Reviewer's report

**Title:** Rating Neighborhoods for Older Adult Health: Results from the African American Health Study

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 9 July 2007

**Reviewer:** Jessica Kelley-Moore

Reviewer's report:

**General**

Comments on Revision of “Rating Neighborhoods for Older Adult Health: Results from the African American Health Study”

The authors have substantially revised this manuscript, resulting in a clear and concise presentation of the psychometrics associated with their neighborhood assessment instrument. This will be of use for the field which is just beginning to systematically study the physical and social environment and its impact on health. I have only a few remaining comments and requested clarifications, all of which are quite minor.

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**Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)**

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**Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)**

1. The Phases are much clearer in the analysis and results. I recommend adding a brief description of them to the Intro to help the reader understand the exact purpose of this paper.

2. The first full sentence on page 13 is unclear ("There were some reversed differences...").

3. Likewise, the first sentence in the second paragraph on page 13 could use clarification. This could probably use a couple more sentences explaining Table 2 because its results are not as self-explanatory as the other tables. I had to study the table several times to make sure I understood what was being presented.

4. In the Discussion, perhaps you could further emphasize that the nearly 3 point difference in the scale across suburb/urban neighborhoods was due to “real” differences, not an artifact of measurement. I think that is lost in your discussion of findings and it’s an important scientific point.

5. The last full sentence on page 16 could use clarification (“In the only other study...”).
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

6. On page 12, you note the factor loadings for the seven-item scale. The factor loading for traffic seems low (probably due to higher variability across neighborhoods). Was the alpha higher when traffic was not included?

7. Substantively, I tend to disagree with your statement that the neighborhood effects are not confounded by race. I understand the point that you are making, but particularly for the comparison of interviewer-rated and subject-rated neighborhood status, there may be an unmeasured race effect. Your study assumes that white respondents on the same street would rate their neighborhood the same way. You can’t answer that question with your study design, but it still may exist.

As I stated before, this is a very useful paper to the field and I look forward to the authors’ subsequent work linking this validated scale to health outcomes for older adults.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.