



# Université d'Ottawa · University of Ottawa

École de psychologie      School of Psychology

Dean Svend Hylleberg,  
University of Aarhus,  
Denmark,

August 23, 2006

Dear Dean Hylleberg;

I have recently been informed of the evaluation of the research on sex differences in mental ability by Helmuth Nyborg and of his imminent suspension from his teaching and research supervision responsibility at the University of Aarhus. I urge you to rescind this egregious action.

I have followed the research work of Helmuth Nyborg for over twenty years. During that time he has established himself as a distinguished scholar with an impeccable record of publication that has contributed significantly to our understanding of individual differences, in general, and of sex differences, in particular. Moreover, his leadership in this field is widely acknowledged internationally, as evidenced by his role as editor and contributor to numerous books on this subject and as a member of the board of directors of the International Society for the study of Individual Differences. He is clearly well-known as a reputable scholar and on that basis alone does not deserve the severe action that is proposed.

I am also knowledgeable about his research on sex differences and mental ability and I have read the reviews of this work undertaken by colleagues at the University of Aarhus. The limitations of the work that are reported are quite common in this field of work and are typically taken into account when weighing the impact of the research. The limitations did not prevent acceptance by independent peer review for publication in a respected international journal and in no way do these limitations justify the suspension from duties at the University Aarhus that is proposed. Certainly, such action is an unconscionable assault on academic freedom that is a basic principle of university life.

In this regard, the approach taken to address the issue raised in Professor Nyborg's work is especially unprofessional and repugnant. If a scholar disagrees with a result or interpretation of an effect, the appropriate course is to rebutt or refute the claim through debate and independent research. Co-opting and scrutinizing Professor Nyborg's work, which evidenced no hint of fraud, is plainly deplorable. So too is the attempt to censor the controversial views that emerged from his research.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Stelmack, PhD.

Professor

Past-President, International Society for the Study of Individual Differences.

cc. Rector Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen; Professor Helmuth Nyborg

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**4 August 2006**

Dean Svend Hylleberg,  
Aarhus University.

Dear Dean Hylleberg,

I am writing to express my support for Dr Helmuth Nyborg in the ongoing controversy about his work at your University. I wrote previously in his support, in 2005. I have now seen the results of the report that the University has produced on his research into sex-differences. To my mind it does not show any major lack of research skills, or any lack of probity in Dr Nyborg. There can be few research scientists in the world whose work, if subjected to a similar attempt to find and magnify minor errors and inconsistencies, would not be found wanting.

As I wrote before, I have known the work of Dr Helmuth Nyborg for approximately thirty years. His research has been meticulous, careful, well-thought-out, and in accordance with the highest standards of scientific objectivity. It has made numerous important contributions to the study of sex differences.

Dr Helmuth Nyborg has been respected in his field and by his colleagues. If the present report is used as a basis for disciplinary proceedings against Dr Nyborg, I am sure that scientists around the world who are able to judge will consider this as being not an appropriate response to scientific misdoing but an attempt to punish him for bringing to light unwelcome scientific results. It will not redound to the credit of your university.

Yours truly,

Dr Michel Treisman M.B, B. Ch., M.A., D. Phil.

Emeritus Reader in Experimental Psychology