

Restricted Entry: Is bias limiting Sikhs' access to mental health services?

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Project Concept: The objective of this audit study is to determine whether implicit bias exists in counsellors' responses to prospective Sikh clients' help-seeking that impedes Sikhs' ability to access counselling. The quality of counselling and related services individuals receive is greatly influenced by their race and gender due to the biases of the professionals providing such services. Until recently, studies that have examined professionals' bias towards individuals have been solely focused on the adequacy of services provided to clients. This focus has led to substantial evidence of counsellors' discriminatory and culturally-biased decisions, yet little is known about the potential bias of the professional when it comes to extending their services to disadvantaged groups in the first place.

Hypotheses: hypothesize that Sikh clients will receive fewer responses and appointment offers from counsellors relative to prospective White Christian clients.

Methods: Auditors will leave voicemails on 600-800 counsellors' answering machines soliciting counselling services. The name of prospective client will either be Christian or Sikh sounding, and will possess an accent or no accent.

We have already completed a pilot study identifying the Sikh name Bhupinder and Christian name Christian as most likely to conjure up an image of a Sikh or Christian person, respectively. The sample will consist of approximately 800-600 licensed counsellors in individual private practices located in Vancouver, BC. The responses to the voicemails will then be analyzed to determine whether there are any differences in the rate of return responses and if services are promoted in those responses between the "Sikh" condition and "White/Christian" condition, and whether the presence of an accent influences these numbers

Follow-up: If we find that a bias does indeed exist, then the next step would be to examine why this bias exists and how to ameliorate the effects of it.

Statistical Advice: I am looking for advice on what statistical tests I should use. I would like to analyze the data both as a within-subjects and between subjects design, so I would need instructions for which type of analyses should be used for both of those designs. I need help to calculate what an adequate sample size would be for this 2 by 2 study (1. Sikh/accent 2. Sikh/no accent 3. Christian/ accent 4. Christian/no accent).

