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Professor Nielsen's research interests are behavioral finance, corporate governance, family business, and household finance. His research has featured in international newspapers and magazines including Business Week, Financial Times, Harvard Business Review, International Herald Tribune, The Economist, The Times of India, and Wall Street Journal.

He has studied the consequence of family succession on firm performance, the value of independent directors, why individuals shy away from stocks, the effect of personal exposure to the global financial crisis on risk taking, and households' decisions to refinance their mortgage. His work has been published in academic journals including American Economic Review, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Financial Economics, Review of Financial Studies, Management Science, and Review of Finance. His research has been awarded with external financing from competitive research grants on several occasions.

On his area of expertise Professor Nielsen has served as an external advisor, consultant, and lecturer to government agencies and companies in China.