Reviewer's report

Title: Assessing service use for mental health by indigenous populations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States: A rapid review of population surveys

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Reviewer: Sarah Nelson

Reviewer's report:

By examining the content of population-level surveys relating to Indigenous service use in four settler-colonial countries and comparing the questions asked to those in "mainstream" health and service use surveys, this manuscript is an extremely valuable addition to the literature. It is well laid out and clearly written and I recommend it for publication with the following comments:

1) It seems to me that this paper will be extremely useful in helping researchers to develop or redesign mental health service use surveys intended for use with Indigenous populations. With this in mind, it would be great if the authors could elaborate more on the differences in how, and what kind of, information is collected in Indigenous surveys versus "mainstream" surveys. The rationale for using mainstream surveys in the development of the authors' review framework should be elaborated on and expanded (page 9, lines 16-36). Omitting discussions in this review of sections of Indigenous surveys such as questions about perceptions of mental health (page 17, lines 39-47) could impede the development of future surveys; this should be discussed and clarified.

2) The background and abstract cite the poor mental health of Indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States as part of the rationale for the study. These disparities are, however, highly uneven within and among Indigenous populations in each of these countries and information on health disparities tends to be limited, not easily comparable, or excludes certain Indigenous populations. While in aggregate, health disparities are a concern, highlighting the poor mental health of Indigenous peoples as a generality can lead to portrayal of Indigenous communities as "damaged" (Tuck, 2009). Further, there is a strong rationale for this study in the limited nature of currently available information on mental health service use by Indigenous peoples (e.g. page 5, lines 13-34) - even if rates of mental health problems were the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. I would suggest focusing on addressing gaps in information because of the disparities in how information is collected in Indigenous populations versus non-Indigenous populations, rather than focusing on the poor mental health of Indigenous peoples as the rationale for carrying out this review.

3) A brief discussion of what "service use" means and the debates in the literature around defining access and service use would be beneficial.
4) I would capitalize the word "Indigenous," throughout.

5) A brief overview of the mental health service systems in each country would also be useful; for example, do differences between public universal health care and private health care plans need to be taken into account in survey design? Do these differences account for some of the inconsistencies between surveys?

6) Page 18, line 54 or 55: what do "hospital separations" refer to?

7) The findings of this study will be very useful for other researchers as well as Indigenous organizations and communities. Overall, more clarity on how other researchers can make use of these findings would be helpful. If the goal is "greater comprehensiveness and uniformity" (page 28, line 5/6) among surveys, then a discussion of how this can be achieved while also taking into account culture- and nation-state-specific contexts of service delivery and use would help other researchers to incorporate these findings into their own work.

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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**
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Acceptable

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