Reviewer's report

Title: Tridimensional Personality Questionnaire data on alcoholic violent offenders: specific connections to severe B-cluster personality disorders and violent criminality

Version: Date: 30 November 2006

Reviewer: C Robert C Cloninger

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General

This is a clearly written article by an experienced group of forensic investigators. The population is well described in terms of TPQ personality traits, SCID diagnoses, and type of crime. The clinical sample and controls are well described in text, tables, and figures in a concise way. I would not omit any of the tables or figures even though there is some redundancy with text because these ways of presenting are helpful to the reader and will facilitate citation and study by others.

The authors find that low TPQ Harm Avoidance is rare in people who are comorbid with both ASPD and Borderline PD. People with low HA correspond to Hare’s psychopaths (factor 1). This is consistent with Cloninger’s original hypothesis because he uses a multidimensional profile to distinguish ASPD and BPD into mutually exclusive configurations. People with comorbid ASPD/BPD according to SCID correspond to those Cloninger calls Borderline or explosive temperaments. People with low HA, ASPD, and no comorbid BPD correspond to primary psychopaths (Hare’s factor 1) or what Cloninger calls Antisocial personality disorder. Viewed this way I think these results are entirely consistent with Cloninger’s original hypothesis. It is true that many borderline personalities are highly antisocial, corresponding to what was sometimes called secondary psychopaths because of their anxious-neurotic behavior.

I think that the authors description really does lead the reader to this same conclusion. The only confusing issue is that SCID produces many overlapping diagnoses, whereas multidimensional approaches allow clinicians to place people into mutually exclusive categories in a multidimensional space. Any changes should be discretionary revisions in my opinion. The authors are to be congratulated on an excellent piece of work, the first as they say multidimensional description of a group of severe violent offenders with such careful diagnostic assessment by SCID, TPQ, and type of crime.

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

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)