

DATE: October 1, 2018

TO: Board of Directors

International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG)

Suzanne Bultheel (France), President [suzanne.bultheel@gmail.com](mailto:suzanne.bultheel@gmail.com)

Nancy Arthur (Canada), Vice-President [narthur@ucalgary.ca](mailto:narthur@ucalgary.ca)

Gideon Arulmani (India), Vice-President [garulmani@t-p-f.org](mailto:garulmani@t-p-f.org)

Raimo Vuorinen (Finland), Vice-President [raimo.vuorinen@jyu.fi](mailto:raimo.vuorinen@jyu.fi)

Beatriz Malik (Spain), Treasurer [bmalik@edu.uned.es](mailto:bmalik@edu.uned.es)

Laurent Matte (Canada), Secretary General [lmatte@orientation.qc.ca](mailto:lmatte@orientation.qc.ca)

Bill Borgen (Canada) [william.borgen@ubc.ca](mailto:william.borgen@ubc.ca)

Tibor Bors Borbély-Pecze (Hungary), Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Finance,  
Budapest

Gabriela Cabrera Lopez (Mexico) [ageecl@unam.mx](mailto:ageecl@unam.mx)

Jane Goodman (USA), Professor Emerita, Counseling, Oakland University, Rochester, MI

Mary McMahan (Australia) [marylmcmahan@uq.edu.au](mailto:marylmcmahan@uq.edu.au)

Gert Van Brussel (The Netherlands) [gert.vanbrussel@live.nl](mailto:gert.vanbrussel@live.nl)

Peter Weber (Germany) [peter.weber@hdba.de](mailto:peter.weber@hdba.de)

FROM: Linda S. Gottfredson, University of Delaware, USA [gottfred@udel.edu](mailto:gottfred@udel.edu)

CC: Karin Asplund (Sweden), Local Conference Organizer [krm.asplund@educ.goteborg.se](mailto:krm.asplund@educ.goteborg.se)

RE: IAEVG Board's Disinvitation and My Decision

Over a year ago I happily accepted IAEVG's invitation to present a keynote address at its 2018 October conference in Gothenburg, Sweden. I was eager to speak with IAEVG members around the world who have implemented my theory of occupational choice, "Circumscription and Compromise." I also looked forward to conducting workshops with local vocational guidance workers in Gothenburg.

The IAEVG Board's Decision

A shameful, anti-scientific act by a majority of the IAEVG Board killed that opportunity, however. I was informed on June 7 that the Board had directed the conference organizer to cancel my keynote because, according to unnamed critics, my research "in the field of intelligence and race is found not to be in line with the Ethical Standards of the Association." Perhaps ironically, my keynote was to be on ethics: "What should I do? Ethical challenges in helping youth navigate career choices in a world where family expectations, ingrained stereotypes, social engineers, and genetic proclivities compete for influence."

The Board gave me no chance to answer the false and defamatory claims in the four letters it received from critics it will not name. (I append those letters below.) These critics merely recycle old falsehoods about my work, my funding, and my intentions, which I rebutted decades ago. I won many of my scientific awards precisely for the scientific work they impugn, specifically, analyses of the societal dilemmas created by within-group and between-group (racial-ethnic) differences in general intelligence (*g*). My recent work is helping to bring the complexities of self-managing diabetes and other chronic diseases within the cognitive reach of lower-ability patients.

The Board's decision was also anti-scientific, strikingly so for a supposedly scientific society. The Board considered only its own interests—avoid controversy and a boycott by members if I gave a keynote on any topic. In so doing, it signaled it will shun anyone who broaches certain scientific and ethical questions, in this case, “How do we protect and assist the most cognitively vulnerable among us?” Far from noble, it is heartless to deny the stiff cognitive headwinds against which less able individuals struggle every day in our ever-more cognitively demanding modern world. It is not I who violated IAEVG's professional and scientific ethics, but IAEVG itself.

#### The Critics' False Allegations

The four letters display righteous ignorance about the scientific fields their authors off-handedly dismiss as “questionable” but clearly know nothing about (general intelligence, behavior genetics). None acknowledges the articles I have written about the ethics of researching and reporting socially important but unwelcome scientific facts, including genetically-influenced variation within human groups and probably between them as well. None mentions the independent bodies of evidence I examined when reaching the conclusions they disfavor. While none disputes my evidence, all impugn my scientific integrity. Quotations from my work on intelligence are presented, without any contrary evidence or argument, as if they were self-evidently false. The letters also attribute motivations to me that are absolutely false. For instance, I have never sought to *justify* racial differences, as they claim, but only to explain them.

The letters invoke ad hominem critiques from the 1970s and 1980s (by Kamin, Rose, Gould, and the Southern Poverty Law Center) to taint and “discredit” scientific discoveries made decades later. When ideological opponents have neither logic nor data on their side, they often insinuate investigator malevolence, as do the four letters' authors and their sources. Perhaps that is why, unbeknownst to me, I was investigated for possible associations with “right wing” groups by the Gothenburg City Unit for Violent Extremism in cooperation with the police. (They found none.)

## The Critics' Hypocrisy

The critics' letters acknowledge the importance of my career theory and its international influence on career guidance. They nonetheless protest my giving a keynote on that theory—"Circumscription and Compromise"—because they object to my "later" work on intelligence. A keynote on the former would, they argue, imply IAEVG endorsement of the latter.

Apparently not wanting to discredit the underpinnings of many members' guidance programs, the critics and the Board speak of me as if I am two people—the good Linda early in my career and a bad one in the last 30 years. The first Linda may participate in the conference in some manner, but the second must be disapproved by rescinding the keynote invitation made to the first.

This division is as false as it is absurd. My online vita (<http://www1.udel.edu/educ/gottfredson/reprints>) shows that for many years I worked *simultaneously* on career guidance, mental abilities, tests and assessments, job performance, job analysis (What traits and behaviors do different jobs actually require for good performance?), and genetic influences on behavior. I did so because the latter five fields provide information essential for designing career guidance that respects each individual's personal autonomy, psychological uniqueness, and social circumstances while improving their odds of life success and satisfaction.

## My Decision

I greatly appreciate the efforts of the local organizer and several others who tried to find other ways for me to participate in the conference. I see no point, however, in attending a conference whose leadership vetoes relevant speakers and ideas that might upset its reigning ideology. Nor do I wish to expose attendees of the international conference or local workshops to potential disruption owing to my presence. Your local conference organizer, who has been scrupulously professional in representing IAEVG, has had enough to contend with already. The Board and my unnamed critics owe her an apology.

Finally, please circulate this letter to your members and conference attendees.

Attached: Four letters received by the IAEVG Board of Directors.

## **Four letters forwarded to Linda Gottfredson on July 3, 2018, after she requested copies of them**

### Letter no 1

To the organizing committee of IAEVG 2018 conference

We would like to express our concern regarding the upcoming IAEVG conference and one of its intended keynote speakers. It has come our attention that professor emerita Linda Gottfredsson, whose earlier theories of career choice have been influential in Scandinavia, has more lately expressed views and approaches in her research that are based on highly problematic and untenable concepts of "race" and genetically inherited intelligence, and used research and writings based on these to justify inequalities between ethnic groups. These views are in stark contradiction with the IAEVG ethical standards. These ethical standards include

*"(...) avoiding all forms of stereotyping and discrimination, e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, classism, and pro-actively work to overcome the impact of these forms of oppression on clients' access to and full participation in meaningful education and employment."*

*"In striving for social justice, members recognize the obligation to advocate for the provision of equitable opportunities in educational and vocational guidance without prejudice to persons, including diversity on dimensions such as social class, educational background, age, gender, race/ethnicity, religious beliefs, abilities, sexual orientation, and their intersections."*

*"IAEVG Members avoid all forms of oppressive social practices such as discrimination, and actively work directly with clients and the public, and on their behalf, to address oppressive social and structural inequalities in education and employment systems."*

We are asking IAEVG organizers to reconsider their choice of plenary speaker. On behalf of staff of the career counselling programme

University of Eastern Finland

### Letter no 2

21st May 2018

Dear Suzanne Bulteel, Karin Asplund and the board of the IAEVG

We are academics, researchers and careers professionals from a range of countries. Most of us are focused on researching, teaching and writing about career guidance or on delivering career guidance. Many of us are members of the IAEVG or have attended IAEVG events in the past. We are supportive of the organisation and are looking forwards to the next conference in Sweden. It is in this spirit of

support that, we have determined to write to you to express concern about the planned keynote from Linda Gottfredson.

Many of us have been influenced by Professor Gottfredson's work. In particular her theory of circumscription and compromise. This theory is extensively taught in initial education programmes for guidance professionals and is an important foundation of much theoretical work in our field. Because of this we understand why Professor Gottfredson was invited to the conference. However, we have become aware of a disturbing turn that her work has taken since this foundational work in careers towards very questionable work on race and intelligence testing.

For over thirty years Professor Gottfredson has been working on theories of intelligence and making the argument for genetic and racial differences in levels of intelligence. This argument has been a major feature of her work and is discussed in numerous papers. In 1994's *'Egalitarian fiction and collective fraud'* she berates social scientists for perpetuating a collective falsehood 'that racial-ethnic groups never differ in average developed intelligence' and bemoans the fact that 'Americans may not speak certain truths about racial matters today.' In 2005's *'What if the hereditarian hypothesis is true?'* she describes Rushton and Jensen's claim that 'long-standing, worldwide Black-White average differences in cognitive ability are more plausibly explained by their hereditarian theory than by culture-only theory' as compelling. In 2012's *'Resolute ignorance on race and Rushton'* she again defends Rushton's theory that there is a 'consistent three-way patterning of mean differences among blacks, whites, and East Asians on coevolved sets of morphological, physiological, developmental, psychological, and behavioral traits' and dismisses criticisms of them as 'mob science'.

This clear and unambiguous body of work has led Gottfredson to be a controversial figure who frequently attracts criticism and protest. She is listed on the Southern Poverty Law Centre's website as an extremist and this site also highlights the fact that her work has been funded by the racist Pioneer Fund.

David Gillborn's article *Softly, softly: genetics, intelligence and the hidden racism of the new geneism* discusses Gottfredson's work as part of a group of scholars working on 'racial geneism – the belief that genes shape the nature of ethnic group achievements and inequities'. He critiques the scientific basis of this work, citing important critics of racial geneism such as those made by Steven Rose, Stephen J Gould and Leon Kamin. His article ends with a point made by Rose in an article in *Nature* that racial geneism is 'ideology masquerading as science'. Gillborn also discusses how racial geneism has influenced policies, politicians and the media.

Gillborn's point is that despite the careful way these arguments are phrased (what he calls 'racial inexplicitness') in essence what is being proposed is that there is a legitimate scientific basis for racism. Finally, and critically in relation to the invitation issued by the IAEVG Gillborn explains that Gottfredson is not just a researcher working in this area, but one of the most prominent advocates and organisers for this group who led the publication of a letter in the *Wall Street Journal* in defence of highly controversial *The Bell Curve*.

We believe that the invitation of Professor Gottfredson to give a keynote at the IAEVG sends out the wrong signals about what the association stands for and what the majority of the membership believe. Such an invitation seems to contradict the excellent statement on social justice issued by the IAEVG in 2013 which many of us make frequent reference to.

We are worried about the damage that this invitation might do to the career development field, to the IAEVG and most of all about the way that a high-profile keynote like this might legitimise racial geneism. In the light of this we would like to ask you the following questions.

1. Given the information that we have provided do you feel that Professor Gottfredson is an appropriate choice for the conference keynote? We feel that it would be better to reconsider in the light of the information about her more recent work.
2. Will the IAEVG and the Swedish organising committee issue a public statement distancing themselves from Gottfredson's work on race and intelligence?

We would find it very useful to have some answers to some of these questions as we all consider our position in relation to attending the keynote and the conference.

We understand that it is very challenging organising a conference like the IAEVG and we thank the organisers for taking this on. We believe that it is important that the IAEVG represents a range of opinions and allows opportunity for debate. We are not arguing about whether Professor Gottfredson should be allowed to attend or to present at the conference, but concerned about the decision to make her a keynote speaker. A keynote has a unique status at a conference such as this. It offers a public platform and by extension a public endorsement of the ideas of the speaker. We feel that this is inappropriate as her later work is not relevant to the aims of the IAEVG and has the potential to mire the association in unwanted controversy.

We hope that you will feel able to provide us with a response to this letter and that you will withdraw the invitation for Professor Gottfredson to deliver a keynote.

Signed by 10 European researchers

### Letter no 3

Dear Suzanne Bulteel, Karin Asplund and the board of the IAEVG,

I am writing to you to express my concern at the decision to invite a keynote address from Linda Gottfredson at your forthcoming conference. While many, including myself, will regard her earlier work on circumscription and compromise as being of great importance and relevance to the members of the IAEVG, her more recent work on intelligence has been subject to a sustained and significant critical response. Given the sensitive nature of the later work, I do not feel that a keynote at the IAEVG is the most appropriate platform for their dissemination.

If a keynote invitation is to have any meaning and standing, it must come with the approval and acclamation of the Association. In anticipation, it is not good enough for those responsible for this decision (the local organising committee, the executive committee and the Board of the IAEVG), to try to suggest that the invitation does not reflect the views or support of these bodies, because clearly it does. Otherwise the invitation would never have been made or would be rescinded. A Keynote speaker is actively promoted by the inviting Association, and their messages disseminated

by that body, using their privileged position to promote and promulgate the message to their membership and to the general public. This power comes with grave responsibilities.

Australian researcher

#### Letter no 4

Dear Suzanne

I'm adding a note of urgency to the request just sent by XX. Because of this matter, I have not yet booked for conference - I have to decide about boycotting if this is not resolved - but have missed early bird rates. Now we are approaching the 3-month advance time at which I need to book best train fares etc. It will hugely increase costs if I cannot book quickly and get best fares.

Please could I urge you to resolve this unfortunate situation very speedily.

Kind regards