Author's response to reviews

Title: Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: A cross-sectional survey

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Ms Zapanta,

Re: Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: A cross-sectional survey

We thank the referee for taking the time to review the manuscript and provide her considered and insightful feedback. Please find below our responses. Attached is our amended manuscript, which we feel has benefitted from the revision.

The sample is large enough that it should be possible to determine if the effects of discrimination in public or in government agencies on mental health are significantly greater than other forms of discrimination. The authors describe the findings as if this is the case, but without specific tests of this hypothesis the conclusions are not warranted. Regression analyses with all locations entered simultaneously are needed.

This analysis has been completed and included in the manuscript (lines 332-336, Table 3). There have been some changes to the settings associated with being above the threshold for high psychological distress, with sports and employment settings becoming significant and public transport becoming non-significant. The abstract, results and discussion sections have been amended to reflect these changes (lines 69, 460, 540-541, 563-575).

The finding that public spaces are frequent sites of discrimination is consistent with the literature, and this should be noted. It is critically important in studies of racism to begin to document consistent findings and trends. Consistency in findings adds to the readers’ confidence in the results and adds to overall strength of the literature in this area.

This trend has been noted (line 568).

The authors report that 11 of 12 types of coping are not significantly associated with reduced distress. This is consistent with the review by Brondolo et al (2009) that the evidence is weak linking any individual-level coping strategy to reductions in the effects of racism on depression. However, the authors of this paper are not truly testing the degree to which these coping strategies buffer the effects of exposure on racism. It would be more appropriate to test interactions of level of discrimination X coping on distress. It may be that certain types of coping strategies are more commonly used by people who have experienced high levels of racism and therefore, although the coping strategy may be helpful, the levels of distress are still relatively high.

The survey asks about the use of coping strategies only in relation to the most recent incident and the stress associated with this incident, rather than the effects of experiencing racism in general. Logistic regression has been undertaken to determine whether any particular strategy has a unique effect on
finding the most recent incident stressful (lines 334-336). The strategy ‘Ignoring it or pretending it didn’t happen’ remained the only strategy associated with finding the most recent incident stressful (Table 4).

Some minor points:
Line 50 = should read “Data were” not data was. (There are also some other minor errors and some more careful proof reading would be helpful.)
These errors have been corrected and the paper has been proof-read and edited.

Line 167: “To our knowledge, the current work is unique in the scope of data collected regarding racial discrimination experienced and its effects on mental health.” The authors’ project is very exciting and impressive, but this statement is probably not accurate as major population-based studies, including MESA in the US have collected data on discrimination and also include much more detailed assessments of physical and mental health on a much larger population.
This line has been removed from the manuscript (line 206).

Studies by Wiehe and colleagues also examine the relationship of discrimination in different settings and health outcomes. See Wiehe, S., et al (2010) Gender Differences in the Association Between Perceived Discrimination and Adolescent Smoking
Thank you for this reference. The article has been included and cited in the discussion section (lines 547-550).

Thank you again for your time, consideration of our manuscript and the opportunity to respond to the reviewer. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can provide any further information.

Warmest regards,

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