

# Kings of Men: Introduction to a Special Issue

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This special issue is dedicated to Arthur Jensen. It has become apparent that he is unlikely to receive the recognition his work merits. The issue begins with a statement by Jensen which discusses some of his work people are less familiar with. His bibliography is also reprinted. A number of persons selected for their diversity in outlook then comment on the work of Arthur Jensen and the impact it has had.

This special issue is devoted to Arthur Jensen. Several years ago it became apparent to me that Arthur Jensen would probably never receive the kind of recognition others with even lesser accomplishments have been given. He will not receive the honors his work merits from organizations like the American Psychological Association, the National Academy of Science, or the National Association for the Advancement of Science, to name a few. The reasons for this lack of recognition are obvious. He has taken controversial and politically unpopular stands on issues that are important to the study of intelligence.

To attempt to rectify this situation, I contacted him and asked that he allow *Intelligence* to do a special issue in his honor. My plan was to have him write an introduction that would describe his career. This would be followed by commentary on his work by a wide assortment of researchers in the field. Not surprisingly, the one addition he requested was that a list of his publications be included. He has had a highly productive career and, I must say, I was not fully aware of the extent of his interests until I saw the list of publications.

The plan originally formulated has been carried out in this issue of *Intelligence*. In his personal statement, you will see that Jensen emphasizes work that may be less familiar to many readers but is no less important. The commentaries on Jensen's work are well worth reading. They tell you as much about the commentators as about Jensen. You will also see that even those who strongly disagree with Jensen have high respect for his intellectual integrity and what he has accomplished. Though this volume stands as a tribute to Arthur

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Jensen by his contemporaries, like all scientists, his ultimate recognition will be the degree of acceptance of the ideas he has developed.

What has Jensen accomplished in his career? By any measure, Arthur Jensen has made substantial contributions to the study of human intelligence. While opinion may differ about what his most important contributions have been, I have three that I think would rank high on anyone's list.

**Genetics.** It is hard to remember how dominant environmental thinking was just 30 years ago. Many thought that even mental retardation could be cured by purely environmental interventions. The genetics of intelligence were seldom discussed. Jensen's Harvard Educational Review article and subsequent publications on the genetics of intelligence had an enormous effect on the zeitgeist. It was no longer possible to ignore genetic influences when discussing intelligence. He paved the way for the many behavior geneticists who were to follow in his footsteps.

We have still not realized the full ramifications of this change. For example, not everyone yet fully appreciates that genetics will have to be taken into account when considering environmental variables. Much of the research that was done on the effect of so called environmental variables is worthless because those studies failed to partial out genetic influences and, so, are hopelessly confounded. Among the most discerning, there is a new appreciation for the methodologies that will have to be used to truly understand the environment. Year's from now we may realize that our appreciation of genetic influences was the first step over the threshold to a better understanding of the environment.

**Cognition and the Brain.** Jensen's early work on reaction time and intelligence focused interest on cognition and its relationship to brain processes and how cognition and brain processes relate to intelligence. A better appreciation of the cognition-brain-intelligence relationship is critical to ultimately understanding intelligence. Though Jensen was not the only one to appreciate this, his work was certainly pivotal. What seemed to impress people most was that such a simple task as choice reaction time correlated with intelligence.

While we are now in only the earliest phases of understanding the cognition-brain-intelligence relationship, there is no question that is where the field is heading. Techniques for studying this relationship like averaged evoked potentials, PET, and fMRI are increasingly being used and reported upon. The future is promising for these tools. But without an appreciation of the brain-cognition-intelligence relationship it is unlikely they would have been used at all.

**g.** Without question, Jensen's most significant contribution has been to show the importance of general intelligence, or *g*. The idea introduced by Spearman, while still a graduate student in 1904, reached its highest pinnacle yet in Jensen's (1998) recent book, *The g factor: The science of mental ability*. Besides being beautifully written, I predict the book will be the foundation for research for decades to come. It is a summary, that nearly anyone can read, of the research that makes *g* such an important concept. No one can fully understand individual differences without an understanding of general intelligence and its implications.

Jensen has been the major champion of the concept of *g* over the last two decades. He has shown that of all individual differences so far demonstrated, *g* is the most powerful both as a scientific construct and in the prediction of every day performance. He has crys-

tallized methods for studying g and applied those methods. His work on g alone is sufficient for a distinguished scientific career.

Why has Arthur Jensen accomplished what he has accomplished? It seems reasonable to ask why he has accomplished so much if for no other reason than to understand scientific achievement. I think there are a number of personal characteristics that were important in his success. I have had the chance to observe him closely over the last 25 years and these conclusions are based on those observations.

*Smart.* Jensen comes up with more good ideas than anyone I have known. In the course of reviewing for *Intelligence*, I have seen countless times when he has suggested ideas for studies to people that have been successfully carried out. He receives no credit for this and, in most cases, is never acknowledged for his contribution. I once asked him why he didn't carry out some of these good ideas himself. He told me he had more things than he could possibly do and the important thing was to see the work done to advance the field.

His published work is testament to his clear and insightful thinking. The work is always understandable and usually makes a fundamental point. There may be people who publish more, but I am sure there are very few whose publications reflect as many good ideas as Jensen's do.

*Tenacity Derived from a Love of His Work.* Jensen sticks to an idea when he knows he is right. There are few people who have a firmer sense of what is right and what is wrong and who are willing to follow their own instincts about what is right. His tenacity is propelled by a real enjoyment of the work he does. If you talk to him about intelligence, it is hard not to become excited yourself because of the enthusiasm he shows. It is clear he really loves the pursuit of answers in this field for their own sake.

*Agnosticism and Open Mindedness.* In his own statement in this issue, he admits to a healthy agnosticism about everything. This is particularly true about intelligence. He has no investment about how a question comes out, he simply wants it answered correctly. For years, his critics have called him every name in the book and have accused him of all kinds of biases and prejudices. In fact, I have never known anybody with fewer prejudices. The biggest prejudices scientists usually have are those in favor of their own ideas. Such prejudices are very hard to avoid and the notion of the "objective" scientist is, for most of us, a goal we fail to achieve. However, Jensen has no loyalty whatsoever to any theory or hypothesis even if they come from his own ideas. He would gladly know the truth even if it proved him wrong. In fact, he would be excited to know the truth.

His agnosticism is one of the characteristics that it took me longest to identify. I think that is because it is such an unusual one and not typical of most others I have known. When I first met him personally, I wondered what his biases and prejudices really were and tried to identify them for many years. My effort was wasted. I finally came to the conclusion that he just doesn't have any. I think this may be a point that is impossible for his critics to understand. On the other hand, it is the very reason he has stood up so well against his critics. He has invested himself in pursuit of the truth, not any particular set of ideas.

*Thick Skin.* I doubt that there have been few people in the history of science who have suffered more criticism than Jensen. There are other examples, of course, including Galileo, Darwin and others. But I doubt if any of them had to have police guards or were

regularly threatened with acts of physical violence. I have heard all sorts of rumors about Jensen. One of the most interesting was that he conspired with the Nixon Whitehouse to kill Headstart. I asked him about this and he had a recollection of someone asking him about his research but there was no conspiracy. What is ludicrous about this rumor is that Headstart spending increased dramatically during the Nixon administration (Caruso, Taylor, & Detterman, 1988). There have been many other rumors and gossip, but the ones I have been able to check out have all been false.

Besides vociferous attacks from organized opposition, Jensen has also had to suffer the indignity of seeing his research and writing systematically misrepresented in the popular press. Many of the articles that I have read in the popular press have made me wonder how much of Jensen's work the author had actually read. I am sure that this misrepresentation would be the most difficult part for me to withstand. However, in the years I have known him, I have never heard him complain about this treatment or express any sentiment of unfairness. I always wondered why. It was not long ago that I figured it out. Because he has no commitment to any particular outcome, Jensen finds it amusing, and perhaps humorous, that people become so exorcised about ideas, ideas that could be right or wrong. Instead of applying their intellect to finding out if these ideas hold water, they express their emotions against the message bearer. The saddest part of the whole thing is that the criticisms that have been directed against Jensen have led to little, if anything, of lasting scientific value. Viewed in this way, the effort expended in futile activity is rather ironically humorous.

One of the incidents that typifies many of Jensen's personal characteristics occurred when he came to Case Western Reserve University to give a colloquium. The talk was open to the university community and drew a large crowd. Among those in the crowd were several members of the local Communist Party. They had come to hear him talk about race and intelligence but, instead, he had just begun his reaction time research and was talking about that. During his presentation they listened attentively and politely, as is the custom of all Midwesterners, even members of the Communist Party. At the end of the presentation, there was time for questions and they asked a few pointed ones showing that they had studied up for Jensen's appearance. (In fact, they had probably read more of Jensen than most in the audience.)

After the talk ended, there was a reception in the lobby. As he was drinking his wine and eating his cheese, Jensen slowly made his way around the room working toward the Communist Party members who were bunched in a corner. He was probably drawn to them because it was clear that they were among the best informed about his work even though they had philosophical differences. Maybe it was the philosophical differences that attracted Jensen to them. I will never be sure. They began asking him questions about intelligence which he enthusiastically answered. The conversation went on for some time. The rest of the audience drifted away and the caterers began cleaning up. Jensen carried on enthusiastically and, at least in my opinion, his opponents were loosing badly. Looking for a way out, the Communist Party members slowly began backing towards the door. But Jensen was just getting started and for every step backward they took toward the door, he took one forward both figuratively and literally. Feeling a bit sorry for them by this time, I told Dr. Jensen that we had to leave for dinner. Taking the opportunity, the representatives of the Communist Party bolted for the door and began walking east on Euclid Avenue. You could see that Jensen was disappointed to loose his sparring partners. He quickly asked

which way we were going to dinner. I said we first had to return to my office which was east on Euclid. Quickly, he proceeded me out the door and caught up to his victims. The discussion proceeded down Euclid Avenue until our ways had to part. I think this encounter was the highlight of Jensen's visit.

**Solitude.** Finally, I think one thing that Jensen has enjoyed as a result of his notoriety is a kind of solitude in which to think, work, and write. Even those who become moderately successful in this business are asked to do many things they don't really want to do and that don't contribute to their scientific accomplishment. Because many have regarded him as a social outcast, he has been spared many of these nearly meaningless activities that he would have had to carry out if he had been in the good graces of those in power. Add to this a wife who Jensen acknowledges has left him totally free to pursue his research and you have what seems to me a nearly ideal circumstance for a scientific career. My one concern in doing this issue is that we could ruin all of that by giving him the recognition he deserves. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

The following quote is one of my favorite from Galton. It describes general intelligence and those who possess it in high quantity. Galton never knew Jensen but I am sure that he had men like him in mind when he wrote this:

People lay too much stress on apparent specialties, thinking over rashly that because a man is devoted to some pursuit, he could not possibly have succeeded in anything else. They might just as well say that because a youth had fallen desperately in love with a brunette, he could not possibly have fallen in love with a blonde. He may or may not have more natural liking for the former type of beauty than the latter, but it is as probable as not that the affair was mainly or wholly due to a general amorousness of disposition. It is just the same with special pursuits. A gifted man is often capricious and fickle before he selects his occupation, but when it has been chosen he devotes himself to it with a truly passionate ardour. After a man of genius has selected his hobby, and so adapted himself to it as to seem unfitted for any other occupation in life and to be possessed of but one special aptitude, I often notice, with admiration, how well he bears himself when circumstances suddenly thrust him into a strange position. He will display an insight into new conditions, and a power of dealing with them, with which even his most intimate friends were unprepared to accredit him. Many a presumptuous fool has mistaken indifference and neglect for incapacity; and in trying to throw a man of genius on ground where he was unprepared for attack, has himself received a most severe and unexpected fall. I am sure that no one who has had the privilege of mixing in the society of the abler men of any great capital, or who is acquainted with the biographies of the heroes of history, can doubt the existence of grand human animals, of natures pre-eminently noble, of individuals born to be kings of men. (Galton, 1869, pp. 24-25)

I think if you read this issue cover to cover, you will find that no matter what your opinions are on the issues, no matter who is right or wrong, Arthur Jensen is a man to be respected not only for what he has accomplished but for who he is. Thank you, Professor Jensen.

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