Chris Vito has asked me to write a letter of recommendation in support of his application to your doctoral program; I am happy to do so. I have known

Chris for more than three years. He was a student of mine in my undergraduate social theory course at San Diego State. He is now a student of mine in a graduate seminar called Globalization and Ethics, and is working with me on his Masters thesis. Chris also worked as my graduate assistant for two semesters. I believe I can comment on Chris’s academic ability and potential to do doctoral work, his commitment to learning and teaching, and his personal character.

I have taught in the Sociology Department at San Diego State University for fourteen years and I have taught undergraduate courses, entry level and upper division, and graduate courses. During this time, I have taught several thousand students. Academically, I would rank Chris in the top 1% of the students both undergraduate and graduate that I have taught. All of the courses that I teach have a comprehensive evaluation process, exams, papers, and presentations. Chris has excelled in all of these areas. He writes extremely well and he is very articulate in both interpersonal interactions and classroom presentations. Chris also does something few students seem to do these days; he reads beyond the assignments and he takes courses outside the discipline. This has given him an impressively wide intellectual background, one that includes not only sociology, but history, philosophy and popular culture. In his Master’s thesis he brings this background together in an analysis of underground `hip hop as social criticism, specifically the work of Immortal Technique. The thesis is also an imaginative critique of Marxism and Critical Theory while still remaining within the tradition.

Another area that I can comment on is Chris’s performance as my graduate assistant. I believe his work as my assistant reflects well on both his maturity and his commitment to teaching. Chris was the best graduate assistant that I have had. He was self-motivated, dependable, and pro-active. He was on time, always knew what he had to do, and didn’t have to be given directions. And he did much more than was required by the job description. He held office hours, review sessions, and he tutored students. Since working for me, Chris has had several semesters teaching break out sections for the large Introduction to Sociology course. I would have complete confidence in Chris teaching an entry level course or being a teaching assistant for your department.

As I have said, I have known Chris for over three years and I believe that I have come to know him, not just as a student, but as a person. Chris is a person responsible and dependable, a person of good character. During his time at San Diego State, he has developed strong interpersonal relationship with his cohort and with the faculty. He is unusually mature for his age; perhaps this could be, at least partially, because he has had to work his entire academic career. At one point, he was working three jobs in order to help support his parents who were having difficulty financially. He never complained or used the situation as an excuse.

I have no doubt that Chris would be able to do doctoral level work and that he would excel in the program and be able to finish the program. I give Chris my highest recommendation without qualification. If I can be of any further assistance, I can be reached at [psemm@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu.edu) or 619-594-5906.