Reviewer's report

Title: Ten years of lesbian health survey research in the UK West Midlands

Version: 3 Date: 13 April 2007

Reviewer: Theo G. M. Sandfort

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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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)

This paper has been substantially improved! The authors have made a serious attempt to address the issues raised.

In the second paragraph of the background section, the authors still play down the importance of general population surveys in which attention for homosexuality is integrated. Given the serious limitations of their own methods (limited operationalizations of major concepts, convenience samples that are put together in different ways over the four waves), this comes across as very unbalanced. The papers listed below are could examples of what such an approach learns us:


Methods, line 1: Given the outcomes of the study (“considerable health needs”), the reference to healthy volunteers comes across as somewhat ironic. “not recruited via the NHS” is probably sufficient.

The inclusion of Table 1 is extremely helpful. I miss the question about mental health problems, though. I would like to see that included.

Discussion, paragraph 4: stating that 1000 women have been surveyed suggests that the four samples were independent. Since it is not known that this is true, the conclusion that 1% of lesbian and bisexual women have been studied is not warranted.

Discussion, paragraph 7-8: The authors still play down that the findings from this study come from convenience samples. They state that it is unclear whether findings are generalisable, but continue to include expressions like: the implications…. are considerable, as if they want to ignore that these are indeed convenience samples. An example of the limitations of convenience samples can be found in:


A toning down of the importance of the findings is needed.
Discussion, paragraph 8: It is still not clear to me why the size of Denmark is so important. If the authors of the Danish study had had a bigger sample, there would not have been any power issues.

Discussion, paragraph 9: There is an implicit assumption that not being out to one’s GP is caused by fear of discrimination. It is not known whether this is the case; there can be many other reasons for non-disclosure.

A limitation not mentioned in the discussion section yet is weak operationalization of the health measures.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'