A STUDY OF DELINQUENT BOYS USING JESNESS INVENTORY

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SUMMARY

The Jesness Inventory was administered to two groups; one consisting of 100 institutionalised delinquents and the other of 100 students of the school leaving class in a local school. The results suggest that some of the sub-tests of the inventory significantly discriminate between the delinquent and the non-delinquent normal boys.

These results have been studied in the light of earlier data of British and American Workers.

Current thinking on juvenile delinquency has high-lighted a sociological factor in the evolution of this form of behaviour. The so called pathological characteristics of the individual who turns delinquent have all been rejected and the blame placed squarely on society which considers these individuals non-conformists.

Psychiatric intervention in personality and attitude change of delinquents have been considered unwarranted (Taylor et al., 1973) though this is perhaps an extremist view. Glueck and Glueck (1950) viewed delinquency as a bio-psycho-social phenomenon like all other behaviour. Bovet (1951) quoting Glueck mentions that 'a factor cannot be a cause before it is a motive'. Bovet further adds that neither the psychiatrist nor the psychologist can neglect sociological causes in delinquency and feels that it would be of considerable value if juveniles in this group were examined both medically and psychologically.

In our setting, earlier studies (Somasundaram and Meera Polnaya, 1979) suggested that mild mental retardation was not a causative factor in Juvenile Delinquency. The personality of the delinquent girls was then studied (Somasundaram and Meera Polnaya, 1980) using the Jesness Inventory. The present study using the same inventory focusses on the personality profile of delinquent boys in an institutional setting.

Sample:

One group consisted of 100 boys, residents at the Govt. approved School for Boys, Chingleput. They were in the age group of 16-18, convicted for various offences like stealing etc. Their length of stay in the institution varied. They did not suffer from any physical illness, epilepsy or mental retardation and had never been referred to a psychiatrist. The second (central group) consisted of 100 boys of the corporation high school, NUNGAMBAKKAM, Madras. They were in the final year in school. They were matched for age etc. with the other group.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A Tamil version of the Jesness Inventory prepared for an earlier study on delinquent girls was used.

For both the groups the inventory was read out and the responses recorded by the subjects in their answer sheets. Sufficient time and explanations were given so that the questions were fully comprehended.

The scoring was carried out according to the direction given in the manuals. Only the raw scores were taken into account. A profile was obtained for every boy after tabulation of scores on each subject.

The results are summarised in the following Table.
1. Social Maladjustment

Items for this scale were selected to stress differences between delinquents and non-delinquents at all ages tested. Social maladjustment is defined as the extent to which the individual shares attitudes expressed by persons who show inability to meet, in socially approved ways, the demands of living. Delinquents tend to have a negative self-concept, feel unhappy, worried and misunderstood, distrust authority, blame others for problems; they are bothered by feelings of hostility, sensitive to criticism and they accept such behaviour which is generally regarded as anti-social. Our findings in this subject are shown in Table I.

The scale successfully differentiated between the delinquent and normal boys. This is in conformity with the work of Jesness (1965) American Studies. Fisher's (1967) study on Borstal boys, Davies (1967) study of British probationers and Mett's (1969) study of Approved School boys also gave similar results.

In our earlier study with delinquent girls, also this scale was found to be discriminatory. (Table II).

### Table I—Comparison of the Scores of Delinquent and Normal Boys

|                           | Delinquent Mean | Delinquent S.D. | Normal Mean | Normal S.D. | 't' value | Significance P value |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Social Maladjustment      | 32.53          | 6.52            | 29.98       | 4.44        | 3.23      | <.001                |
| Value Orientation         | 24.60          | 5.07            | 26.09       | 5.65        | 1.96      | <.05                 |
| Immaturity                | 23.13          | 3.32            | 23.84       | 3.95        | 1.392     | >.05                 |
| Autism                    | 14.41          | 3.53            | 13.29       | 3.65        | 2.205     | >.05                 |
| Alienation                | 14.86          | 3.25            | 15.80       | 1.7         | 2.561     | <.001                |
| Manifest Aggression       | 17.26          | 4.44            | 16.54       | 3.94        | 1.206     | >.05                 |
| Withdrawal Depression     | 13.48          | 3.41            | 13.59       | 1.85        | 0.224     | >.05                 |
| Social Anxiety            | 14.23          | 2.85            | 14.00       | 2.07        | 0.653     | >.05                 |
| Repression                | 9.71           | 2.46            | 0.11        | 2.18        | 1.220     | >.05                 |
| Denial                    | 8.87           | 1.52            | 8.56        | 1.68        | 1.372     | >.05                 |
| Asocial Index             | 21.35          | 3.75            | 18.13       | 4.86        | 5.227     | <.001                

Value Orientation:

Items selected for this scale were those, which differentiated various social class groups based on ratings for father's occupation. This scale measures tendency to share attitudes of persons 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 the internal tension in terms of specific symptoms.

The test differentiates the two groups significantly but surprisingly the normal group scores more. In our previous study with delinquent girls the test was able to differentiate.

Immaturity:

Items selected for this sub-scale differentiated 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 a person of a younger age. Items suggest that more immature subjects are naive in evaluating their own and other's motivation, tend to repress or suppress problems,
**Table II—Comparison of the Scores of Delinquent and Normal Girls.** (Somasundaram and Polnaya, 1980)

| Scale                          | Delinquents (Gr. 1) | Non-delinquents Approved school girls (Gr. 2) | Normals (Gr. 3) | "t" between Gr. 1 & 3 | P |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Mean                          | S.D.                | Mean                                          | S.D.           | Mean                 | S.D. |<.001 |
| Social maladjustment scale    | 31.4                | 4.9                                           | 25.0           | 5.3                  | 25.9 | 6.6  |>.05 |
| Value orientation scale       | 23.1                | 4.8                                           | 22.2           | 5.1                  | 21.6 | 5.2  |>.05 |
| Immaturity Scale              | 22.2                | 2.6                                           | 19.7           | 3.4                  | 19.3 | 2.9  |>.05 |
| Autism Scale                  | 13.8                | 4.8                                           | 10.6           | 4.4                  | 10.2 | 3.9  |>.05 |
| Alienation Scale              | 13.7                | 2.6                                           | 12.3           | 3.0                  | 11.9 | 2.7  |>.05 |
| Manifest aggression scale     | 15.8                | 2.9                                           | 14.5           | 3.4                  | 14.6 | 4.2  |>.05 |
| Withdrawal Scale              | 12.9                | 2.1                                           | 12.9           | 3.1                  | 12.6 | 2.8  |>.05 |
| Social Anxiety Scale          | 12.8                | 2.8                                           | 13.9           | 3.5                  | 15.2 | 3.8  |>.05 |
| Repression scale              | 6.2                 | 2.3                                           | 8.8            | 3.6                  | 8.6  | 3.6  |>.05 |
| Denial Scale                  | 8.7                 | 2.3                                           | 8.5            | 2.6                  | 9.1  | 2.9  |>.05 |
| Asocial Index                 | 28.1                | 6.3                                           | 19.6           | 7.1                  | 21.8 | 7.8  |>.05 |

Lack insight and frequently express anxiety through somatic symptoms. Our findings on this sub-scale are given in Table I.

American and British workers found that this sub-scale differentiated significantly between their delinquent and non-delinquent samples. But our experience with boys is to the contrary. However in our earlier study with girls, the test was found to differentiate at a highly significant level.

**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 objective reality. Item content shows the higher scorer to see himself as smart, good looking and tough. He tends to 'hear things', day dream, and feel something is wrong with his mind. He also prefers to be alone, he is fearful and expresses many somatic complaints.

This sub-scale in our experience discriminates between delinquent boys and girls. This has been the experience of British and American Workers. In our earlier study on girls also significant differences were found between the performance of delinquent and normal groups on this sub-scale with the scoring pattern as shown in Table II.

**Alienation:**

Alienation measures the presence of distrust and estrangement in the subject's attitudes towards 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 on to others, and deny personal problems.

This test discriminates significantly between delinquents and normals in our sample as in the British and American studies. Between delinquent and non-delinquent girls also, significant differences emerged on this scale, in our previous study. The results of that study are shown in Table II.
Table III—Compares Therman Scores and Standard Deviation of the British and Indian Delinquents

| Scale | British delinquents (N=51) | Mean   | S.D.   | Indian delinquents (N=100) | Mean   | S.D.   | t value | P value |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|----------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| SM    | 27.04                       | 5.51   |        | 32.53                      | 6.52   |        | 31.371  | <.001   |
| VO    | 17.31                       | 6.26   |        | 24.60                      | 5.07   |        | 41.657  | <.001   |
| Imm   | 15.19                       | 4.69   |        | 23.13                      | 3.24   |        | 62.520  | <.001   |
| AU    | 7.57                        | 3.47   |        | 14.41                      | 3.43   |        | 65.033  | <.001   |
| AL    | 9.98                        | 4.34   |        | 14.86                      | 3.52   |        | 41.008  | <.001   |
| MA    | 14.55                       | 5.30   |        | 17.26                      | 4.44   |        | 18.067  | <.001   |
| WD    | 13.08                       | 3.19   |        | 13.48                      | 3.41   |        | 4.124   | <.001   |
| SA    | 14.12                       | 3.60   |        | 14.25                      | 2.84   |        | 1.078   | >.705   |
| REP   | 4.94                        | 2.41   |        | 9.71                       | 2.46   |        | 66.250  | <.001   |
| DEN   | 10.76                       | 3.71   |        | 8.87                       | 1.52   |        | 20.106  | <.001   |
| ASI   | 24.26                       | 5.01   |        | 21.35                      | 3.87   |        | 20.935  | <.001   |

British boys differ very much from the Indian boys in all scales except the Social Anxiety Scale.

**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.

Our findings failed to discriminate delinquent and non-delinquents. However our earlier study on girls revealed significant differences between the delinquents and non delinquents on this scale.

**Withdrawal Depression:**

Withdrawal depression measures a tendency to isolate oneself 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 others' aggressiveness.

This scale discriminated between British American delinquents and non delinquents. But in our study it was not found to discriminate between these two groups. Our earlier experience with girls was also the same.

**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. They also tend to have an intrapunitive orientation.

Our groups scored as given in Table I, on this sub-test. The experience of the original workers and that of later British workers has been that this scale does not discriminate between delinquents and non delinquents. Our study with boys falls in line with their findings.

However we found normal girls scoring higher than delinquent girls in our earlier study and the difference was statistically significant while it appeared that institutionalisation with its emphasis on discipline might lead to an extrapunitive attitude—this was only true of girls and not of the institutionalised delinquent boys.

The scoring pattern in our study on girls are offered in Table II.
Repression:

Repression measures the exclusion from conscious awareness of feelings ordinarily experienced. Negative feelings such as anger, dislike or rebellion are not admitted by high scorers as true of them. They are generally uncritical of themselves and others.

Our scores for this sub-scale are given in Table I.

Denial:

Denial measures the subjects reluctance to acknowledge unpleasant aspects of every day living. This scale not correlating highly with the repression, emerged as a cluster, separate from repression. 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.

Both the repression and denial scales did not discriminate between delinquents and non-delinquents in the original and in the British samples. Our results also are similar.

In our earlier study on girls also no significant difference was found between delinquent and non-delinquent groups on these two sub-scales.

ASOCIAL INDEX:

Jesness defines asocialisation as a generalised pre-disposition 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 scale discriminates very significantly between delinquents and non-delinquent groups. Our groups score higher than these samples. The same observations were made after our study on girls.

CONCLUSION

The Jesness Inventory significantly differentiates between delinquent and non-delinquent boys.

It measures many aspects of personality functioning and could therefore be an important tool in the study of juvenile delinquency in India. Statistically significant differences have emerged between delinquent and non delinquent boys on the sub-scales of social maladjustment, value orientation, autism, alienation and asocial index.

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