Reviewer’s report

Title: A randomised trial of the influence of racial stereotype bias on examiners' scores, feedback, and recollections in undergraduate clinical exams

Version: 0 Date: 21 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Danette McKinley

Reviewer’s report:

This was a well-designed and well-executed study. It is valuable to conduct work in the accumulation of evidence of the validity of scores and decisions based on various assessment instruments. This work showed that although examiners may activate stereotypes of ethnic minorities, it does not appear to affect their scoring. Because of the this manuscript is so well written, I have only minor, discretionary edits to suggest.

First, I thought that it would be ideal to report whether the study was approved (or exempted) by an ethics board. You detail the recruitment and consent of participants, including checking to see if their understanding of the study would lead to socially acceptable responses. Just a sentence noting review/exemption is needed.

In the Methods section, you explain the scoring used in the scope of the study. While I am sure that the domains measured (knowledge and communications) overlap with those that examiners have rated in the past, I did wonder how the rating form compares to the task they complete in real life. It may be that the form that was used in the study allowed them to provide ratings that reflected the simulated performances despite stereotype activation while those typically used do not.

Also, the lack of prior information on ratings from these examiners was managed by consideration of the standard deviation of the groups for power analysis (very smart decision). However, should the study be replicated, it could be that having this information provides an additional covariate for analysis of the scores the examiners provide in these simulated sessions.

Again, congratulations on reporting on such well-designed work. Work in psychology has shown that there are several factors that can influence bias, and you have focused on a salient factor that could cause differential performance. I look forward to seeing this published.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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