JUNILENILE DELINQUENCY IN GIRLS
II. THE APPLICATION OF THE JESNESS INVENTORY

O. SOMASUNDARAM
MEERA POLNAYA

SUMMARY

The use of the Inventory with 3 groups of girls is described—75 normal girls studying in 10th standard, 75 girls in an approved school with criminal record and 75 girls in the approved school requiring 'care and protection'. The results indicate that most of the sub-tests of the Inventory discriminate the delinquents from the normals. The results are compared with American and British studies. The usefulness of the Inventory in an Indian Setting indicated and future research trends are identified.

In the west during the past 10-15 years, psychiatric predominance in the study of juvenile delinquency has ended (Gibbens, 1976). Psychiatric assessment and treatment was considered important in the study and sociological factors were relegated to a less important place. More recently criminal sociology has emerged a leading science in the study of delinquency. Some of them have totally rejected all the 'so-called' unfavourable pathological characteristics of the individual as he becomes a delinquent. They have actually placed the blame on the society when it 'labels' them as non-conformists. They have expounded the view that the psychiatric attempt to tamper with the delinquent attitudes and personality are unwarranted (Taylor et al., 1973).

Such extremist views are not likely to be accepted by the majority of workers in the field. Although psychological factors need not be the primary determinants of a delinquent act, such an act, like any other piece of human behaviour, can not nevertheless, take place without involving the psyche. If a social factor is to become a criminal force, it must set in motion a number of psychological processes. The ease with which such processes are set in motion depends on the previous organization of the subject's personality, his constitution, his life experiences, his responses, and his vulnerabilities.

In an attempt to evaluate some of the psychological and constitutional factors in the Indian set up the role of mild mental retardation in the causation of juvenile delinquency was studied earlier (Somusundaram and Meera Polnaya, 1979) and it was concluded that this factor is not a causal agent. In the present study personality structure of the delinquent girls is once again studied with the aid of the Jesness Inventory.

THE JESNESS INVENTORY

The inventory was devised by Carl P. Jesness and was developed part of a five-year study of delinquency sponsored by the Rosenberg Foundation through a grant to the California Youth Authority. What follows is a brief description of the Inventory collected from the Manual (Jesness, 1971); for more details the interested reader should refer to the other publications (Jesness, 1962; 1965 and 1974). The Inventory consists of 153 true-false items, designed to measure the reactions of young people to a wide range of content and scores on 11 personality characteristics with appropriate scales.

1Profession of Psychiatry, Madras Medical College, and Superintendent, Institute of Mental Health, Madras.
2Formerly Clinical Psychologist, Institute of Mental Health, Madras.
The aim of the present study is to apply the Jesness Inventory to two groups of juveniles, one delinquent and the other requiring 'care and protection' under the Tamil Nadu Children Act, and to compare them with normal girls studying in a private girls' school.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

One group consisted of 75 girls sentenced for various crimes like stealing, illicit distillation etc. The girls are in the age group of approximately 15 years. The age has been verified from the admission records. However, as with any uneducated or underprivileged group, the record of age is only approximate and not accurate. The girls have spent varying periods in the institution. They were not suffering from any physical illness, did not have any degree of mental retardation or epilepsy, and had never been referred to a psychiatrist.

The second group consisted of 75 girls, non-delinquent, from the Approved School. These girls had been detained there under the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Children Act for 'Care and Protection'. For further details reference could be made to our previous paper on juvenile delinquency. Girls committing sexual offences are not detained in this Approved School.

The normal group consisted of 75 girls studying in the school leaving class, of a private girls' school. All the three groups were drawn from the same ethnic background and sex with an approximate age of 15 years.

A Tamil version of the Jesness Inventory was prepared, taking special care to avoid the Americanisms, which were not many.

For the first two groups, the Inventory was read out and the responses were recorded by the investigator. For the third group, the Inventory was used a self-administered one. For all the groups explanations were given in case of difficult items. This is in conformity with the procedures adopted by the British workers.

The scoring was done according to the directions given in the manual, taking into account only the raw scores. The score for each sub-test was then tabulated and a profile was thus obtained for each girl.

The summaries of the results are listed in the following table.

| Scale                        | Delinquents Gr. 1 | Non-delinquents Approved school girls Gr. 2 | Normals Gr. 3 | "t" between Gr. 1 & 3 | P  |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----|
| Mean                         | 25.0              | 22.2                                        | 19.7          | 10.6                  | .6 |<.001 |
| S.D.                         | 5.3               | 4.4                                         | 3.4           | 3.9                   | 5.2 |>.05 |
| Mean                         | 21.6              | 18.4                                        | 15.9          | 15.2                  | 6.6 |<.001 |
| S.D.                         | 5.2               | 5.1                                         | 2.7           | 4.1                   | 6.3 |<.001 |
| Mean                         | 21.6              | 13.9                                        | 15.2          | 4.8                   | 2.0 |>.05 |
| S.D.                         | 5.2               | 3.5                                         | 3.6           | 0.8                   | 0.9 |<.001 |
| Mean                         | 21.6              | 2.3                                         | 2.6           | 2.9                   | 7.8 |<.001 |
| S.D.                         | 5.2               | 8.8                                         | 9.1           | 2.9                   | 5.4 |<.001 |

The Scores are on sub-test.
The Means between Groups (2) and (3) are not significant on all scales except on Social Anxiety Scale where the level of significance is at 5%. It may be indicated that the two populations in the approved schools, delinquent and non-delinquent should be treated differently.

DISCUSSION

It is proposed to discuss the results of the investigation under each of the sub-tests.

1. Social Maladjustment:

Items for this scale were selected to show differences between delinquents and non-delinquents at all ages tested. Social maladjustment is defined by the extent to which the individual shares attitudes expressed by persons who show an inability to meet, in socially approved ways, the demands of living. Items show delinquents tend to show a negative self-concept, feel unhappy, worried and misunderstood, distrust authority, blame others for problems, be bothered by feelings of hostility, generously evaluated parents, be sensitive to criticism, and accept such behaviour which is generally regarded as antisocial.

The inventory successfully discriminated the delinquents from the normal girls. This is in conformity with the work of Jesness’ American studies (Jesness, 1965). British studies of Fisher (1967) on Borstal lads and Davis’ 1967 study of British probationers of and Mott’s (1967) study of approved school boys also gave similar results.

Value orientation:

Items selected for this scale were those which differentiated various social class groups based on ratings for the father’s occupation. This scale measures a tendency to share attitudes and opinions characteristic of people in lower socio-economic classes. The themes measured by the items include: trouble, luck and thrills, fear of failure, gang orientation, toughness and a tendency to view internal tension in terms of specific symptoms. The present study reveals no difference between delinquents and normals on the scale.

Immaturity:

Items selected discriminated between age groups in a non-delinquent sample. This scale measures the tendency to display attitudes and perceptions of self and others which are usual for person of a younger age. Items suggest that more immature subjects, are naive in evaluating their own and others’ motivations, tend to repress or suppress problems, lack insight and frequently express anxiety through somatic symptoms.

American and British workers found that this sub-scale discriminated significantly between their delinquent and non-delinquent samples. Our findings fall in line with theirs.

Autism:

Autism is defined as the tendency for the individual’s thinking to be regulated unduly by personal needs. Planning and perceiving are unrealistic and the self does not seem to be clearly differentiated from non-self or objective reality. Item content shows the higher scorer to see himself as smart, good looking, tough, hear things, day dream, and feel something is wrong with his mind. The high scorer also prefers to be alone, is fearful and expresses many somatic complaints.

As with the American and British workers our study also discriminates between the delinquents and the non-delinquents on this sub-scale.

Alienation:

Alienation measures the presence of distrust and estrangement in the subjects attitudes toward those representing authority. Delinquents score higher than non-delinquents at every age tested. Item
content shows those high in alienation to show poor interpersonal relationships, be critical and intolerant of others, project hostile feelings onto others, and deny personal problems.

American and British workers found this sub-scale to discriminate significantly between the delinquents and the non-delinquents. Our experience has also been the same.

**Manifest aggression:**

Manifest aggression measures an awareness of unpleasant feelings of anger and aggression and a tendency to react quickly with emotion. The high scorer is concerned about controlling his feelings, expresses disappointment with others and is frustrated in his efforts to understand and feel comfortable with himself.

This sub-scale was found to differentiate between delinquent and non-delinquent workers, in our study. Our findings here are in agreement with the American and the British workers.

**Withdrawal depression:**

Withdrawal depression measures a tendency to isolate one's self from others and perceive a lack of satisfaction with self and others. High scorers see themselves as depressed, sad, and misunderstood. They prefer to be alone; feel lonesome, feel that fighting is bad and are displeased by other's aggressiveness.

This scale discriminated between the American and British delinquents and non-delinquents. But in our study this is not so.

**Social Anxiety:**

Social anxiety measures a perceived emotional discomfort associated with interpersonal relationships. High scorers feel and acknowledge nervous tension, see themselves as sensitive to criticism and unduly shy. Items also suggest an intro-punitive orientation for the high scorer.

**Repression:**

Repression measures the exclusion from conscious awareness of, or a failure to label, feelings ordinarily experienced. High scorers do not admit negative feelings such as anger, dislike or rebellion and are generally uncritical of themselves or others. Our findings do not show any difference between the two groups.

**Denial:**

Denial measures the subject's reluctance to accept or acknowledge unpleasant aspects of reality which are found in day to day living. This scale emerged as a separate cluster from repression and does not correlate highly with the repression scale. High scorers see their parents as without fault and admit no conflict with them, deny personal inadequacies or unhappiness and are unwilling to criticise others. Low scores indicate a willingness to admit problems, conflicts and inadequacies.

The original workers and the later British workers found that these two subscales did not clearly discriminate between the delinquents and the non-delinquents at all ages. Our experience has also been the same.

**Asocial Index:**

Jesness defines a socialisation as a "generalised predisposition to resolve problems in social and personal adjustment in ways ordinarily regarded as showing a
disregard for social customs and rules’, and considers it to be ‘the dimension of personality most closely related to and most predictive of delinquent behaviour’.

The asocial index has been of value in discriminating the two groups in our sample, as in the experience of the previous American and British workers. But our groups have consistently scored higher than either the American or the British samples.

Table II gives the comparison between American and Indian samples.

**Table II—Comparison of mean and standard deviation for Indian and American delinquents**

| Scale | Indian Delinquents | American Delinquents |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Mean  | S.D.              | Mean                 | S.D.               |
| SM    | 31.4              | 26.3                 | 3.5                |
| VO    | 23.1              | 15.9                 | 2.1                |
| Imm.  | 22.2              | 12.4                 | 3.5                |
| Au    | 13.8              | 7.6                  | 3.3                |
| AI    | 13.7              | 7.9                  | 4.6                |
| MA    | 15.9              | 15.2                 | 5.4                |
| Wd    | 12.9              | 13.4                 | 5.5                |
| SA    | 12.8              | 15.4                 | 3.8                |
| Rep   | 8.2               | 3.4                  | 2.1                |
| Den   | 8.7               | 10.2                 | 3.4                |
| ASI   | 28.1              | 25.0                 | 5.0                |

This is somewhat difficult to explain. Is it because of an ‘acquiescence response set’ working in our sample as suggested by Fisher (1967) while explaining the scoring pattern for his sample. This is difficult to confirm without more study especially with regard to statistical analysis. Another factor of considerable importance is cultural differences between the American and the India samples.

**CONCLUSION**

It could be concluded that the Jesness Inventory could be a useful tool in the study of juvenile delinquency in India as it efficiently discriminates the delinquents from the normal.

Future trends could be indicated. Most of the work quoted above has been done with the delinquent boys of different age groups and at different times of their delinquent career. The predictive value of the test and the assessment of the benefits of probation and correctional methods could be investigated with the aid of the Inventory.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Mrs. Kasthuri Ekambaram, former director, Miss Savithri, the present director, deserve our thanks for their cooperation. Thanks are also due to headmistress, M. C. M. Girls High School and Dr. N. Vaidyanathan, for their help.

**REFERENCES**

Davies, M. (1967). The use of Jesness Inventory on a sample of British probationers. H.N.S.O., London.

Fisher, R. M. (1967). Acquiescent response set, the Jesness Inventory and implications for use of ‘foreign’ psychological tests. Brit. J. Soc. Clin. Psychol., 6, 5.

Gibbens, T. C. M. (1976). Treatment of delinquents in child Psychiatry—Modern approaches. Eds. Rutter, M., and Hertove, L. Oxford : Blackwell Scientific Publication.

Jesness, C. F. (1974). Classifying Juvenile Offenders. California : Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.

Jesness, C. F. (1972). Manual—The Jesness Inventory. California : Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.

Jesness, C. F. (1962). The Jesness Inventory—Development and Validation—Calif. Youth Authority Research Report No. 29. California : Consulting Psychologists Press.

Jesness, C. F. (1965). The Fricot Ranch Study: Outcomes with large vs. small living units in the rehabilitation of delinquents. Calif. Youth Authority Research Report No. 47. California : Consulting Psychologists Press.

Mott, J. (1969). The Jesness Inventory: application to approved school boys—a Home Office Research Unit Report. London : H.N.S.O.

Somasundaram, O. S. & Meera Polnay (1979). Juvenile Delinquency (in girls). Ind. J. Crim., 7, 1, 46.

Taylor, L., Waiton, P. & Young, J. (1973). The new criminology. London : Routledge.