Reviewer’s report

Title: Intersecting identities and the navigation of stigma and discrimination

Version: 2  Date: 15 September 2014

Reviewer: Ryan DeLapp

Reviewer’s report:

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. The Qualitative section is at times difficult to follow given that there is so much information that is being organized/categorized under three specific themes. The current use of headings is somewhat helpful; however, the ‘social distancing’ and ‘old and new label’ sections appear at times disjointed. Given what the authors are attempting to convey using their qualitative data, the homeland culture section is best organized. In comparison, the ‘old and new labels’ section appears to include two sub-themes, race/ethnicity and homeless/mental illness. However in your discussion of these sub-themes, there appears to be additional layers to the data that get lost within the discussion. For example, within the homeless/mental illness sub-theme, the authors discuss several more nuanced themes, which appear to be the general link between being homeless and having a mental illness (Page 12, line 291-301), the difficulty of accepting the new label as an identity (Page 13, 302-312), the autonomy of disclosing the new label (Page 13, 313-318), and coping with the stigma attached to the new label (Page 13, 319-325). Upon the first read through in its current format, these more nuanced themes are not easily comprehended. Possibly the introduction of more headings or more clearly worded topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph will better organize this section and help the reader understand the more nuanced interactions within your data.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

2. Page 9, Theme: Social Distancing paragraph, (“Stigma emerged as …”): Discrimination is properly defined earlier in the manuscript (“been treated unfairly by others in Canada”, p.6); however, stigma is often loosely referred to and never really concretely defined by the authors. It would be helpful to clarify whether stigma was defined for the respondents or by the respondents. Ultimately, it is hard to appreciate the meaning of the qualitative data when there no clear operationalization of term stigma, which restricts the readers understanding of exactly what aspect of being stigmatized is characterized by the theme of social distancing.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
3. Page 5-6, (“From the total sample of 550 participants….”) Although it is important to report the demographic makeup of the 36 individuals who were interviewed, it is equally important to provide descriptive statistics of the full sample utilized for the manuscript. Without including such data, the reader lacks an understanding of the external validity (or generalizability) of these findings. Also, the absence of demographic information describing the entire sample limits the ability for future research to replicate or expound upon your findings. Finally, it remains unclear whether the demographic makeup of the subsample of 36 individuals (as detailed in Table 2) is representative of the full sample, which leaves me to wonder if the themes described in the qualitative data are representative of the larger sample.

4. Page 8, first paragraph of the results section (“Quantitative (Table 1)…”). The frequency and type of discrimination experienced by this sample is important data to report. However, given the proposed main objective of the manuscript is to highlight the additive effects of multiple identities on discrimination/stigma, the quantitative data provide very little insight regarding these additive effects in your full sample. In light of the variability across several demographic variables (e.g., immigration status, ethnicity/race, years homeless) described in Table 2, the authors should provide the readers some data regarding how these demographic variables (or minority statuses) impact reported discrimination/stigma. The authors can use simple statistical methods (e.g., percentages, frequency distribution, chi square analyses) to highlight these distinctions for the full sample. For example, in comparing foreign-born vs. Canadian-born participants in the full sample, it allows the reader to get a sense of how multiple identities (i.e., immigration status, being homeless, and having a mental illness) combine to influence the frequency of a specific type of perceived discrimination (e.g., being homeless, impoverished).

**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’