THE JESNESS INVENTORY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

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The Jesness Inventory Classification System is a simple, objective method for classifying offenders into one of nine subtypes. Having its origin in the I-level classification, the JI system has gone through a long evolution. The procedure for classification now requires only the responses to the 155-item Jesness Inventory, which can be hand-scored. Studies with both delinquents and nondelinquents have shown the classification to be comprehensive and valid.

To the social scientist it is axiomatic that classification is essential to scientific progress—it is a prerequisite to understanding causation, to the incremental accumulation of knowledge, and, even more basically, to our ability to communicate with one another. To the practitioner in an applied setting, classification, whether formalized or not, is involved in the prediction of recidivism, the decisions made about assignments to different levels of custody and security, and the assumptions about offenders' needs and their responses to different programs and treatments. To both the action-oriented worker and the theoretician, classification can also provide a means of assessing the phenotypic (surface) personality features of an individual, as well as his or her more enduring (genotypic) personality structure and dynamics. Among the several classification systems currently available is that based on the Jesness Inventory (JI), a simple, hand-scorable procedure for classifying persons into one of the nine personality subtypes.

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ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

The Jesness Inventory (JI) Classification System has a fairly long history, the first attempt at developing the subtype scales having been performed in 1962. I-level theory, the precursor of the JI system, evolved during a series of graduate seminars attended by Marguarite (Grant) Warren at U.C. Berkeley. The theory was first described in an article that appeared in 1957 (Sullivan, Grant, & Grant, 1957). Although several of the subtypes were mentioned, the more complete elaboration of the nine subtypes occurred during the Community Treatment Project, a California Youth Authority research effort sponsored by NIMH during the 1960s and early 1970s. A systematic clinical iterative process was used based on data from interviews and feedback from staff working intensively with parolees over a period of several months (Palmer, 1971).

To arrive at the youth's classification, Warren and her associate, Ted Palmer, developed a rather lengthy and complex interview format. Even with extensive training, however, the reliability of this method left much to be desired (Molof, 1969). In 1962, with the cooperation of Warren and Palmer, I performed an item analysis of subtype responses to the JI to determine the feasibility of developing a simpler, more objective approach to the classification. The results were encouraging, and in 1965 the first subtype scales were developed on the basis of the responses of 206 "ideal" cases classified by Warren and her staff. It is the scores in these scales, as modified and refined over many iterations based on samples of increasing size, that form the basis of the JI Classification.

The procedure for using these scales has, too, gone through a lengthy process of refinement. The first approach subjectively combined inventory scores together with supporting data from a brief interview and a sentence completion test (Jesness, 1971). The second approach, which was completely objective, used data from the Inventory and the Jesness Self-Appraisal Behavior Checklist (Jesness, 1974, 1976). This *Sequential I-level Classification System* required the user to send the raw data to a scoring

service where a lengthy computer program solved the complex discriminant formulas involved. The time and inconvenience involved in mailing and processing limited the system's use, however, and in 1981 a completely objective hand-scorable procedure replaced the sequential system. The manual for the hand-scorable Jesness Inventory Classification System was published in 1985 (Jesness & Wedge, 1985).

In that manual, alternative labels are suggested for use with nonoffenders. Because the I-level system was developed as a procedure for classifying juvenile delinquents, the original subtype labels had a strong clinical/psychiatric flavor. The nomenclature was appropriate for persons who were at one end of the behavioral continuum—the maladjusted end—but for use with "normal" persons or those with minor problems finding appropriate alternative subtype labels seemed necessary, for the system has been and will undoubtedly continue to be used with a general population. The alternative labels have not entirely met the goals of being nonpejorative and ambiguous, but in the absence of clear indications of delinquency or other problems they are recommended for use with nondeviant populations. Listed in Table 1 are the conventional I-level subtype designations, the symbol for each, and the alternative terminology.

Relative to youths of other subtypes, delinquents and nondelinquents in the various subtype classes tend to show the following characteristics:

AA (unsocialized, aggressive/undersocialized, active). From deprived background; negative attitudes toward authority, family, and school; unpredictable, nonconforming, aggressive, and obtrusive behavior; delinquent orientation; and high self-reported delinquency.

AP (unsocialized passive/undersocialized, passive). From deprived home background; negative attitudes toward family and school; low verbal aptitude, nonconforming, inappropriate behavior; poor peer relations; and negative self-concept.

CFM (immature conformist/conformist). Positive attitudes toward home, school, and authority; conforming behavior; often depen-

TABLE 1
I-Level Subtype Designations

Conventional Label	Symbol	Alternative Terminology
I-level 2		
Unsocialized, aggressive	I-2 AA	Undersocialized, active
Unsocialized, passive	I-2 AP	Undersocialized, passive
I-level 3		
Immature conformist	I-3 CFM	Conformist
Cultural conformist	I-3 CFC	Group-oriented
Manipulator	I-3 MP	Pragmatist
I-level 4		
Neurotic, acting-out	I-4 NA	Autonomy-oriented
Neurotic, anxious	I-4 NX	Introspective
Situational emotional reaction	I-4 SE	Inhibited
Cultural identifier	I-4 CI	Adaptive

dent (follower); positive, uncritical self-concept, and low self-reported delinquency.

CFC (cultural conformist/group oriented). From deprived background; low motivation, poor achievement, and negative attitudes toward school; alienated, distrustful, and hostile toward adults and authority; delinquently oriented friends; delinquent self-concept; and high self-reported delinquency.

MP (manipulator/pragmatist). Generally positive attitudes toward school; positive self-concept; manipulative, sometimes obtrusive behavior; and inconsistency between self-evaluations and objective measures (e.g., official versus self-reported delinquency).

NA (neurotic, acting-out/autonomy oriented). Above average verbal aptitude; behavior problems in school; negative attitudes toward authority; family conflicts; self-presentation as adequate and independent, but somewhat cynical and disenchanted; often provocative, outspoken, and nonconforming; and high self-reported delinquency.

NX (neurotic, anxious/introspective). Mostly positive attitudes toward school; conforming; somewhat perturbable, dependent, anxious, and insecure; nondelinquent orientation; family and interpersonal conflicts; and low official delinquency.

SE (situational/inhibited). Above average socioeconomic background; positive attitudes toward school and family; positive, nondelinquent self-concept; confident; naive; conforming; good interpersonal relationships; and low self-reported and official delinquency.

CI (cultural identifier/adaptive). High verbal aptitude; highly motivated for school; positive attitudes toward authority, school, parents, and self; confident; good interpersonal relationships; nondelinquent orientation; and low self-reported and official delinquency.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The JI classification is based on the individual's responses to items in the Jesness Inventory (1983). Developed for use with young adolescents, the test was later modified to allow its use with both sexes as well as adults. The 155 true-false items yield age-normed *T*-scores on eleven personality/attitude scales—three empirically derived (Social Maladjustment, Value Orientation, and Immaturity), seven based on cluster analyses (Autism, Alienation, Manifest Aggression, Withdrawal, Social Anxiety, Repression, and Denial), and one developed from a discriminant function analysis (Asocial Index). The norms for these scales (from age 8 to 18) are based on the responses of nondelinquents. With adults, the 18-year norms used have in several studies been shown to be adequate.

The present subtype scales were based on responses of a criterion group of 1,700 delinquents who had been classified with some confidence as to I-level subtype (i.e., there was independent agreement on the classification from at least two sources). Minor modifications of the scales were made in 1984 based on an analysis of response patterns of a large sample (n = 4,400) of delinquents. Following the item analyses, age-norms for each of

the nine scales were established from the responses of a second sample of 2,000 delinquent youths. Raw score to *T*-score conversion tables are presented in the manual.

The classification in most instances is determined by the highest subtype *T*-score (Jesness & Wedge, 1985). The rules are simple, explicit, and can quickly be memorized. A single subtype designation is usually indicated where the highest score is at least 4 (sometimes 5) points higher than the second highest score. Where the difference is not this great, a dual (i.e., multiple) classification is called for, with the higher of the two scores designated the primary subtype and the next highest the secondary subtype.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability. The most meaningful reliability data on a classification system probably relates to its stability over time. Data based on the Sequential procedure, which used the discriminant formulas, showed that stability varied depending on length of time between testing and age of the offender (Jesness, 1974). In a sample of adult county jail farm inmates retested after from 3 to 12 months, which included all cases (i.e. those with either a single or dual classification), the agreement of the initial primary subtype classification with that at retest was 58%. Classification with a group of juvenile offenders (median age 17) retested after a shorter interval (2 weeks) showed approximately of the same results.

Reliability data available on the hand-scorable system came from a sample of presumed nondelinquents tested in both the seventh and eighth grades (spring 1977 and spring 1978). The median subtype scale test-retest correlation was .65 (Jesness, 1986). Of the 277 with a single classification, 48% received the same primary subtype and 65% the same primary or secondary subtype designation. When all students were included (i.e., single or multiple classifications), agreement as to primary classification was 46%, and for I-level 68%.

Validity. Extensive validity data were presented on the classification based on the Sequential method using the discriminant function formulas (Jesness, 1974). Because of the fairly high agreement between that system and the present hand-scorable method, those results can be assumed to apply. More recently obtained construct validity data on the JI system add considerable additional support to its validity. These data came from studies with delinquents, as well as nondelinquents. The data on delinquents came from a study of the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of a sample of 1,133 institutionalized California Youth Authority wards (Jesness & Wedge, 1984). Analysis of variance showed that subtype means differed on virtually all of the variables available in that study. Among the more important of these variables, all of which showed statistically significant differences across subtype, were socioeconomic background, verbal and numerical aptitude, attitudes toward family, attitudes toward school, self-concept, observer ratings of institutional behavior, self-reported delinquency, and number of subsequent criminal offenses. Comparisons between individual subtype means based on the Scheffe multiple-comparison procedure showed that the most distinctive differences were on attitudinal measures. The results were uniformly consistent with generalizations based on previous clinical findings (e.g., Warren, 1982) and research studies (Jesness, 1971, 1974, 1975). Hierarchical multiple-regression analyses with age, aptitude, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity entered first revealed that subtype conveyed much more than could be learned from background information.

The second study reporting data on the validity of the classification procedure came from a longitudinal study of a large cohort (n = 1,626) of junior high school students (Jesness, 1986; Wright & Jesness, 1981). These presumed nondelinquents were given the JI in 1977 and in 1978. A follow-up of their subsequent delinquency was carried out in 1982.

Construct validity of the JI classification was determined by examining subtype differences across several demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral measures. Chi-square analyses indicated that the subtypes differed in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and sex. Analysis of variance showed that subtype accounted for a

significant percentage of the variance on all the variables included in the analysis. The major variables and percentage of variance accounted for by subtype were as follows: school achievement (12%); school attitudes (21%); classroom misbehavior (14%); family cohesion (13%); home misbehavior (15%); self-appraisal Behavior Checklist scales Obtrusiveness (19%), Responsibility (12%), and Confidence (21%); delinquent peers (20%); self-reported delinquency (21%); and disciplinary referrals (3%). The Scheffe multiple-comparison procedure indicated that the differences among subtypes were uniformly consistent with expectations based on previous studies with delinquents.

With regard to predictive validity, it should be emphasized that the subtypes originated out of a need to distinguish among already identified delinquents as an aid in treatment planning. Therefore, subtype was not expected to be differentially predictive of delinquency, at least to any marked extent. Small subtype differences in number of subsequent adult arrests were, however, previously found with delinquent samples, and the hypothesis was that similar outcomes would be found with nondelinquents. Results of the follow-up analyses revealed differences across subtypes in the average number of referrals to probation ($p < .001$). The highest proportion of delinquents was found among those classified as CFC, NA, and AP; the lowest proportion was found among the SEs, CIs, and NXs.

Data on the nondelinquents were also analyzed separately for males and females. With males, the variance accounted for by subtype on most variables was much the same as that for the combined male/female sample. With females, differences on all the variables were statistically significant across subtype, although the percentage of variance explained by subtype was slightly lower than for males. The rank ordering of subtype means for males and females was virtually identical on all variables (i.e., the rank-order correlations were almost all above .90).

Subtype differences were found not only for sex, but also for age, ethnicity, achievement test scores, and socioeconomic status. The question arises as to whether these differences might account for apparent subtype personality differences on the other variables. To answer this question, regressions were run in which age,

sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and achievement test scores were partialled prior to entering subtype (as dummy variables). The results indicated that subtype contributed to the variance of all variables ($p < .001$). In most instances, subtype was by far the largest contributor, the exceptions being Disciplinary Referrals and Probation Referrals, which were more predictable from demographic data and achievement test scores.

PREVALENCE OF USE

It is quite difficult to provide a precise estimate of the extent to which the JI Classification System is being used. The manual was published only recently (late in 1985) and the articles relative to validity appeared in 1984 and 1986. Data on the Jesness Inventory and the Classification System's predecessor (the sequential system) can, however, provide some indirect information.

Although modified in 1972 to enable its use with adults as well as children, by far the greatest interest in the JI and sequential systems has been by those working with adolescents, especially those deemed delinquent or showing behavioral problems. The publisher's mailing list as well as my own correspondence contains many agencies whose titles are indicative of this (e.g. child diagnostic centers, state and county juvenile services, family courts, public defenders' offices, youth camps, guidance centers, probation departments, group homes). Mental health centers and psychiatric hospitals also appear on the list, as do psychologists, counselors, and social workers in private practice and in special education departments. Many requests for information have also come from psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists in academic settings, but most of the research has been done by graduate students and has not resulted in articles appearing in professional journals.

The Inventory has also been used in adult maximum security prisons, and with adult probationers. Carbonell (1983) found the JI and sequential system "applicable to adult prisoners in a

medium security federal corrections institutions." (Incidentally, she found virtually no concordance between JI and MMPI types, which was her primary hypothesis.)

The Inventory has been translated into several languages. It has been used successfully in Poland, Germany, England, Yugoslavia, India, and South America. For several years, youth workers in Canada have been especially interested in the concept of differential treatment and have used the classification extensively.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The JI Classification system is helpful in providing a means of distinguishing among offenders in ways that are relevant to management and treatment. Having their origin in clinical experience, as well as theory, the types possess a quality of verisimilitude that can lead to an ease of acceptance by relatively untrained personnel. This same quality may sometimes result, however, in an unfortunate reification of the types. The author has more than once cringed to hear staff insist that a client "is really an NA rather than an NX" or whatever. This problem is not, of course, unique to the JI system.

For use with some clients, such as young adolescents, the JI has the advantage of being written in simple, idiomatic language that can be comprehended by those with no more than fourth grade reading ability. (A tape recording can also be used in instances where even that low requirement poses a problem.) In addition, the brevity of the JI helps to avoid some of the difficulties to the client imposed by some other methods. Thirty minutes are usually adequate for administration of the test. Scoring of the test and applying the rules for deriving the subtypes are both simple, and although computer scoring is available, scoring by hand is quite feasible. (Scoring software for use with microcomputers is also available from the publisher.)

The JI system has the virtue of being completely objective. All users will obtain the same results. Familiarity with the JI scales, especially the Repression and Denial scales, along with knowledge

of subtype characteristics, may be desirable in some clinical situations, however, for in common with other personality inventories, the JI is vulnerable to error. Some "nay-sayers" in particular may assume a defensive posture that can lead to an erroneous classification (e.g., an Inhibited or Situational reaction label in a person with a background history that is quite contradictory). The personality and behavioral attributes that characterize members of each subtype are described in the manual. These descriptions are preceded by a caveat to the effect that the JI Classification should not be regarded as a substitute for a complete evaluation, but should be an integral part of it.

As to comprehensiveness, a single classification can be expected in nearly 65% of the cases; about 34% will have a dual classification; for fewer than 1% no decision will be reached. If the reader is willing to concur that a dual classification is a useful, consequential designation, then virtually all clients can be classified. Reliability as gauged by stability over time was, however, shown to be less than perfect, and with young adolescents caution should be exercised in making assumptions about the long-term stability of the classification. However, stability of the system compares very favorably to others such as those based on the MMPI (Johnson, Simmons, & Gordon, 1983; Simons, Johnson, Gouvier, & Muzycyka, 1981).

A potential strength of the system that has received limited trial lies in the matching of client to treater. Palmer (1973) found improved outcomes in those instances where youths on parole had been assigned to workers whose treatment style matched the theoretical optimum. Jesness (1974), in an institutional setting, found no difference in postrelease outcome, but a decrease in disciplinary referrals in those living units where youth counselors more closely matched to the ideal.

Another strength of the classification system lies in the possible differential etiology of crime and delinquency related to the subtypes. It was the clinical impression of caseworkers in the Community Treatment Project (CTP) that such relations existed (Warren, 1966) and was implied in the nomenclature. A recent study by Warren (1982) with female delinquents was quite

encouraging in this regard. She found predictable differences in the causal elements associated with the major subtypes as classified by interviews. Of course, it is possible to view this as a weakness, rather than a strength. The system has been criticized by some for being racially biased in that, for example, a disproportionate number of blacks become classified as CFC (cultural conformist). I believe that a stronger argument can be made to the effect that a finding of no ethnic differences would be counter to theory and common sense. In other words, I believe there are different causal patterns leading to delinquency, and for many blacks, their culturally deprived environments could be expected to play a strong influence in leading to crime, and thus to the classification of cultural conformist. Similar theoretical arguments can be made for the slight ethnic disparity among other subtypes.

CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The JI Classification System is being used in many settings with juvenile offenders, but perhaps not to the extent one might expect. The reason for this may in the past have related to the need to use a scoring service, for only a complex computer program could cope with the discriminant formulas involved. In addition to the turnaround time involved, the cost of computer scoring, too, may have been a factor. Now that these problems have been resolved with the development of a simplified classification procedure, one would expect more interest from persons in diagnostic settings where time is of importance.

With more widespread use, one could also expect more research to be carried out on the system. The validity data so far available have come primarily from clinical impression, and from studies of convergent and construct validity. The main usefulness of the system presumably lies in its relevance for the differential management and treatment of persons differing in basic personality. But here research evidence is scarce. The guides to differential treatment offered to this point (Warren, 1964; Jesness

& Wedge, 1983) have been based on the clinical impressions of caseworkers, youth counselors, and teachers. In the one major controlled study comparing outcomes of different treatment with different offenders (Jesness, 1975), the results were partly according to expectations (the undersocialized responded best to a behavioral approach) and partly counter to theory (the manipulators responded best to a psychodynamic approach). Thus much remains to be learned. And even what we have learned in terms of clinical impression is not readily available. (I hope to soon publish a short manual that will resolve this problem.)

A long-range research objective will be that of identifying the most salient characteristics that distinguish well-functioning persons of a given subtype from maladjusted or antisocial individuals of that particular subtype. It is a matter of deep curiosity, for example, to understand the circumstances and particular personal characteristics that enable some I-2 level persons to function adequately in our complex society. A truly differential delinquency causal theory would not seek to explain why youths become delinquent, but why some conformists, or undersocialized, or whatever type of youths become delinquent while others do not. It would, incidentally, be equally informative to discover that the basic causes in each instance were the same; but thus far no single theory of which we are aware has appeared satisfactory in this regard.

The future use of the system with juveniles remains optimistic. Most of those who use it become enthusiastic supporters of it. Encouraging others to use the system with adults, however, may depend more on the overall status of the criminal justice system than on the merits of the classification system itself. If agencies dealing with offenders are overwhelmed by their numbers, and concerned only with getting through each day without a riot, they will find it difficult to spare the resources to try out such "luxuries" as a personality classification system, however shortsighted this may prove to be in the long run. But I fully expect that an ever-increasing number of persons working with children, adolescents, and young offenders will find the system of unique value in their everyday practice.

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