step-parent is clear. However, can you please explain how the number of changes in the family structure was defined as either "1", "2" and "&gt;2". Did participants report how many family structure changes had occurred over a certain time period? Or are these numbers based on derived from other information available in the registry data?
Authors reply: We have clarified the sentence adding following: “Further, the number of changes in the family structure was based on registry data on adults moving in and out of the same address as the child and entered as a categorical variable and coded into “1”, “2” and “&gt;2”.”

Discussion:
Some discussion regarding the implications of your findings would be useful. For instance, if the school is an important setting for identifying and providing help and support in children experiencing family dissolution, what does this mean for teachers? What can they look for? How can they follow up appropriately to support children impacted by family dissolution? What supports can schools put in place? i.e. staff trained in student wellbeing, referral pathways?
Authors reply: We have added the following sentence: “Here, the health visitors in collaboration with a pedagogical and psychological consulting team could be central; example by offering group sessions to children who experience family dissolution.”