

February 23, 2012

Herman DeBose, Chair
Department of Sociology

Dear Dr. DeBose,

I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Jerald Schutte, the distinguished professor of sociology at California State University, Northridge. Dr. Schutte was a professor of mine during both my undergraduate and graduate years of schooling, and was deeply influential on my own development and direction as a sociological researcher.

I can say without reservation that I would not be where I am today without Dr. Schutte. I make my living working with a Ph.D. as a statistician and research scientist, skills that I gained and honed under the instruction of Dr. Schutte. My knowledge and understanding of statistics and social research methodology were shaped by Dr. Schutte's expert training at both the undergraduate and graduate stages of my development, training that was sufficient to provide me with research employment first for the state of California, then for the University of California, Riverside, and eventually for the research institute that now employs me. I am deeply fulfilled by my chosen profession, and I truly and honestly believe that this opportunity would not have been available to me were it not for the expert tutelage gained under his guidance. In this, I owe a great part of my career to Dr. Jerald Schutte.

My debt and gratitude extend beyond the career opportunities he has provided me, however. My chosen area of substantive expertise is social psychology, an interest sparked in me by classes taken with Dr. Schutte. Specifically, Dr. Schutte's great passion and intellectual affinity towards the theories of cognitive consistency sparked in me a (thus-far) lifelong interest in the mechanics of cognition, with specific focus on the role of gestalt and consistency/comparison processes. This interest was no passing fancy, but rather acted as the foundation for my very career, serving as the basis for my first master's thesis (an examination of how people respond to consistency/uniformity in music, now a published book), my second master's thesis (an examination of the role consistency plays in the experience of amusement, currently in the R&R stage at a peer-reviewed journal), and my Ph.D. dissertation, entitled "A Revised Theory of Cognitive Consistency" (currently under manuscript development). One can show few clearer examples of the influence one professor can have on the development and direction of student's intellectual interests. One can find even fewer examples of a student more grateful. In this, I owe a great part of my intellectual life to Dr. Jerald Schutte.

The lessons he taught me were not all derived from books. During the first two weeks of my first class with Dr. Schutte, he and I began to form a conflictual relationship. In what was either youthful exuberance or sheer misguided conceit, I rather rudely challenged his knowledge and authority on a public class discussion page. If I remember correctly, he had not answered a question about the central limit theorem as fully as I would have preferred.

Before the next class meeting, Dr. Schutte called me into his office. He sat me down across the desk and looked at me rather seriously. He said, "Jesse, I don't think you understand the impact your opinion has

on the mood of the class as a whole. You're smart and brash, and the other students will follow your lead because of it. As a result, I can't have you causing trouble." Or something to that effect. It's more impactful when a big, bearded doctor says it to you. He continued, "I'll make you a deal. If you have any issues in the future, you come talk to me directly. My door and email account are always open; I'll answer any questions you might have, day or night."

This may seem a small issue, and in hindsight perhaps it was. But, it caused a younger me to look at myself in a new way. Dr. Schutte didn't talk down to me or reprimand me. He didn't try to reassert his authority by putting me in my place. He talked to me like an equal and showed me power I didn't know I had, while maintaining the gentle authority of professorship. He had the courage to *empower* a troublesome student, rather than trying to delegitimize their actions. In doing so, he instantly won me over and got me to try harder to do well and impress him and the students around me, a habit that spread to my other areas of my life. In this, I owe Dr. Jerald Schutte some small part of my transition into adulthood.

I bought Jerry a present when I graduated, and he wrote me a very kind and warm note. He attended my wedding. I don't stay in touch with Jerry as much as I'd like, because life is like that, but I'm deeply honored to have the chance to write this letter. The time in my life when a single individual can have such an impact on me is closing, if it hasn't closed already, and this letter is a chance for me to put down on paper what time can sometimes dim or adulterate.

I'm ostensibly writing this letter for a distinguished teacher nomination, though I'm not clear on the details. The details don't matter. Personally, I'm writing this letter to tell Jerry how much I appreciate the effect he had on my life. If someone else wants to give him an award, all the better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jesse Fletcher', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jesse Fletcher