Reviewer's report

Title: Validating a work group climate assessment tool for improving the performance of public health organizations

Version: 1 Date: 25 August 2005

Reviewer: John Townsend

Reviewer's report:

General
In general, this paper is well written and moves smoothly through the appropriate psychometric steps of validating an instrument.

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

The authors should make a stronger case why this instrument with 8 simple items is substantially superior to the Stinger scale with 24 items. It appears that both scale could be completed in less than 5 minutes. The biggest issues in this field are the management actions required to change group climate, rather than perhaps the efficiency of its measurement.

The authors should make a stronger case why a "tools approach" to change in climate is useful for managers. Does it facilitate diagnoses of problems; does it lead to action; is it useful for monitoring; or does it provide sufficient depth to serve as the basis for evaluation? Some brief discussion of this would be useful. Does the fact that it has been used in distance learning suggest that a shorter instrument is key?

What is lost by the lack of independent clustering of the 3 components (i.e. clarity, support and challenge) in a scale of only 8 items? From my perspective, perhaps what is lost is some guidance about where to take actions based on the differential response to subscales. I'm not sure if this is a problem for the potential users of this scale, but it should be addressed in the discussion.

The structure of the literature review on page 5 seems a bit mechanical with each paragraph referring to a separate author. A more integrated review with a conceptual presentation of the literature (rather than by author) would be more useful for most audiences.

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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)

The terms culture and climate seem to be used interchangeably in page 6, para 2. In the same paragraph, perhaps the word "organizationwide" should be spelled as two words or at least hyphenated.

Does the work tables on page 10, para 2 "tabulated" mean summed?

Page 11, para 1: Was the scale published in the MSH in-house journal subject to peer review?

Page 13, para 3: I don't think that women are overrepresented in the pool of potential respondents in the the health field, which often has more women than men in management and service positions.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

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

**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.