Reviewer's report

Title: Predicting violent infractions in a Swiss state penitentiary: a replication study of the PCL-R in a population of sex and violent offenders

Version: 1 Date: 2 June 2008

Reviewer: Douglas Tucker

Reviewer's report:

1. Major compulsory revisions
   I do not believe that major revisions are necessary. Overall this is an interesting and relevant study which explores an important application of the PCL-R as a potential predictor of verbal and physical aggression in the prison setting. The methodology appears sound, but should be reviewed by a statistician as I am not qualified to comment on the statistical validity of this study. The conclusions appear appropriate to the data, including the importance of distinguishing affective ("reactive") from instrumental violence, and the likelihood that the PCL-R is more effective at predicting the latter than the former.

2. Minor essential revisions
   I do not believe that it has been made sufficiently clear what the authors are defining as "instrumental violence" in this study. Presumably, it is the three incidents of deliberate violence without prior verbal conflict, and if this is the case it should be explicitly stated.

   There are several minor grammatical and typographical errors which should be corrected. For example, the last sentence of the Conclusions section of the abstract should read "It is proposed that the distinction between reactive and instrumental motives of institutional violence must be considered when examining..." Line 9 on page 7 should read "This finding contrasts somewhat with the results..." Line 22 on page 7 should read "The objective of this study was to examine..." Line 1 on Page 8 should read "In addition, the motives and consequences of the aggressive behavior were analyzed." Line 5 on page 11 should read "The mean time spent in the "Poschwies" penitentiary was ..."

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.