Reviewer's report

Title: Mass social contact interventions and their effect on mental health related discrimination

Version: 1 Date: 28 March 2012

Reviewer: lee knifton

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Following all minor

Overall I think that this is a valuable paper that genuinely adds to the existing body of knowledge in the area and should certainly be published. It builds upon and adds to theory; it develops our understanding of what works in hectic real life situations, and it tries to look at longer term changes and behavioural intent and discrimination proxies, addressing weaknesses of many previous studies. The commitment to involving people with experience is commendable and the design is clever and egalitarian. However I feel that some of the claims made should be toned down.

Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The questions are well framed and the complexities are clearly defined in a complex study

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
They are clearly described and no additions suggested

Are the data sound?
There are lots of reasonable weaknesses in the data but they do not invalidate the findings and they are outlined by the authors

Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
I don’t think so.
There are numerous weaknesses (almost inevitable in real life situation) in the data, eg:
• It is not pre-post (a missed opportunity or do you feel this would affect the interaction?)
• Nor are there controls
• The small sample sizes as a % of the audiences and selection biases in the study are acknowledged but then are not reflected in the claims made
• Drop off is very high
• Vast majority already know and have contact with people with MHPs
I really don’t think that the data does demonstrate effect, so much as tentatively indicate- and it would be much better to say that. I would tone down the claims of effect and really reinforce the fact you’ve developed an approach that is valuable.

In fact, you might also want to say that it didn’t worsen things (see, and perhaps cite, Quinn et al, 2011, Impact of a mental health arts festival on stigma and discrimination, Acta.- where some real life contact events actually had a negative effect).

Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Most of the limitations are actually described well in the section but I do not think that they have influenced the claims sufficiently. In addition
You should probably acknowledge lack of specificity as a further limitation as people respond to people with different MHPs differently, and this could be important here.

You state that it is not representative in terms of demographics and the main concern for me would be BME communities. Partly due to socio-cultural differences in some parts of some communities that can lead to conceptual differences about MI and beliefs such as inheritability and contagion. Also the more common issue of dual stigma/discrimination due to racism that may complicate likely ‘contact’ effects (see, and perhaps cite, intro’ in Knifton et al, 2010, Community Conversation. SPPE)

Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes, very clearly. It is great to see people actually going back to the original studies to look at the conditions under which contact works, this is usually skimmed over. There are several papers over the last half century suggesting the impact of contact seems to be greater for the majority than the stigmatized minority and you could explore your different results here a bit more

Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
There are two issues:
The first is that is not discrimination as in the title. Reported behavioral intent and campaign activity are not discrimination they are stigma or discrimination intent
Secondly the claims are over slightly overstated (see note in “Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?”)

Is the writing acceptable?
Complex works presented very clearly

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable
**Statistical review**: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests**:  
I have worked on international studies in partnership with IoP in the past. I publish on area of stigma and contact