Reviewer's report

Title: Acceptance of sexual minorities and the mediating role of social capital on health and well-being among members of same-sex and opposite-sex couples: a cross-European study.

Version: 2
Date: 7 January 2015

Reviewer: Tiffany Jones

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Minor Essential Revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   In the main, yes. I guess the issue would be that it is not defined as question but as an aim in a broad sense (101-104). The aim does not quite account for the parameters of the study (countries/ genders and so on... perhaps if this is adequately mentioned in the methods that is less of an issue but personally I may not leave it so late). Teasing out beneath the aim some precise questions on the exact relationships examined in the data would improve presentation of question/s overall... you asked questions, you just don't put them in here. Try wording this as “The research questions of the study included: What is the nature of the relationship between x and y?, and How does this compare with z etc.?" Use the questions you asked of the data, but worded in a general way which could make sense to a third party with no knowledge of your study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   In the main, yes. But we need more information on how the original study was conducted, a bit more of a summary on how that data came to be, what it includes and so on.

3. Are the data sound?
   Yes, but there needs to be better interpretation accounting for context.

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
   In my view and experience yes, but I would be keen for an additional quantitative expert/s to be consulted. The tables for example also fit APA guidelines etc. The last 2 figures seem to be a tad spurious and confusing though – I am not sure they add much and the arrows are a bit all over the place.

5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes, in the main.

6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
In the Introduction I sometimes wanted more details on which countries precisely some statements referred to. Readers will also need a thorough account of European (e.g. EU and so on) and country-specific context and policy/ legislation in relation to issues of same sex couples as relevant to the piece, and also economic contexts as relevant to the piece. Therefore, the discussion and conclusion are quite impacted by the lack of contextual information provided in the introduction, the data seems far less meaningful than it could be (given more of a treatment) especially to people outside Europe but even to those within it. You have to use contextually specific information to make greater sense of your data, in relation to findings and implications but also then in terms of limitations of findings and conclusions. This would also help clarify specific streams of study for further research ideas.

7. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

The authors need to be a bit clearer on the limitations of the data source itself, and how it was initially collected, to help us understand the limitations present and then need to address and outline those additionally built into their own study. The lack of context is also a problem here too, in the sense that we don’t know what is “special” about these circumstances politically and economically and therefore the data compared to other countries/ continents for example. It can’t be ignored or skimmed over.

8. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

In the main, but I would have liked some more information about studies published from the data itself before they came to it. Also there needs to be some more information on links already established between discrimination and wellbeing for example, and other social structures and wellbeing for LGB people (e.g. Hillier et al 2010 provides some good work on health and wellbeing outcomes for same sex attracted youth, my own Springer book Jones 2015 policy and gay, lesbian, bisexual…. Etc. shows links between health and wellbeing for LGB people and social and education policies).

9. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The title of this paper (currently lines 1, 2 and 3) is long and confusing. It needs to be pared down to an appropriate length to enhance sense-making and attract readers (perhaps in academia and its various fields, but also beyond it). Remember that your reader does not read the title with the knowledge of your field and project that you bring to writing that title (as its authors). The way to solve this issue is to consider: how would you both (conversationally) explain this project to a naïve stranger in 10 words or less? Perhaps even do so, bring someone else into the room and try it. Use that brief line as your title. Other key words that are not being used in the title but you find relevant for someone searching for this piece can then simply be put into the “key words” list.

The abstract on the other hand is a bit clearer. Although I note that perhaps there are moments where it looks like you had prepared the study in the hopes of some alternate result (so maybe re-read this and check if you can’t make it a tad
more congruent in terms of background summary and findings, be precise) but the findings themselves are actually quite interesting in summary here. Just watch in the summary of conclusions (lines 32-34) you don’t go overboard and make such definitive statements… I know it can be difficult given abstract word counts, but don’t cut those necessary mediating words here. After all, this is a small sample, the findings have implications but are not conclusive, the data suggest relationships but certainly not causes for example. I’d recommend you revise that sense of there being causation, and replace it with the “suggestion of a relationship between” or similar in the spirit of a more appropriately scientific reserve about your data and its limitations. Also, the methods (line 23 onwards) are described using passive grammar, rephrase in active grammar.

In terms of Key Words, I don’t know that Subjective Wellbeing (line 36) will get many online/ library searches… why not wellbeing? Keep it broader to allow for readers who may be interested.

10. Is the writing acceptable?

Generally the writing style is acceptable, especially where precise and where active grammar is used. There are some incidences of passive grammar to be addressed. For examples of the best writing in the piece see the Introduction (from 18+), the short sentences and references were generally well done. Keeping that more uniform throughout would be good at times.

**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, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None/ N/a.