Reviewer's report

Title: Are single mothers' higher smoking rates mediated by dysfunctional coping styles?

Version: 1 Date: 19 March 2014

Reviewer: Ari Haukkala

Reviewer's report:

This is interesting study that addresses relevant public health problem, high prevalence of smoking among single mothers. This area is less examined and will have important public health impact in case there could be some information to improve this problem. However, in regards to manuscript there are many shortcomings that diminish the quality of paper in its current form.

Major compulsory revisions

1. A first major issue that has to be resolved is one of the coping styles “substance consumption” that includes specific questions about smoking. Naturally smokers have higher prevalence of this coping style although items include other substances as well. It became quite trivial to examine does this coping style mediate association between single motherhood and smoking. This coping dimension could be analyzed separately from other more psychological coping styles.

2. Second major limitation is the association between smoking and stress. Introduction does not include any information how stress is related to smoking. There are several important dimensions/mechanism in this association. Authors must address and describe which dimension/mechanism is related to current paper.

3. in Table 1 coping styles are presented as continuous variables comparing mean values between single mothers and other mothers. However, in table 2 these coping styles are presented as categorical tertiles. This is unnecessary as continuous variables can be used logistic regression as predictors for smoking status.

There were several minor issues

5. in the methods section authors describe smoking prevalence and after that how smoking prevalence was measured.

6. For table 1 it is unnecessary to show item level information within coping styles five coping styles. Instead in the methods section there must be some information what kind of reliability these sum variables (coping styles) have in terms of Cronbach alpha or equivalent reliability indicator.

7. in the abstract there is now clear results in terms of p-values or odds ratios.

8. In the results section it is more appropriate to indicate table where results are
(in this case mean values) are presented and use p-values in the text to indicate significance.

9. According to this logic non-significant results (page 7 first paragraph) are non-significant, means do not “tend” to be higher.

**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:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.