Reviewer's report

Title: Validity of self-reported criminal behaviour in substance abusing women at five-year follow-up

Version: 2  Date: 20 November 2007

Reviewer: Norman G Poythress

Reviewer's report:

General

In my view the authors have been responsive to previous reviews and have made satisfactory revisions to the manuscript.

----------

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)

Two clarifications should be made:

(1) on p.7 the authors report that 84% of participants were included in follow-up, but on p.10 they report 85%. These numbers should be reconciled.

(2) last line on p.8, fourth word should be "violence" rather than "theft"

----------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Throughout the article the authors describe their study as evaluating the validity of "self-reported criminal behavior" (e.g.: Title; p.2, Abstract, line 1; p.3, line 10) or "self-reported crime" (e.g.: p.6, line 18; p.7, major heading at bottom of page).

In fact, the study is not about the validity of self-reported crime, but about the validity of self-reported criminal justice system involvement -- i.e., whether self-reports of arrest (for various crimes) and incarceration match official records. The reader can infer this from other parts of the ms (e.g., the form of the questions posed to the participants during the follow-up interview, shown on p.5), but the distinction is made most explicit in the discussion, when the authors note limitations of the study. It seems to me that it would be both (a) easier on the reader and (b) a more accurate description of the nature of the study if the authors replaced the various instances of "self reported criminal behavior" or "self-reported crime" with the term "self-reported criminal justice involvement."
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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