

On Arthur Jensen's Integrity

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Few psychologists have engendered the controversy or endured the abuse that Arthur Jensen has in the past three decades. His adamant adherence to a hard-edged science and an uncompromising personal integrity have led to notoriety. Although these virtues might be rewarded, if applied to less controversial topics, Art Jensen has been vilified because he applied his standards to the most important and painful social issues of our day. In this article, I admire his ethics but trace the negative reactions he evoked. His legacy to psychological science goes beyond important studies on choice reaction times and intelligence, environmental effects on intelligence, and race differences in mental development: Art Jensen set a standard for an honest psychological science.

For more than 40 years, Arthur Jensen has unflinchingly strived to make psychology an honest science. My emphasis is on both words, honest, and science. For this alone, I would admire him enormously, but there is much more to admire about Art's lifework, which continues unabated by his official retirement. Besides his intellectual mentor, Robert Thorndike, and a few other pillars, such as Lee Cronbach, Robert Woodworth, and Lewis Terman, Arthur Jensen's contributions tower above educational psychology and psychometrics.

The Scientist

As his own essay (this issue) demonstrates, Art relentlessly pursues a hard-edged, hypothetic-deductive science that treads on a more emotional, humanistic psychology. Art has no sympathy for mushy thinking. For him, impressions and feelings are not data and have no place in psychology, beyond perhaps the hypothesis-formation stage. Art is ruthlessly scientific: If hypotheses derived from a theory cannot be tested by logical experimentation and data analysis, the theory does not deserve to be called psychological science.

Art rejects convenient compromises and politically expedient obfuscation. These virtues have not been universally appreciated. I have never known him to evade a controversy or mollify an opponent, when the intellectual stakes are high. Outspoken and bloodlessly calm in the face of threats, Art confronts the most emotional critics with logical argument and polite disdain. He remains agnostic where data do not drive him to a conclusion, and

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his agnosticism on matters of test bias, IQ testing, and racial differences in “g” has cost him dearly. Even with his back to the wall, he continues to proclaim the facts, as he sees them.

He exposes intellectual dishonesty in whomever he finds it, and there is plenty of intellectual dishonesty to find among our Politically Correct colleagues. Art is an important player in battles against the kind of naive environmentalism that has squashed constructive, scientific contributions from psychologists to the most important educational issues of our time, from Head Start to special education to university entrance requirements. Although we are both infamous for exposing naked Emperors, I may be just a tiny bit more tolerant of the bleeding-hearts among us—a weakness that has saved me from much of the abuse he has suffered.

Research Contributions

Art’s own studies of learning processes and “g” unwaveringly follow models derived from physical sciences. Psychological science consists of rigorous experiments, psychometrically credible tests, and sophisticated data analyses. He is an unapologetic reductionist, who believes that complex processes will always be explainable in simpler, component terms.

For Art, mind is no more than brain chemistry. In this belief, he clearly rejects systems theories and cognitive theories of mind, in favor of mechanistic, physical models. For those who believe that the whole may be more than the sum of its component parts, especially in biological systems, and that experience is constructed by minds, Art’s strict adherence to physical science model may seem anachronistic.

Determined and persistent, Art followed several lines of research on learning and intelligence. To my mind, his three most important research contributions are:

1. The elegant series of studies on reaction times in complex, choice tasks;
2. His studies of older and younger siblings in California and Georgia to test competing genetic and environmental hypotheses about racial differences in IQ; and
3. The clever construct validity studies, matching the performance of younger White children to that of older Black children on tasks where Black-White difference are most prominent.

In the series of studies on reaction times, he showed that brain functions—speed, reliability, and capacity—can be measured in seemingly simple reaction time tasks that are importantly related to psychometric “g” and by extension to many forms of academic and other life achievements. Despite carping by critics from the narrow world of experimental psychology, Art showed real-life implications for laboratory tasks that heretofore had gone unnoticed, except among laboratory psychologists. (I was there in Britain where the mocking of some learning researchers was extremely distasteful to all but the nastiest high-table fools.) In characteristic fashion, Art ignored the *ad hominem* slurs and persisted to show how important their seemingly trivial tasks really were. Art succeeded in giving psychometric “g” some important physical correlates (he might say physical bases, but I won’t go that far). That line of research has many more miles to go.

Closer to my interests, in the second example, Art saw an opportunity for a naturally occurring experiment—the comparison of older and younger siblings, as a test of compet-

ing theories about the origins of racial differences in IQ. He reasoned logically (as always) that if environmental deprivations were responsible for lower test scores of Blacks, then the longer children were exposed to such environments, the more they would lag behind test norms; that is, the lower their IQ scores would become. Older siblings have longer exposure to such deprivations; hence, they ought to score lower on IQ and standardized achievement test than their younger sibs. If, on the other hand, genetic differences were primarily responsible for Black-White differences, than no older-younger sibling differences should be observed. Among Berkeley, CA school children, no older-younger sibling differences on tests were observed. In poverty-stricken, rural Georgia, however, the environmentally predicted declines in test scores were found.

More developmental psychologists are embarrassingly glib on racial differences: Any observed Black-White difference *must* be due to "racism," social disadvantage, and other neighborhood and school features, because they *correlate* with IQ. By using sibling comparisons, Art showed that such excuses (I refuse to call them explanations) were not true in Berkeley, where exposure to the mainstream culture is extensive for even the poorest minority children, whereas in rural Georgia, restriction of learning opportunities explained the sibling IQ differences. These studies showed that in really deprived rearing circumstances, even Art Jensen can find environmental effects! Kidding aside, these studies of sibling differences in IQ are all the more important because Art did them. One can only hope his critics will remember to attribute them to him.

The studies of sibling IQ differences in California and Georgia helped me to think about what kinds of environments have negative effects on intellectual development and which do not. Our own adoption studies found that children adopted in infancy into working class families achieved IQ levels as high as adoptees reared in privileged professional families, whereas biological offspring of such families differed by 10 IQ points, on average. Clearly, genes were the major cause of social class differences in IQ, not whether parents take their children to ball games or museums, or whether they listen to Country & Western tunes or to Mozart (take that, Art-the-music-snob). These results, and Art's sibling studies, led me to stand up for "good-enough parents," who provide loving support and learning opportunities, but not necessarily those the intelligentsia value most. My proposal, that most parents are "good enough" at child rearing to support their children becoming the best they can be, provoked PC colleagues to attack me as anti-child welfare, because surely every child needs to have parents just like them to become the best (their self-serving snobbery is appalling and unrecognized).

Since our working class Midwesterners were doing as good a job with their adopted children as their highly educated compatriots, my conclusion about "good enough" parents is logically inescapable. So is the conclusion from Art's research; to wit, the African-American families in California did expose their children to learning opportunities sufficient to maintain their intellectual growth over the school years. The fact that their IQ test scores lagged behind those of Whites is not likely to be explained by differences in learning opportunities.

An interesting parallel to this work is our longitudinal study of interracial adoptees. At the average of 7 years, the African-American adopted children scored 106.1 on IQ tests. By the average age of 18 however, their IQ scores had declined to 96.8. Children with one White and one Black parent scored, on average, 109.0 at age 7 and 98.5 at age 18; children with two Black parents (and later adoptive placements) scored 96.8 at age 7 and 89.4 at age

18. The test performance of the Black/Black adoptees was not different from that of ordinary Black children reared by their own families in the same area of the country. My colleagues and I reported the data accurately and as fully as possible, and then tried to make the results palatable to environmentally committed colleagues. In retrospect, this was a mistake. The results of the transracial adoption study can be used to support either a genetic difference hypothesis or an environmental difference one (because the children have visible African ancestry). We should have been agnostic on the conclusions; Art would have been.

A less recognized line of research, and one with great implications for developmental psychology, is Art's use of younger White children to model the test performance of older Black children. By showing that response and error patterns of Black children matched, on average, those of White children two years younger, Art did more than challenge the test-bias literature. He showed that differences in test performance among age-matched White and Black children can be most simply explained as differences in rates of mental development. The implicit analogy to physical growth is powerful: Slower growth rates over the same length of time lead to lesser final attainments, whether one is speaking of height or of intelligence. The implications of these studies are truly frightening, but Art does not flinch. I have yet to see these findings incorporated into introductory psychology textbooks or developmental texts, however, so the wrath of Politically Challenged has not rained down on him yet.

Scholarly Reviews

Among his many works, those that will be most widely cited and remembered are his rigorous reviews of data on test bias, evidence for the "g" in general intelligence, and reviews of research on group differences in IQ and achievement. In scholarly yet accessible prose, Art tells coherent stories that make the best sense of complex theories and data. Along the way, he refutes the many ad hoc claims about test bias, disposes of theories of multiple intelligences, and lays waste to naive environmental theories of race and social class differences in educational achievements. In a dozen impressive books and hundreds of articles, spanning 30 years, Art has brought uncompromising logic and scientific rigor to the most controversial topics of our age.

In my last term at the University of Virginia, I taught an undergraduate course on intelligence. The text was *Bias in Mental Testing*. At first, some students were surprised and even alarmed that many of their assignments were drawn from a book by that infamous Dr. Jensen. But they came to appreciate the serious nature of the book and its helpful chapters on testing, validity, reliability, and potential biases in mental tests. By the end of the semester, they felt they had accomplished several feats—to have read nearly all of the 700+ pages and to have passed tests on the content. Another accomplishment was their open minds about the content and the author, whom they came to admire. It's a splendid book.

Notoriety

Art seems to have been genuinely surprised by the notoriety he attained from his writings on race and IQ. Others cannot understand his surprise. When one lobbs hand grenades at the intelligence and potential achievements of others, one should anticipate a violent reaction. For Art to say that only 5% of the Harvard Education Review article concerned

racial difference in IQ is like saying the only problem Lincoln had in the time he attended Ford's theater was the split second he was shot. Somehow, the percentage is not the critical issue in either case.

Anticipated or not, the consequences of his notoriety were severe and prolonged. Few can claim to be, or to have been, as sorely tested as Art has been in defense of psychology as a science. I have witnessed his steadfastness in the face of a screaming, unruly mob who disrupted his lecture on learning and intelligence and threatened his personal safety. I learned what it was like to be spat upon and to put my body on the line to get Art out of a University of Minnesota auditorium. It was shocking and frightening, as surely the radicals intended, but it was most of all infuriating, because no disciplinary actions were taken against those who assaulted us. Those were the wonderful 1970s.

As he mentions in his essay (this issue), his automobile tires were slashed, police had to open his mail, and his office at the University of California-Berkeley was stripped bare to protect him from a potential bomb. Art's office at Berkeley was more like a San Quentin cell than a typically cluttered faculty office. His family was threatened, and his personal freedoms seriously compromised—all because he reported his conclusions about genetics and IQ, based on a serious scientific review of the research literature.

By his own account, he is no extravert. Nor, I may add, did warmth and humor soften the acrimonious exchanges he had with hostile audiences. One might also observe that insight into his violent, enraged opponents was lacking. The logical, unemotional Dr. Jensen would never behave in such an uncivilized manner, nor comprehend those who do.

Art has also endured abuse from thugs with pens instead of megaphones. Personally, I have no empathy for politically driven liars, who distort scientific facts in a misguided and condescending effort to protect an impossible myth about human equality (= identity). Art believes he understands the motives of the Marcus Feldmans, Steven Jay Goulds, and Leon Kamins of the intellectual world. They seem to speak his language, albeit with forked tongues. I find them despicable, because they have the knowledge and intellect to know that they deliberately corrupt science. To deny falsely the scientific evidence that nearly all measurable human traits are moderately to highly heritable is to deny parents and policy makers essential knowledge to run their own lives and the society as a whole. Self-appointed saviors of the equality myth are far more dangerous to an honest psychological science than a hundred outraged groupies who don't know that the lecture was supposed to be about, anyway.

All in all, with clear conscience, Art stands up for data, searches for the most logical and supportable explanations, and rejects all of the *ad hominem* garbage thrown his way.

I did observe a humorous episode with the notorious Arthur Jensen. While at York University, we took a little stroll to a neighborhood shop, where another customer asked me if we were from the conference on intelligence. She had heard that the terrible Arthur Jensen was there. "I can't understand how they could have let him in the country!," she proclaimed. With Art standing mutely at my side, I told her that Dr. Jensen was indeed present. "Is he as awful as they say?," she asked. "Oh yes," I said, "dreadful!" At least that's the way I recall it.

Art Jensen's contribution to psychological science are enormous, and they continue to mount. His work includes the impeccable tome on test bias, the most thoughtful research on learning and intelligence, and some critical studies on race and environment. The massive body of work will persist for generations of psychologists. Yet, I believe that his most

important contribution is intellectual honesty and integrity to a psychological science that is threatened with Politically Correct corruption. Art has not known how to be politically expedient, or to couch his ideas in soothing terms, so that he has often suffered academic rejection. But most people heard you, Art, and they remember, even if they did not like the message. Both inside and outside of academia, your intellectually honest legacy will prevail.