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Dean Svend Hylleberg
Det Samfundsvidenskabelige Fakultet
Nordre Ringgade
Bygning 327, 3.
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August 6, 2006

Dear Prof. Hylleberg,

I am writing in support of Professor Helmuth Nyborg, who is facing disciplinary action from the University of Aarhus. I am Secretary-Treasurer of the International Society for the Study of Individual Differences (ISSID), the premier international society for researchers on ability and personality, although I emphasize that I am writing in a personal capacity. I will also state that my own research is not concerned with the potentially controversial issues address by Prof. Nyborg, and I do not necessarily endorse the conclusions at which he arrives.

I wish to emphasize the high regard in which Prof. Nyborg's research is held by the community of individual difference researchers. His work is widely esteemed and respected, even by researchers with differing evaluations of the evidence. He was an Executive Director of ISSID from 1999-2005. I know of no-one in the Society who questions his integrity or dedication to research. Prof. Nyborg also organized the very successful 1997 Meeting of the Society in Aarhus, the first time this event took place in your country.

I am not, of course, in a position to evaluate all the details of Prof. Nyborg's case but there are several features of the documents I have seen that are profoundly troubling. These documents include three evaluations produced by your committee. My concerns are as follows.

First, your committee's thoroughness in re-analyzing Prof. Nyborg's data is commendable, but it is difficult to see how their conclusions have much bearing on either his quality and consistency of research, or his scientific ethics. Factor analysis is notorious for raising statistical difficulties, and even experts in the technique are on record as differing sharply in their recommendations for procedures and interpretations of data. Even if Prof. Nyborg's analyses are open to criticism, he

is far from alone in this respect. If your committee arrives at different conclusions, their place is in the scientific literature where the issues may be openly debated.

Second, regarding the documentation and reporting of data, the comments posted by Prof. Nyborg on his website rebut at least some of the criticisms made by the committee. As an Associate Editor for *Personality and Individual Differences*, I can also endorse the specific point that the 5,000 word limit on articles tends to limit the author's ability to present all details of a study. In general, the committee's report of March 16 does not show much evidence for serious engagement with Prof. Nyborg's response. It is also disquieting that there is a major discrepancy in the different accounts. The report mentions Pia Ankersen's complaint, but, according to Prof. Nyborg, this individual was sent the information requested, along with follow-up emails. I do not see any evidence that your university attempted to investigate the discrepancy, or that you have safeguards in place to protect faculty from potentially malicious complaints.

Third, it has escaped no-one's notice that Prof. Nyborg has expressed opinions, on eugenics, for example, that will be unwelcome to many. It may appear more than a coincidence that Prof. Nyborg is also being investigated for the quality of his scientific work. I do not expect you to agree that he is being punished for having unpopular views, but you should be aware of the danger that this will be the perception, to the detriment of your university's reputation. As far as I can tell, no precautions were taken to ensure that the evaluation of Prof. Nyborg was not colored by prejudice or personal animus. I do not, as it happens, share Prof. Nyborg's views on eugenics, but I believe that the principle of academic freedom should protect his faculty position, subject to whatever legal framework for freedom of speech exists in Denmark.

In sum, Prof. Nyborg is a distinguished researcher who does not deserve to see his career at Aarhus University finish under a cloud. The reports commissioned by the university at most show minor errors and lapses in communication of a kind not uncommon in academia. It is unfortunate that your investigative procedures have not included steps to defend your institution against the perception that he is being held to different academic standards than other researchers, because of his controversial opinions. I very much hope that you will have the wisdom to exonerate Prof. Nyborg. Doing so will serve both the cause of justice and the interests of Aarhus University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerald Matthews".

Gerald Matthews, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology