Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of neighbourhood formality status and socio-economic position on self-rated health among adult men and women: a multilevel, cross sectional, population study from Aleppo, Syria

Version: 2 Date: 18 January 2013

Reviewer: Carla Shoff

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

This study is the first to consider neighborhood SES and informality status in the study of the relationship between neighborhood and health. It is also the first multilevel modeling study from a developed country to study the effects of neighborhood SES on self-rated health.

This is a well written paper that makes a strong contribution. However, there are some issues that should be clarified or addressed by the authors.

One of the weaknesses of this paper is that the authors used the individual-level survey data and aggregated this data to the neighborhood-level to create the level-two measures. The authors have addressed this as a limitation of their study (which is good), but I feel that more needs to be said about this issue. As I am not familiar with data in Syria, it seems there should be some other data collection that could be used to construct the neighborhood-level data. The authors did note that there could be a small number of respondents per neighborhood when the survey data is aggregated to create the neighborhood-level measures of SES. With this statement, the authors should note that the smaller the number of people in each neighborhood, the larger the measurement error. This should be addresses as a limitation of this study. They should also say what the minimum number of individuals were per neighborhood.

The authors do not identify a neighborhood-level effect of SES on SRH. I believe this may be partly due to the data source as well as the way that SES is being measured. Are there no other measures available in this dataset or another data source that may provide more common measures of SES. If so theses should be tested, if not this should be a limitation of this study.

I believe the authors are using multilevel multinomial logistic regression models; however this is never stated as such in the paper. Also, in the table headings the word “multivariable” is used. If the authors are referring to multinomial they should use the more standard terminology and if this is not the method that the authors did use they should have because of the construction of the outcome variable.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests