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## Title registration for a review proposal: Shared living arrangements after divorce and the wellbeing of children

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Anne-Marie Klint Jørgensen

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To start a Campbell review, a title must be registered and approved by the appropriate Campbell review group. For information about the title registration and protocol and review steps, visit the Campbell website:

[http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/systematic\\_reviews/index.php](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/systematic_reviews/index.php)

Submitted to the Coordinating Group of:

- Crime and Justice
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Other

Plans to co-register:

- No
- Yes  Cochrane [Note the use of revman 5 will be required]
- Maybe

Instruction: Briefly address each item below. Provide enough precise information to allow us the ability to evaluate the scope of the review and its appropriateness for the Campbell Collaboration. Note the review proposal should not overlap with existing Campbell and Cochrane published reviews or registered reviews in progress.

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### TITLE OF THE REVIEW

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Suggested format

[intervention/s] for [outcome/s] in [problem/population] in [location/situation]  
*Note that Campbell reviews usually concern interventions, although this is not essential.*

Shared living arrangements after divorce and the wellbeing of children

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### BACKGROUND

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**Briefly describe and define *the problem***

*[Provide a brief description of the problem. Why is this review important? You may provide citations of relevant papers. Use APA style for referencing.]*

Divorces are becoming more and more common in the Western world. E.g., in a country like Denmark more than a third of all marriages end in divorce (Christoffersen, 2004). This implies that about one-third of all children in Denmark will experience their parents' divorce before they turn 18 years of age. This phenomenon is not limited to Denmark: Bumpass (1984) found that about two-fifth of children born to married mothers in the US will experience the disruption of that marriage while they are children. The impact of divorce on children is thus of importance around the world.

Research shows that, on average, children from divorced families are not doing as well as children in intact families (Amato & Keith, 1991). Hypotheses are that parental absence, economic stress, socioeconomic disadvantage, and changes in family processes might accompany the divorce and explain these findings. Some argue, however, that close relationships with both parents after the divorce have the potential to overcome these difficulties (Bauserman, 2002), suggesting that a shared living arrangement after the divorce will be beneficial for the child.

Shared living arrangements have increased in popularity as an option after divorce since the 1970s (Bender, 1994). Shared living implies that the child stays with both the mother and the father on a pre-determined rota system – for instance one week with each parent, or 5 days with one parent and 7 days with the other parent. For a shared living arrangement to be successful, parents need to cooperate and agree in important matters concerning the child. Often parents with shared living arrangements also share legal custody although this is not a prerequisite. In Denmark, following a new and groundbreaking rule in Family Law from 2007 (Act of Parental Responsibility) authorities can now decide on fifty-fifty shared living arrangements on behalf of the parents.

Over time there has been a lot of discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of children living in two households (with shared living arrangements). While some researchers stress that contact with both parents is beneficial for children's wellbeing, others argue that shared living arrangements disrupts needed stability in children's lives and can lead to harm by exposing children to ongoing parental conflict. The benefit of a shared living arrangement is therefore expected to depend on the level of parental conflict. In addition, factors such as the child's age and sex may be important. Bauserman (2002) has carried out a meta-analytic review of child adjustment for children in joint custody settings compared to children in sole-custody (primarily maternal) settings. Bauserman includes both joint legal custody and joint physical custody in his analysis, and finds across multiple types of

measures that children in joint custody are better adjusted than children in sole custody. The results, however, can be difficult to interpret because legal and physical custody is mixed.

In this review, the purpose is to study the impact of shared living arrangements on children's wellbeing, where the child lives with both parents on a predetermined rota system

**Briefly describe and define *the population***

*[Outline types of participant to be included and who is excluded, with thoughts given to aspects of the participants /target audience receiving the intervention. E.g. age, gender, geographical location etc. ]*

The population consists of families (parents and children) with the following characteristics:

Parents are divorced and have shared physical custody, implying that the children live with both parents in turn. Parents can be married or cohabiting prior to the divorce/separation.

Children aged 0-17 at the time of divorce/parental separation, are included

**Briefly describe and define *the intervention***

*[Define the intervention and specific comparisons to be made. What is given, by whom and for how long? Outline possible variations of the intervention. What are the comparison conditions? E.g. no intervention, treatment as usual or alternative intervention. ]*

A shared living arrangement refers to a setting where the child lives with both parents by a fixed rota system – for instance one week with each parent or 5 days with one parent and 7 days with the other parent. We define a shared living arrangement as one where the child spends at least 25 % of the time with each parent (ruling out spending every other weekend with the non-resident parent).

The shared living arrangement is typically decided by the parents themselves, although legal authorities can be involved.

The comparison condition is children living mainly with one parent. This comparison condition provides the opportunity to analyze if children with close contact to the non-residential parent adjust better than children with close contact to only one parent.

Another possible comparison condition is children living in intact families. This comparison condition provides insight into how children in divorced families adjust compared to children living in nuclear families.

**Outcomes: What are the intended effects of the intervention?**

*[What measurements will be used?*

*List primary and secondary outcomes (This will depend on the review and the field in question)].*

This review will provide insight into differences in children’s wellbeing across different custodial settings both in the short term (how do shared living arrangements influence the children’s wellbeing at the time they live with both parents) and in the long term (how do shared living arrangements influence the children’s wellbeing in the long term).

Primary outcomes include children’s general adjustment, emotional adjustment, behavioural adjustment, self-esteem, family relations, academic performance, and divorce-specific adjustment.

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**OBJECTIVES**

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*1-3 sentences on the objectives of this review*

The objective of this review to study the impact on children’s wellbeing of shared living arrangements, where the child lives with both parents on a predetermined rota system

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**METHODOLOGY**

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**What types of studies designs are to be included and excluded?**

*[Inclusion criteria: What types of studies are to be included? Exclusion criteria: What types of studies are to be excluded? Please specify and describe eligible study designs (e.g. prospective parallel groups with baseline controls, control/comparison groups and duration of follow-ups.)]*

For this review, we do not expect to find any RCTs. Instead quasi experimental designs (QEDs) will be included in this study. By QEDs we refer to quantitative effect study designs, where a counterfactual can be established (e.g. before and after studies with prospective parallel groups and baseline controls).

**Your method of synthesis:**

Will you use meta-analysis, etc?

Yes, if possible and appropriate.

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## REFERENCES

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Amato, P.R. and J.G. Gilbreth, 1999: Nonresident fathers and children's well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 61(3)

Amato, P.R. and B. Keith, 1991: Parental Divorce and Adult Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 53(1), pp. 43-58

Bauserman R., 2002: Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, vol. 16(1), pp 91–102

Bender W., 1994: Joint Custody, The Option of Choice. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, vol. 21(3 & 4), pp 115 - 132

Bumpass L., 1984: Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update. *Demography*, vol. 21(1), pp. 71-82

Christoffersen M., 2004: Familiens udvikling i det 20. århundrede (The development of the family in the 20th century). The Danish National Centre for Social research, Report 04:07

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## SOURCES OF SUPPORT

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### **Internal funding:**

SFI Campbell

### **External funding:**

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## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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None know

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## REQUEST SUPPORT

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Do you need support in any of these areas (methodology, statistics, systematic searches, field expertise, review manager etc?)

Possibly regarding meta-analysis

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## AUTHOR(S) REVIEW TEAM

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**Include the complete name and address of reviewer(s)** (can be changed later). This is the review team -- list the full names, affiliation and contact details of author's to be cited on the final publication.

**Lead reviewer:**

The lead author is the person who develops and co-ordinates the review team, discusses and assigns roles for individual members of the review team, liaises with the editorial base and takes responsibility for the on-going updates of the review

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Please give brief description of content and methodological expertise within the review team. The recommended optimal review team composition includes at least one person on the review team who has content expertise, at least one person who has methodological expertise and at least one person who has statistical expertise. It is also recommended to have one person with information retrieval expertise. Who is responsible for the below areas? Please list their names:

- Content: Sofie Mathilde Hansen Stage & Mai Heide Ottesen
- Systematic review methods: Mette Deding
- Statistical analysis: Mette Deding
- Information retrieval: Mette Deding

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## **PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME**

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Approximate date for submission of Draft Protocol (please note this should be no longer than six months after title approval. If the protocol is not submitted by then, the review area may be opened up for other reviewers):

**Title registration approval date:**

**Draft protocol submission date:** November 2010

***Submit the Title proposal directly to the  
Campbell Social Welfare Coordinating Group's managing editor  
Krystyna Kowalski [krk@sfi.dk](mailto:krk@sfi.dk)***