Reviewer's report

Title: Self-esteem is associated with premorbid adjustment and positive psychotic symptoms in early psychosis.

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2011

Reviewer: Kelly Buck

Reviewer's report:

1. The question posed by the authors is well-defined and a pertinent topic of study that will contribute to the scholarly body of knowledge about psychosis.

2. I have some questions about the methods.
   a. Clarify the age range of childhood used; was it birth to 11 years?
   b. Note the time range of when the assessments were completed.
   c. The age range of 18-65 is quite broad; 65 seems quite unusual to have untreated psychosis, please explain.
   d. Explain the median duration of untreated psychosis as 78 weeks (range 0-1040). What does the N=106 mean? You reported 113 patients as being in the study. Were patients excluded, and if so, why? Also provide an explanation about those (I assume it was 1 person) who had 1040 weeks, or 20 years of untreated psychosis).
   e. Provide validity/reliability for the RSES and PAS. Who collected this data?

3. The data appear to be sound.

4. The manuscript adheres to relevant standards for reporting except for Table 1, in which gender is reported as having a "mean." In the body of the paper, it states that nearly 1/3 of the sample are women, but this is reported as a mean value, and needs correction.

5. The discussion is mostly well written, however I would question the addition of reference 34. I'm not really sure that the reference to social ranking theory is relevant for this paper. I would suggest removing the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 12 unless you explain it more fully and link it to the findings of this study. The conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data. I would suggest for future research, in addition to looking at changes in self esteem which may occur over the course of the illness, to also investigate related factors, such as stigma or metacognition, that could promote or degrade self esteem.

6. The limitations of the work are clearly stated.

7. The authors clearly acknowledge work upon which they are building, however I would recommend that the authors consider including the following articles to
their review in the paragraph starting at the bottom of page 4:


8. The title and abstract are appropriate.

9. The authors should add some statements about treatment implications. For example, they might add that psychotherapy interventions could be geared to increase self-esteem through CBT which could target beliefs about oneself. Also they should mention that psychotherapy can assist the patient in developing a richer personal narrative in order to deepen their self experience and improve self-esteem. Based on the authors’ findings, these interventions may be expected to lessen the likelihood of development of or to decrease the severity of persecutory delusions and hallucinations.

10. The writing, however, is not acceptable and needs much revision. There are numerous grammatical errors, words which are not spelled correctly, and also some sentences which do not make sense. For example, the first sentence of the introduction would be much better if worded with the following: "Self-esteem, a global and complex concept, is comprised of appraisal of self-worth....." Also, I would recommend re-wording the last sentence in the first paragraph at the top of page 6, and many sentences in the last paragraph starting at the bottom of page 13 and continuing to the top of page 14. In terms of format, the Conclusion paragraph needs to follow the same form as the other sections. Table 4 has all commas instead of decimal points.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.