Reviewer’s report

Title: Cognitive predictors of treatment outcome for exposure therapy: Do changes in self-efficacy, self-focused attention, and estimated social costs predict symptom improvement in social anxiety disorder?

Version: 1 Date: 15 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Angela Fang

Reviewer’s report:

Although the authors have addressed my previous concerns, there is new information in the manuscript that are unfortunately raising some new concerns about the findings. I hope the following suggestions improve the interpretation of the findings and the clarity of the implications.

Re: treatment completers, it seems arbitrary to define treatment completers as completing at least six sessions in a ten-session protocol. I think there still needs to be a clearer rationale for this, as Reviewer 2 recommended. In addition, this definition would be more justifiable if there was no difference in outcomes between those who completed 3 exposure sessions compared to those who completed only 4. Please assess whether there is a difference based on number of exposure sessions completed.

Many of the results reported within the text are redundant with the text reported in the new Table 2. I don't think it's necessary to repeat the statistics within the text in the Results section.

I agree with Reviewer 2's concern that the treatment term needed to be included in the model when assessing the treatment x change in cognitions effect on LSAS scores at post-treatment. However, with the product term in the model, the main effect of treatment in these models become conditional effects and cannot be interpreted as significant main effects, as described on p.11-12. As such, attempts to interpret the significant main effects in these models as demonstrating an effect of treatment type on LSAS scores need to be removed from the Results and Discussion sections (+ limitations paragraph on p.15).

Because the treatment term cannot be interpreted as main effects in Table 2a-2c, it's not justified to include treatment as a predictor in the "final" regression model in Table 2d (nor is it necessary given that this wasn't a primary research question of the study).

Therapy "rationale" is spelled incorrectly at the bottom of p.7. Also, "self-focused" attention is spelled incorrectly on p.12.

In Table 2, I would not highlight a p value of .051 as being statistically significant.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
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No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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