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Letter of reference for Eilon Caspi

To whom it may concern:

I have known Eilon Caspi since 2003 when as a graduate student he participated in my qualitative research methods course. Having witnessed his dedication to learning and his growing expertise as a qualitative researcher, I invited him to join me as a partner, serving as teaching assistant, for the following year's course. Our work together continued after that semester. Specifically, he coordinated a campus-wide qualitative research workshop series that I helped to plan, and he planned and completed his dissertation for which I served as a committee member. Through these connections, I have deep firsthand knowledge, as detailed below, of Eilon's impressive competencies, as a collaborative, qualitative researcher, and talented analytical thinker, scholar and learner.

Throughout his distinguished doctoral journey, Eilon brought a profound commitment to learning, one that surpassed any other doctoral students I had had the privilege of working with during the 19 years of my faculty advising and teaching at the University of Massachusetts Boston's public policy and gerontology doctoral programs.

Several endeavors we worked on together are the foundation for my reflections on Eilon's scholarly contributions, commitment to deep learning and collaborative working style. To each of these projects, Eilon brought a resolute commitment to learning and to carrying out the highest quality research, building upon evidence-based solutions and going beyond conventional thinking.

For example, when Eilon and I were working together planning and carrying out my qualitative research methods course, Eilon characteristically focused not simply on the practicalities of ensuring the logistics of the course went smoothly for each student; he also contributed significantly to the quality of the course by offering his insights on the substance of each course session and on feedback to students on their work. He provided hands-on technical assistance to individual students on course content and on use of qualitative software they were learning. He sensitively brought critical feedback to me in our pre-session and post-session briefings which enabled us to refine our thinking and flexibly respond to learning challenges that students were exhibiting. Uniformly, students who took this course identified Eilon's role as critical to their learning.

As to Eilon's dissertation work, it is difficult to put into words the extent to which his research is of the highest quality imaginable. I will try. First, the thoroughness of his proposal was outstanding. Each of the components of his research design was solidly supported by his analytical review of the literature, his conceptual model, his carefully crafted research questions and methodology.

Second, once he began his ethnographic research, he did so with abandon and a deep seriousness of purpose. For ten months, he immersed himself in the assisted living units that were the settings for his in-depth exploration of the interventions and organizational practices that enable residents with dementia to experience positive, rather than negative, emotional states. Eilon's qualitative research practice --- field observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, review of resident and organization records --- as well as the ethical and other dilemmas he experienced, are detailed with bracing honesty in his extensive daily field notes and reflective memos. The methods chapter of Eilon's final dissertation, in my mind, has the potential to stand as a primer that other qualitative researchers and students could learn much from regarding every step in the planning and carrying out of ethnographic research.

Third, Eilon's dissertation research is path-breaking. His dissertation study has led to three peer-reviewed publications and laid the groundwork for his book, to be published in the coming year by Health Professions Press: *Fighting for Dignity: Prevention of Distressing and Harmful Resident-to-Resident Interactions in Dementia in Long Term Care Homes*.

I am aware that his student cohort, the faculty he works with and his organizational Assisted Living research partners hold Eilon Caspi in very high esteem for his high quality research, his trustworthiness, his generosity in supporting the learnings of his peer cohort. Indeed, I witnessed regularly the ways in which Eilon brings out the best in his colleagues. As a teaching assistant, he had exceptionally high standards for himself; the standards he held for himself are ones that he brought to our work together and to his expectations of students participating in the course. While his standards are high, his commitment to learning and generosity to others were offered in equal measure to his high expectations.

Eilon Caspi is exceptionally bright. He thoroughly, systematically and enthusiastically undertakes any endeavor to which he has made a commitment. He is a talented researcher who has completed an original and path-breaking study that, I expect, will radically change the practices of those working with men and women challenged by dementia. Eilon's novel and original thinking, exceptional productivity, thoroughness, high quality work and collaborative interpersonal style, as described above, are representative of his doctoral journey and his extensive professional post-doctoral accomplishments.

Sincerely,

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