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## **The clinical utility of the Jesness Inventory**

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THE CLINICAL UTILITY OF THE JESNESS INVENTORY

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

PSYCHOLOGY

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

1998



## Abstract

Because previous research findings on the Jesness Inventory have been relatively inconsistent, the current study was conducted to further examine this instrument's reliability, convergent validity and classificatory ability. A 3 to 11 month test-retest interval used with 42 adjudicated adolescents yielded a mean correlation coefficient of .60 and suggested that the stability of the 11 individual subscales is questionable. Using 42 adjudicated adolescents and 48 outpatients, many significant correlations were obtained between the Jesness Inventory and the Adolescent Multiphasic Personality Inventory subscales. Similarly, the Asocial Index accurately classified the adjudicated adolescents as delinquent and the outpatient adolescents as nondelinquent, as 64% of the sample was correctly classified. Current findings suggest that the Jesness Inventory may be useful for clinicians who wish to detect delinquency proneness and assess progress.

### Author Note

The Clinical Utility of the Jesness Inventory is a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Marshall University Graduate College, 100 Angus E. Peyton Drive, South Charleston, West Virginia 25303-1600. Committee members included Dr. Stephen O'Keefe, Program Director; Dr. Robert Wilson, Major Professor; Dr. Allan LaVoie; and Dr. Robert Smith.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Jesness Inventory (JI) is a personality measure that was created by Carl F. Jesness to assess delinquency orientation, personality characteristics and changes in these characteristics over time (Jesness, 1991). This 155 item true/false instrument was originally developed as part of a 5 year research program on delinquency because there was no other such measure available at the time (Jesness, 1991). Initially, the JI was designed to assess and classify young male delinquents, but it was later modified to be appropriate with older male adolescents and with females (Jesness, 1991). The goal was to create a multi-dimensional assessment tool that would cover a variety of attitudes, perceptions and traits, that would be useful in classifying delinquents, that would be predictive of delinquency and that would be responsive to change (Jesness, 1991).

Scores are produced on the JI for eleven personality characteristics: Social Maladjustment (65 items), Value Orientation (39 items), Immaturity (45 items), Autism (28 items), Alienation (26 items), Manifest Aggression (31 items), Withdrawal-Depression (24 items), Social Anxiety (24 items), Repression (15 items), Denial (20 items) and the summary called the Asocial Index (Jesness, 1991). Three of the scales were derived from item analyses using criterion groups, seven were derived from a cluster analysis, and one

was derived from a regression equation that combined several scale scores into a single index of delinquency proneness (Jesness, 1991).

It is noteworthy to mention that even though the JI only consists of 155 items, 317 items are actually used in scoring due to a large amount of item overlap. Because so many of the items are used in more than one scale, the JI subscales are highly intercorrelated (Mooney, 1985), with Jesness (1983) reporting that he found "considerable relatedness" among five of the subscales (Social Maladjustment, Value Orientation, Autism, Alienation and Manifest Aggression). Mooney (1985) suggested that few of the JI subscales measure "relatively orthogonal constructs" and that most of the subscales may measure a "homogeneous entity." He also suggested that there may be a "common factor underlying many of the scales (delinquency?)."

The JI was developed using samples of both male and female delinquents and nondelinquents, with a delinquent being defined as "an individual who has been removed from his home by law enforcement authorities and referred to the California Youth Authority (CYA)" (Jesness, 1991). The male sample consisted of 970 delinquents and 1,075 nondelinquents, while the female sample consisted of 450 delinquents and 811 nondelinquents (Jesness, 1991).

The delinquent sample included all boys who were referred to the CYA, most of whom were assigned to an

institution but some of whom may have been placed on parole in the community (Jesness, 1991). Jesness (1991) notes that this sample may include some minor offenders whose delinquent classification may be questionable. They were not, however, excluded from the sample (Jesness, 1991).

The nondelinquent sample included students who attended ten Northern California public schools (Jesness, 1991). Because background information was not available for several of the subjects in the nondelinquent sample, some delinquents were probably included (Jesness, 1991). T-score norms were developed using data collected from this nondelinquent sample (Jesness, 1991). The current relevance of these norms, however, is rather questionable, as they are based on data collected from 1961 and 1962 and may not be sensitive to the changes that have occurred in delinquent styles and behaviors over time (Butt, 1978).

The reliability of the JI has been examined using both odd-even and test-retest methods. Jesness (1991) reported odd-even reliability coefficients for a sample of 1,862 delinquent and nondelinquent boys who ranged in age from 10 to 18. The coefficients were corrected using a formula developed by Cronbach, and they ranged from an acceptable .88 for Value Orientation to a questionable .62 on Withdrawal-Depression (Jesness, 1991). LaVoie (1985) noted that these findings were indicative of a modest degree of internal consistency, with the coefficients for the JI



scales averaging about .74.

Jesness (1991) also reported test-retest reliability coefficients for both a delinquent sample and a nondelinquent sample (Jesness, 1991). The delinquent sample consisted of 131 subjects who ranged in age from 14 to 21 and who were retested after residing in one of two state training schools for approximately 8 months (Jesness, 1991). The coefficients, which were corrected using a formula described by Guilford, ranged from a questionable .40 on Alienation to an acceptable .79 on both Social Maladjustment and Value Orientation (Jesness, 1991). Jesness (1991) qualifies these questionable findings by noting that if a measure is to be responsive to change, then there must be a compromise between its stability and its sensitivity.

The nondelinquent sample consisted of 536 seventh grade students who were retested after approximately 1 year (Jesness, 1991). Coefficients ranged from an unacceptable .31 on the Asocial Index to a questionable .72 on Value Orientation (Jesness, 1991). Because the correlation on the Asocial Index is so low, Jesness (1991) cautions that this measure should not be exclusively relied upon when assessing children.

Shark and Handal (1977) conducted a 1 week test-retest for 31 delinquent and 31 nondelinquent white males with a mean age of 15. The mean correlation coefficient for the delinquent sample was .68, with a range from .51 on the

Asocial Index to .86 on Manifest Aggression (Shark & Handal, 1977). The mean correlation coefficient for the nondelinquent sample was .65, with a range from .40 on Repression to .77 on Value Orientation (Shark & Handal, 1977). Shark and Handal (1977) noted that the mean correlation coefficient for both groups was below acceptable standards, and they indicated that even though isolated evidence of reliability was found for some of the JI subscales, the instances were inconsistent between the delinquent and the nondelinquent samples (Shark & Handal, 1977). They then concluded that because the reliability of the JI was so low, it should be used with caution (Shark & Handal, 1977).

In rebuttal, Jesness (1977) questioned Shark and Handal's notion of "acceptable standards" by arguing that a test-retest stability coefficient of .70 rather than .75 over a period of several months "is as high as can generally be expected, particularly with personality measures having demonstrated validity to predict anything of practical utility." He does, however, concede that the coefficients are not as high as he would like them to be. Subsequently, he agreed that the JI should be used with caution (Jesness, 1977). Martin and Fischer (1983) also indicated that some of the JI subscale reliabilities "are lower than might be ideal." However, they suggested that low reliability

coefficients may be a result of "the inconsistent nature of delinquency."

Jesness (1991) reported on a test-retest study conducted by Putnins in 1980 on the JI's Asocial Index. A correlation of .64 was obtained for the Asocial Index with high school students after a 2 week interval, while a correlation of .26 was obtained for the Asocial Index with a small group of confined delinquents after a 2 to 3 month interval. Jesness (1991) suggests that the low coefficient for the delinquent sample may be related to the homogeneity of the sample and to the pre and post institutional stay conditions under which it was administered. He does, however, concede that this low finding is a cause for concern, as it raises questions about the predictive validity of the Asocial Index.

Martin (1981) concluded that the JI is a valid instrument for differentiating levels of delinquency. Using a sample of 80 nondelinquent controls, 77 acting out youth, 70 institutional but not adjudged delinquents and 70 delinquent males and females ranging in age from 12 years 4 months to 15 years 11 months, he found significant group differences on five of the JI scales (Social Maladjustment, Value Orientation, Autism, Manifest Aggression and the Asocial Index), with the nondelinquent control group consistently having the lowest scores.

Similarly, a study conducted by Kunce and Hemphill

(1983) found that their sample of 1,122 institutionalized male delinquents obtained elevated mean scores on the Asocial Index and on the Social Maladjustment scale, the two scales that are purportedly predictive of delinquency. They also found positive and significant correlations with the Social Maladjustment, Value Orientation, Autism and Manifest Aggression scales and the frequency of prior institutionalizations and the number of prior offenses (Kunce & Hemphill, 1983). Although the Asocial Index showed a similar pattern, it was not significant (Kunce & Hemphill, 1983). They concluded that their findings provide additional support for the use of the JI for both diagnostic and research purposes (Kunce & Hemphill, 1983).

Shark and Handal (1977) evaluated the stability of the Asocial Index using all 62 members of their retested sample, classifying each subject as either delinquent or nondelinquent by using the recommended raw cutoff score of 22. Results suggested that the relationship between the classification for the test-retest was significant at the .001 level (Shark & Handal, 1977). The accuracy of the classification, however, was not taken into account (Shark & Handal, 1977). Then classification accuracy was assessed by comparing the actual delinquent status of the subjects with their Asocial Index classification status (Shark & Handal, 1977). Results were not significant for either the test or the retest, with 23 subjects being misclassified on the

initial test and 27 subjects being misclassified on the retest. They concluded that the Asocial Index delinquency classifications were inaccurate because they were unable to distinguish the delinquents from the nondelinquents in this sample (Shark & Handal, 1977).

In rebuttal, Jesness (1977), indicated that the subjects that Shark and Handal (1977) classified as delinquent were not adjudicated and therefore, did not meet the qualifications for his definition of a delinquent. This contention was supported by a study conducted by Stott and Olczak (1978) which found significant mean differences for the Value Orientation, Manifest Aggression and Social Maladjustment scales of the JI between 36 adjudicated juvenile delinquents and 36 adjudicated status offenders. Munson and Revers (1986) concluded from their study that "the Asocial Index was useful in distinguishing delinquent maladjusted adolescents from those who are not." Similarly, a study conducted by Saunders and Davies (1976) found that five JI scales (Social Maladjustment, Value Orientation, Autism, Alienation and Manifest Aggression) differentiated their sample of British institutionalized delinquents from boys on probation.

While numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the predictive validity of the JI, very little has been done in the way of establishing its convergent validity. Friesen and Wright (1985) examined the relationship between the JI

and the Carlson Psychological Survey (CPS), using 50 incarcerated adolescent males with a mean age of 15 years and 10 months. Many significant correlations were found between JI scales and between four of the five CPS scales: Chemical Abuse, Thought Disturbance, Antisocial Tendencies and Self-Depreciation (Friesen & Wright, 1985). The exception was the three item CPS validity scale. The correlation between the Asocial Index and Antisocial Tendencies, however, was negative and nonsignificant (LaVoie, 1985).

Although numerous studies have been conducted to establish the reliability and validity of the JI, results have been relatively inconsistent and questions regarding its stability and its predictive ability continue to linger. In addition, very little has been done to establish the JI's convergent validity. The current study, therefore, was conducted to further evaluate the reliability and the validity of this instrument by calculating its test-retest reliability, by assessing the predictive validity of the Asocial Index and by correlating the JI with another personality measure, namely the Adolescent Multiphasic Personality Inventory (AMPI, Vincent & Duthie, 1987).

#### METHOD

##### Subjects

The JI and AMPI were administered as part of a battery of tests given to 42 adjudicated adolescent males who were

placed in a local residential treatment facility and to 48 adolescent outpatients who were receiving services at a local mental health center. The delinquent group consisted of 36 Caucasian and 6 African American males (mean age 15.5 and mean IQ 89.5), 90% of whom were diagnosed with a behavior disorder. The outpatient group consisted of 26 male and 22 female Caucasians (mean age 14.5 and mean IQ 88.6), 48% of whom were diagnosed with a behavior disorder. At the time the data were collected for this study, all subjects had been discharged, hence, this is an archival study.

### Procedures

The JI and the AMPI were administered and scored by a local mental health center. The archived data were entered in the computer and then submitted for analysis to SYSTAT (Wilkinson & Hill, 1994). Initially, test-retest reliability coefficients were calculated for the delinquent sample, with a retest interval ranging from 3 to 11 months (retest data were not available for the outpatient sample). Next the standard scores of the JI subscales were correlated with the standard scores of the AMPI subscales for all delinquent and outpatient subjects (N = 90).

Finally, a chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if the Asocial Index accurately classified the 42 adjudicated adolescents as delinquent and the 48 outpatient adolescents as nondelinquent, using an Asocial Index cutting

score of 22. Jesness (1991) reported that 74% of the delinquents in his sample were correctly classified with a true positive probability of .65 when a raw Asocial Index cutoff score of 22 was used. However, an analysis conducted by Shark and Handal (1977) reported that 52% of the delinquents and 23% of the nondelinquents in their sample were misclassified when a cutting score of 22 was used and that on retest 55% of the delinquents and 32% of the nondelinquents were misclassified.

### Instruments

The AMPI is a true/false personality inventory that was developed by Bruce Duthie to compensate for some of the limitations he had identified in other adolescent personality assessments (Holden, 1985). The instrument is appropriate for use with 12- to 18-year-old respondents and was designed to be parallel in form to the MMPI, with three validity scales and 10 clinical scales (Holden, 1985). The only configural difference between the two instruments is that the AMPI FEM scale is only scored in one direction, making it a general measure of femininity (Vincent & Duthie, 1987). The advantages of the AMPI over other personality tests include its shorter length (133 items), its lower reading level (fourth grade) and its easy on-site scoring (Holden, 1985). It is also useful for assessing both normal and "psychologically abnormal" adolescents (Vincent & Duthie, 1987).



A ten day test-retest reliability yielded Pearson product-moment correlations that ranged from an acceptable .85 on the PAS scale to a questionable .63 on the HYS scale, with the median  $r$  for all 13 scales being an acceptable .76 (Holden, 1985). Concurrent validity studies indicate that the AMPI not only correlates with the MMPI but also correlates with the Diagnostic Inventory of Personality and with the SCL-90-R (Vincent & Duthie, 1987). A construct validity study indicated that the factor structure of the AMPI is consistent across normal and abnormal adolescents (Vincent & Duthie, 1987). In addition, another study suggested that the AMPI can effectively differentiate normal and abnormal adolescents, as well as various diagnostic categories (Vincent & Duthie, 1987).

## RESULTS

### Analysis of Data

Test-retest reliability coefficients were obtained for the delinquent sample ( $N = 42$ ) for each of the 10 JI subscales and the Asocial Index. The mean correlation coefficient for this delinquent sample was .60, with a range from .32 on the Asocial Index to .72 on Manifest Aggression and Value Orientation (see Table 1).

Many significant correlations were obtained between the subscales of the JI and the AMPI (see Table 2). When the patterns of correlations were analyzed, they suggested that the JI scales measure what they purport to measure:

Alienation-distrust and estrangement in relationships; Repression-unaware of feelings; Denial-reluctance to acknowledge problems; Social Maladjustment-socially unacceptable behavior; Autism-unrealistic and bizarre thoughts; Manifest Aggression-anger and self-control problems; Social Anxiety-discomfort in interpersonal relations; Value Orientation-nonconforming behavior; and Withdrawal-Depression-self-dissatisfaction. Of particular interest of course, was the Asocial Index, which correlated negatively with KOR and positively with FAK, HYP, MAN, PAR, PAS, PPD and SCZ and suggested problems with angry, aggressive, impulsive and acting out behavior.

To determine if the suggested Asocial Index raw cutoff score of 22 correctly classified the adjudicated adolescents as delinquent and the outpatient adolescents as nondelinquent, a chi-square comparison was calculated, and it demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between the actual delinquency status and the Asocial Index classification status (chi-squared = 8.601, df = 1, p < 0.003). This is in contrast to the findings of Shark and Handal (1977), as both of their tests failed to demonstrate a significant relationship between delinquency status and Asocial Index scores (chi-squared = 4.51 and 1.09 respectively).

Overall 64% of the subjects (N = 90) were correctly classified, with 76% of the adjudicated delinquents and 54%

of the outpatient adolescents being correctly classified. Again, this is in contrast to the findings reported by Shark and Handal (1977), as they found more classification errors among their delinquent sample than among their nondelinquent sample. However, it closely parallels the finding of Jesness, as 74% of his delinquent sample was correctly classified.

#### DISCUSSION

Because previous research findings have been relatively inconsistent, the current study was conducted to further assess the reliability and the validity of the JI. Initially, the reliability of the instrument was assessed to evaluate the stability of the JI. Using a 3 to 11 month test-retest interval with 42 adjudicated adolescents, a mean correlation coefficient of .60 was obtained, and such a finding puts into question the stability of the ten individual JI subscales in general and the Asocial Index in particular. Even using .70 as what Jesness (1977) would consider an "acceptable standard," only two of the JI subscales (Manifest Aggression and Value Orientation) met this criteria. It is worth noting the similarities between the pattern of the current findings and those obtained by Shark and Handal (1977), especially that in both studies only two of the JI subscales (Manifest Aggression and Value Orientation) were found to possess adequate reliability. It is also worth noting that the low stability coefficients

found in the current study may, at least in part, be attributed to the fact that test-retest data were only available for a relatively homogeneous sample of adjudicated delinquents who were enrolled in residential treatment over a period of several months. However, as was recommended by Jesness (1977) and Shark and Handal (1977), current results continue to suggest that the JI should be used with caution.

Data obtained by correlating the subscales of the JI and AMPI yielded support for the convergent validity of the JI. Many significant correlations were found in the expected directions, with the pattern of results not only lending credibility to the JI's ability to measure delinquent/antisocial characteristics but also suggesting that the JI tends to be sensitive to more global personality traits such as social introversion and depression.

Finally, the criterion-related validity of the JI's Asocial Index was assessed to determine its ability to accurately classify delinquents using the suggested raw cutoff score of 22, and the resulting chi-square comparison demonstrated a significant relationship between actual delinquency status and Asocial Index classification status. Overall, a true positive rate of 64% was obtained, and it is very similar to the 65% rate reported in Jesness' (1991) original analysis. Such findings suggest that the Asocial Index can be of use to clinicians in that it can assist them in identifying delinquent tendencies and in making related

treatment recommendations.

Although current findings appear to lend support to the clinical utility of the JI as an instrument that not only detects delinquency proneness but that also measures more global personality traits, its low reliability suggests that clinicians should continue to use this instrument with caution. Further research should primarily focus on establishing the JI's reliability, using a more heterogenous sample of adolescents and shorter retest interval. In addition, it would be of interest to do a longitudinal study with nonadjudicated adolescents who are classified as delinquent to determine what percentage do go on to become adjudicated offenders.

Table 1

Test-Retest Correlation Coefficients

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JI Scale	A	B
Alienation	.68	.72
Asocial Index	.32	.51
Autism	.59	.63
Denial	.69	.56
Immaturity	.51	.80
Manifest Aggression	.72	.86
Repression	.57	.69
Social Anxiety	.61	.63
Social Maladjustment	.63	.64
Value Orientation	.72	.81
Withdrawal	.59	.59
Mean	.60	.68

---

Note.

A = Hayes-Harris delinquents (N=42, 3 to 11 month retest)

B = Shark and Handal (1977) delinquents (N=31, 1 week retest)

Table 2

Correlations Between JI and AMPI Subscales

AMPI Scales	JI Scales					
	AL	AU	DEN	IMM	MA	REP
DEP	-.01	.12	-.22*	.23*	.13	.01
FAK	.30**	.49***	-.31**	.19	.52***	-.06
FEM	-.13	-.07	-.15	.05	-.07	.08
HYP	.07	.39***	-.24*	.25*	.28**	.02
HYS	-.09	.27**	-.13	.15	.18	-.17
KOR	-.30**	-.34***	.53***	.01	-.46***	.23*
LIE	-.19	-.26*	.33**	.24*	-.34***	.41***
MAN	.12	.36***	-.34***	.05	.43***	-.19
PAR	.37***	.54***	-.53***	.22*	.57***	-.08
PAS	.37***	.55***	-.62***	.20	.59***	-.15
PPD	.18	.37***	-.26*	.17	.43***	-.27**
SCZ	.39***	.59***	-.60***	.24*	.63***	-.10
SIN	.01	.01	-.20	-.05	.05	-.12

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

AMPI Scales	JI Scales				
	SA	SM	VO	WD	ASOCIAL INDEX
DEP	.45***	.11	.09	.47***	.10
FAK	.31**	.56***	.49***	.31**	.48***
FEM	.25*	-.10	-.08	.21*	-.05
HYP	.49***	.35***	.26*	.34**	.26*
HYS	.39***	.10	.14	.36***	.07
KOR	-.53***	-.46***	-.50***	-.37***	-.27**
LIE	-.15	-.23*	-.33**	-.23*	-.10
MAN	.16	.32**	.34***	.36***	.22*
PAR	.38***	.59***	.57***	.55***	.46***
PAS	.57***	.58***	.58***	.65***	.43***
PPD	.12	.33**	.35***	.29**	.29**
SCZ	.48***	.60***	.59***	.61***	.43***
SIN	.41***	.03	.07	.21*	-.04

Note.

n = 90

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

\*\*\*p < .001



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## APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW

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