Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 6 July 2007

Reviewer: Luisa N Borrell

Reviewer's report:

General

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

General comments

Although the revised version of the manuscript (MS) has improved and clarified some of the issues raised in the previous reviews, there is a couple of old as well as new issues that need to be addressed on the MS. This MS has the potential to contribute to our understanding on subjective neighborhood assessment.

Introduction

Page 5, middle paragraph, line 8, the authors state that ‘this assessment tool had acceptable psychometric properties, but we were not satisfied with its discriminative ability or its inter-rater reliability.’ The authors should elaborate on the implications of the discriminative ability or the inter-rated reliability of the scale for studies using the scale. The same will apply to the next sentence state that ‘Further, we found a marked tendency for raters to choose “good” ratings for most items.’

The aim of the study could be more specific regarding what exactly the authors sought in this study.

Methods

Although the Methods session improved substantially during the revision, the analyses session did not change. As before the authors provide a detailed description for each phase of the analyses. However, the authors should consider to be more specific on explaining the purpose or outcome expected for each phase and how the analytical phases are connected. This clarification will make the MS’ results easy to follow and can improve the MS.

Results

For phase 3, the authors stated that they tested 17 interactions (end of page 14). The validity of a model with 17 interactions plus 18 or so main effects is highly questionable. Thus, the interaction findings need to be interpreted with caution.
Discussion

In the Introduction, the authors state that ‘this assessment tool had acceptable psychometric properties, but we were not satisfied with its discriminative ability or its inter-rater reliability.’ Thus, what do the authors learn from this analysis? What can this study contribute to this field? Were there any limitations on the analyses?

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.