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Universities in a global witch hunt

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Researchers are sacked worldwide for mentioning sex- and race difference in intelligence. This fight over values now stretches from Harvard to Aarhus University and harms Nobel Prize winners, university presidents, and also more humble existences.

The President of Harvard University and top politician, Larry Summers, recently remarked that a small gap in intelligence (innate aptitude) may - perhaps, and in addition many other factors - explain sex bias in recruitment to natural sciences. He said nothing empirically wrong, but even the suggestion raised an academic storm. Summers excused, time and again, and allocated 50 million dollars to better recruitment of women in physics and mathematics, but the battle was lost. He "chose" to resign.

James Watson received the Nobel Prize for identifying the structure of the DNA molecule. However, when he recently mentioned that he was pessimistic about Africa's future, given the continent's low average IQ, he got in deep trouble. He had to cancel a series of international lectures, and politically correct people accused Watson for being an immoral racist. Like Summers, he repeatedly apologized but to no avail. The world renowned Institute he himself had established sacked him in disgrace.

In 2002, I referred to a moderate average sex difference in intelligence, and again the political correct academy and press reacted violently. The head of department, professor Jens Mammen, raged, but unlike Summers and Watson I saw no reason to excuse my observation, well knowing that this was not the smartest career move. The University thus confiscated data protocols for a 30-years study of school children and called me in for hour-long Kafka-like cross-examinations without first stating what we were to talk about. An "independent" commission was established and instructed - in highly specific terms covering several pages - about what precisely the university expected from this kangaroo-court.

The total witch hunt lasted 5 years and the acts covered full 5 shelve-meters. Then dean Svend Hylleberg was able to reach a conclusion: Nyborg has made an absolutely untrustworthy and complete worthless sex difference study (published in "Intelligence"); Nyborg is scientifically dishonest, sloppy and ignorant; he had used an incorrect method (hierarchical factor analysis) and is no longer worthy of his chair; he has to immediately clear his office and research center! All personal information is immediately to be deleted from the University database and a travel grant (about US\$ 5,000) is to be withdrawn despite the fact that tickets and congress fee have been paid long ago by his personal money. However, if Nyborg accepts to stay away from the international congress (ISSID), the university will cover his expenses! His current PhD guidance has to be stopped shortly before the defense of a thesis, and his name as supervisor is to be replaced by another name. The university will publish the full critique of Nyborg but will not refer to his detailed rebukes. In this hour of total academic humiliation the dean was able to offer some consolation: Nyborg will not be subjected to a full official disciplinary inquiry because he is too old. The university simply cannot complete such a complicated formal inquiry before he turns 70. Moreover, the university will abstain from initiating another Disciplinary Court even if Nyborg has misrepresented the university and mentioned the case to international colleagues. However, emeritus status after almost 40 years of previously impeccable service is out of the question: We do not share values!

The case reflects, in my opinion, a fundamental disagreement about values, a violation of the academic freedom of expression, a threat to the principle of free choice of scientific method, and an entirely arbitrary and sloppy treatment by the university. I therefore submitted the case to a governmental "Committee on Scientific Research Integrity "(UUVU) under the Ministry for Science, Technology and Development. After careful scrutiny the committee came to the conclusion that it could find no signs of scientific dishonesty. Five years of intense witch-hunt of a 30 year project, with hundreds of children and over a thousand direct or indirect variables, had just revealed a few inconsequential errors and a local disagreement about an often used method (Hierarchical Factor Analysis). The way the university handled the case provoked the full elite of international elite of IQ researchers, including three Presidents of international scientific societies and the editors of several international high-level journals, to write concerned letters to Rector Laurits B. Holm-Nielsen. These events forced rector to denounce the assessment of the dean and director, just as 8 out of 10 psychology professors had done before him, and he ended the Nyborg case with an ice-cold rehiring with no duties for 6 months, until I had to leave when turning 70.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the witch-hunt. Contra the decision of the UUVU, Rector maintained the serious critique of my sex difference research. This is unlawful, I am told by specialists. What is worse, Dean Hylleberg and director Mammen continue their attacks in the daily press. Their public statements reveal a disturbingly low level of insight into the project, they lie, and they promulgate serious personal insinuations. I complained to Rector over all this, but after almost a year of hard thinking he came to the conclusion that the university's handling of a case had been careful and entirely correct. Just a few examples will show how wrong this is (for more examples (in Danish, Alas), see www.helmuthnyborg.dk).

Director Mammen tells newspapers that Nyborg is scientifically dishonest because he does not tell his readers of the international journal that it was an indispensable requirement that all the school children participating in the study had to be photographed naked (as part of a standard Tanner-Whitehouse pubertal screening). This may have introduced a bias, so we cannot rely on the data. Nyborg's entire project therefore becomes totally worthless and completely untrustworthy. The dean agrees and concludes: Nyborg is unworthy of his chair. He must go! Truth is, however, that the dean and the director personally made-up the "indispensable" requirements. It is even stated explicitly in the manual that participation is entirely voluntary and nobody must be put under pressure. Only half the children were actually photographed and their IQ does NOT differ from that of the non-photographed children. The university knows this perfectly well but sees no reason to tell that much to the public. Rector maintains that the University has given the case a fair and careful treatment!

The Dean also finds the project untrustworthy because Nyborg has measured the size of the penis. Who would not drop out of such kind of study? Nyborg does not tell his readers about the penile measure, and researchers failing to report such a potentially serious bias must immediately leave the University in disgrace. Truth is that penis was not at all measured! Rector knows this perfectly well, but sees no reason to admit this to the public, and maintains that the dean has handled the case in an entirely correct and non-sloppy way!

Associate professor Morten Kjeldgaard, also at the University of Aarhus, is another colleague who disagrees with the verdict of the UUVU, and maintains that I am fraudulent. In homepages with clear reference to Aarhus University he has, over 12 years after my protests to the university in 1997, told anybody who cares that I am a useless, petty wrangling, immoral, extreme right-wing oriented bogus researcher. He adds that this applies as well to all my many monstrous international friends (mentioned by name and details), i.e. to the entire international gang of fascist intelligence researches with their strong sympathies for Nazism and Ku Klux Klan. This even applies to their "scientific" societies, such as the

“International Society for Intelligence Research”, “International Society for the Study of Individual Differences”, and “Behavior Genetics Association”. The Danish journal: “Research Forum” provides space for Kjeldgaard to proceed along these infamous lines, and in this toxic context of race hygiene we suddenly find comments from no less than dean Hylleberg. He states, for example, that he did not know that Nyborg was a member of “That Clan”. In a response to Rector, the dean justifies his comment by stating that he just thought of a “kinship relationship”. Nothing wrong with that, Rector admits. In a later issue of “Research Forum” Dean Hylleberg makes it known that he clearly opposes academic bullying: “There is no reason to shit on people”, says he. So right he is. Moreover, the university sees no problem that director Mammen uses the University email-system to urge each of my former colleagues (and later also the public), to consult Kjeldgaard’s infamous hate-pages, where they will find the deeper reasons, which he himself as a civil servant cannot reveal, for why I had to leave my chair.

Kjeldgaard also let the public know that Nyborg’s widespread and bottomless professional ignorance further includes Behavior Genetics, a topic I have taught for many years. Had I understood this area correctly, I would never have dared to father a child at my age because of the extremely high risk of autism and other serious mental illness! Neither is director Mammen holding back. He tells journalists that he has no idea about how I use the many nude pictures of school children. As far as he can see, I have not used them for a scientific purpose! This statement rang a bell in the tabloid press.

These infamous attempts to destroy a scientist’s reputation raise a pertinent question: How far is a university willing to go in allowing leading officers to deliberately ridicule and dishonor researchers with politically incorrect projects? The way Rektor Laurits B. Holm-Nielsen reacts to the complaint over how the university handled the Nyborg-case indicates that he do not wish to demarcate the limit. Precisely because of this, he becomes an accessory to the ongoing global witch hunt of researchers who, in addition to obligatory acceptance of the importance of cultural factors, also point to the importance of human biology and intelligence in understanding the causes of individual, group-differences, and societal differences. This is the type a witch hunt the well-known American researcher Linda Gottfredson from Delaware University in the US calls: “Collective Academic Fraud” – now also striking Aarhus University.

It should be a matter of deep concern for the Minister of Science, the University staff, the Trade Unions, and the international researchers and societies under attack, that a head of Department, thanks to the current vertical university command structure, can effectively circumvent 8 out of ten disagreeing professors of psychology, and give the dean and Rector completely misleading information in a disciplinary case. It is worrisome that an equally sloppy and dishonest dean, also lacking in professional insight and accuracy, can get rector’s accept of undocumented allegations of Ku Klux Klan affiliations.

By rejecting the complaint Laurits B. Holm-Nielsen has, in my opinion, failed his duty as Rector to ensure impartiality and freedom of expression at Aarhus University. He has endangered the right of a scientist to freely and without risk of punishment select a method and a research topic. Rector told a newspaper: “My primary duty is to care for the good reputation of the university, but I will also go far to defend freedom of research as expression”. Precisely this order of priorities kills free research and freedom of expression, and should never stand unchallenged.