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The Difference One Word Makes:

Imagining Sexual Orientation in Graduate School Application Essays

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Abstract

Past researchers in implicit racial bias illuminated how changes of even a single word in such writing samples as job applications and syllabi can shape perceptions and behavior. In the present study, a multi-staged experiment was undertaken to expand the work in implicit racial bias by using a similar research design focused on sexual orientation. We attempted to elicit sexual orientation identification one-word changes (wife, partner, or husband to refer to significant other) in graduate school admission essays and investigated differences in participants' ratings of those essays on a number of relevant dimensions. Results indicate that essays referring to a partner or husband were perceived as more feminine/less masculine and more gay/less straight versus those referring to a wife. We also found that the essays mentioning the partner or husband were rated as being a poorer "fit" to the university versus those referring to a wife. These results have implications for research, as this introduces a useful research paradigm for LGBTQ work, and for practice as it highlights the ways that single-word variations can elicit sexual subjectivities and impact subsequent decisions about admissions and fit.

Keywords. Sexual Orientation; Admissions Essays; Implicit Bias

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Contemporary understandings of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation have emerged from several lines of research. One area of scholarship has been direct discrimination, including homophobic or heterosexist attitudes (D'Aguelli & Rose, 1990; Ferfolja, 2007; Hogan & Rentz, 1996; Norris, 1992; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). Another research focus has been covert discrimination resulting from implicit biases against those perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer (Aberson & Dorra, 2003; Aberson, Swan & Emerson, 1999; Ewing, Stukas, & Sheehan, 2003; Lyons & Atwood, 1994; Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002). Some researchers have focused on discrimination and bias on the basis of sexual orientation in employment (i.e. Levine & Leonard, 1984), housing (i.e. Egerton, 1990), and personal interactions (i.e. Harper & Schneider, 2003). Despite this body of research, research designs for investigating the nuances in and extent of bias and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in higher education have been limited.

In experimental education research, Russ, Simonds, and Hunt (2002) found that when a male guest speaker identified his partner with a male name in a prepared classroom lecture, he received over twice as many critical remarks on evaluations as his counterpart who referred to a female partner. In a study using manipulated syllabi, Anderson and Kanner (2011) found that students rated the syllabi of professors they believed to be gay or lesbian as containing more bias than those of professors they believed to be heterosexual, although the syllabi were identical other than the manipulations made to induce sexual orientation identification. However, these research designs are all limited in the amount of experimental control that can be exerted due to issues such as the use of intact groups, and the limitations of the classroom setting.

In the related field of racial bias and discrimination research, however, another research design has proven effective in gender and ethnicity research. In this research approach, typically the name on a résumé is altered to a ‘Black-sounding’ name, ‘White-sounding’ name, ‘Arab-sounding’ name, and other configurations to test which names will receive callbacks and higher ratings of ability despite having identical résumé content. For example, Widner and Chicoine (2011) found that Arab-sounding male names were less than half as likely to be called back as White-sounding male names. King, Mendoza, Madera, Hebl, and Knight (2006) found similar differences between White-sounding names and Asian-sounding, Hispanic-sounding, and Black-sounding names. This field of research on hiring bias on ethnicity is extensive (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Shih, 2002; Young, Kennedy, Newhouse, Browne, & Thiessen, 1993), and the paradigm has also been applied to gender (i.e. Glick, Zion, & Nelson, 1988). However, although some research in this paradigm has considered sexual orientation as a discriminating variable in hiring decisions (Hovarth & Ryan, 2003; Nadler, et al., 2013; Ruggs, et al., 2013; Weichselbaumer, 2003), this design has not yet been applied to the study of discrimination against LGB individuals in higher education.

In the present study, we sought to expand the work of past researchers in implicit racial bias by using a similar research design for sexual orientation and focusing on educational application documents. In such decisions, the initial stage of evaluation involves the appraisal of written documents (cover letter, résumé, application documents). Based on that appraisal of written documents, the applicant might be invited for further stages of evaluation such as an interview. Because our interest was in education, we selected graduate school admissions essays as the object of research. The process of graduate school admissions shares some similarities with hiring decisions. In both situations, there is a staged process in which one must pass an

initial barrier (the résumé in hiring, or the admissions essay in graduate school admissions) before being interviewed and given full consideration. We thus focused on that initial stage of the graduate application process in which written materials are evaluated, as was the case in the research on implicit racial bias. To that end, we attempted to elicit the identification of sexual orientation through slight variations in graduate school admission essays. Then, we investigated how participants would rate those essays differently on a number of relevant dimensions. We hypothesized that essays with the one-word manipulations intended to elicit sexual identification of the writer as gay would be rated as more feminine, more likely to be gay, and would be rated less favorable on factors such as fit and likelihood of admittance.

Study One

We first wanted to determine which combination of factors in an essay would lead individuals to identify the author as either “gay” versus “straight”. This step was necessary to then narrow the essay prompts and determine how they may be rated differently on admissions-relevant criteria in Study Two.

Method

Participants. Participants were undergraduate students at a research-intensive land grant institution located in the Midwestern United States. There were a total of 122 participants ($M_{age} = 25.67$, $SD_{age} = 6.67$). Of those, 37 reported that they were men, 80 that they were women, and five did not report gender. In terms of ethnicity, 89 reported that they were White, non-Hispanic, 12 that they were Black or African American, non-Hispanic, seven that they were American Indian or Alaskan native, three that they were Asian or Pacific Islander, three that they were Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, three reported ‘other’ ethnicity, and five did not report ethnicity. This distribution is relatively similar to the University distribution for ethnicity overall.

In terms of sexual orientation, 110 reported that they were ‘straight’, four that they were ‘gay/lesbian’, two that they were ‘bisexual’, one reported ‘other’, and five did not respond to the question about sexuality.

Materials.

Essays. There were six experimental conditions, with each condition receiving the same essay except for slight modifications. The ‘control’ condition was an application essay that had not been modified in any way intended to cause a gender-atypical identification or to create identification with ‘non-heterosexual’ sexual identities. This essay was then modified to change the reference to his ‘wife’ to ‘partner’ and then ‘husband’ (see Appendix 1 for essay highlighting these one-word changes). Then based on previous literature suggesting the use of highly specific color words was associated with gender-atypical or non-heterosexual identification (Jacobs, 1996; Kulick, 2000) while less specific color words were associated with more gender typical or heterosexual identification, each of these three conditions was modified by changing references to colors (blue, red, and black) to very specific color terms (sapphire, crimson, black). This resulted in six conditions: control (wife and nonspecific color words), specific color words, partner with nonspecific color words, partner with specific color words, husband with nonspecific color words, and husband with specific color words. Otherwise, the essays were the same, so that the same male applicant wrote the roughly 500 word essay, split between three prompts, with only the changes for significant other wording, and color-words.

Bem Adjectives. Adjectives were drawn from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), on which participants rated the essay author using a seven-point Likert-type rating scale. All adjectives from the masculine and feminine set were used, with the ‘neutral’ terms not used. The ‘neutral’ terms are not scored in the traditional Bem scoring scheme, and were excluded from

this study altogether. The participant was asked to rate each adjective on a seven-point scale (1 = “Not at all like him”, 7 = “Very much like him”). The masculine scale showed high score reliability in the present sample ($\alpha = .91$), as did the feminine scale ($\alpha = .90$).

Adjective Ratings. Also included were ratings on other adjective-anchored scales. There were six of these, four of which were intended as distractors. Only two were related to the research question of the present study. These were the reviewer’s ratings of the essay author a scale of one to seven from “Very Masculine” to “Very Feminine” and from “Very Gay” to “Very Straight”. The full list of adjective rating scales is included in Appendix 1.

Procedure. We recruited student participants by email and by in-person announcements in education, psychology, and statistics courses. Those who were interested were directed to the online study link via the University research administration website. This site tracks student participation in research for extra credit and instructor reporting purposes. Once participants arrived on the online study website, they read the informed consent form, and began the study. The website randomly assigned each participant to one of the essay conditions. Because of unequal attrition in each group, there were not even numbers in each condition. There were 27 in the control condition, 24 in the color variant condition, 17 in the partner variant condition, 25 in the partner-color variant condition, 15 in the husband variant condition, and 11 in the husband-color variant condition. First, participants read the randomly assigned essay. Then, they provided a text description of the essay author. Next, they rated the author on a series of adjectives drawn from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). Following these ratings, the participant rated the author of the essay on a series of adjective-anchored scales, including the target adjective pairs of masculine-feminine and gay-straight. All participants received extra credit in their courses for

participation. These procedures were approved by the University Institutional Review Board, and all participants were treated in accordance with APA ethical guidelines.

Results

We used one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) to analyze the between-groups differences on the Bem masculine adjectives, the Bem feminine adjectives, the single-item rating for masculinity-femininity of the speaker, and the single-item rating for 'gay-straight'. Four ANOVAs were used instead of a single MANOVA because these four analyses were thought to be sufficiently theoretically dissimilar that combining them in a multivariate analysis was inappropriate. Instead, the Bonferroni correction for experimentwise error was used. We began by setting the overall Type I error rate at .05, and applying the Sidak-Bonferroni correction, arrived at an alpha value of .0127 for the four individual ANOVAs. This correction compensates for the increased probability of Type I errors associated with using multiple univariate tests.

In order to assess differences on ratings using the Bem adjectives, a mean score was calculated for all of the Bem 'masculine' adjective ratings, and for all of the Bem 'feminine' ratings, creating two scale scores. There were no statistically significant differences based on experimental group for Bem masculinity adjective ratings ($F_{5,113} = 1.166, p = .330$), nor for Bem femininity adjective ratings ($F_{5,111} = .781, p = .566$). Next, we assessed potential differences on the single-item ratings. For the masculinity-femininity rating, there were significant between-groups differences ($F_{5,111} = 4.750, p = .001, \omega^2 = .138$). There were also significant between-groups differences for the gay-straight rating ($F_{5,111} = 11.956, p < .001, \omega^2 = .377$). Descriptive statistics by group can be found in Table 1.

Next, we used Scheffe post-hoc tests to determine which experimental groups significantly differed in terms of their ratings of the essay author. For the post-hoc comparisons,

we returned to the less conservative alpha level of .05. We found the only two groups significantly different in terms of their rating on the masculinity-femininity item were the partner variant group and the husband variant group. The husband variant group rated the essay author as significantly more masculine/less feminine than the partner variant group ($p = .028$). The partner-color variant group approached significant difference from the husband variant group ($p = .053$), and the difference between the partner variant group and the husband-color variant group approached statistical significance ($p = .053$). In both cases approaching significance, the version including mention of a 'husband' was rated as less masculine/more feminine. For a full listing of the post-hoc results for the masculinity-femininity rating item including mean-group differences, refer to Table 2.

The post-hoc tests revealed many significant differences on the straight-gay item. In comparison to the wife group, those in the partner variant group rated the author further on the 'gay' end of the rating scale ($p = .004$), as did those in the partner-color variant group ($p = .002$), the husband variant group ($p < .001$), and the husband-color variant group ($p = .032$), though there were no significant differences between the control group and the color variant group ($p = .980$). In comparison with those in the color variant group, those in the partner variant group rated the author further on the 'gay' end of the rating scale ($p = .043$), as did those in the partner-color variant group ($p = .036$), and the husband variant group ($p < .001$), with no significant differences between the color variant group and the husband-color variant group ($p = .155$). The remaining groups showed no significant differences. That is, there was no significant difference between partner and husband, with or without the color-word variation. For a full listing of the post-hoc results for the gay-straight rating item including mean-group differences, refer to Table 3.

Study Two

Based on the results of Study One, we believed the key differences that cued sexual identification were between the “Wife” condition and either “Husband” or “Partner”. We also wondered if participants would perceive these conditions differently in terms of the applicant’s preparation for graduate school and “fit” with the institution. As a result, we conducted a follow-up study. In this study, the sentence that had contained the color-word variations was removed entirely, and instead we only varied whether the essay mentioned a wife, a husband, or a partner.

Method

The method was identical to that of Study One, with the exception that we removed the sentence that used color-words and only included Wife, Husband, and Partner variants. We also added two questions: 1) How prepared is he for graduate school, in your opinion (1 = Not well prepared at all; 7 = Extremely well prepared)? 2) How well do you see him fitting in at this university (1 = Not at all well; Extremely well)? The participants included 103 undergraduate students recruited from the online participant pool at the university ($M_{age} = 27.43$, $SD_{age} = 4.060$). There were 31 men and 72 women. In terms of ethnicity, 75 reported that they were White, non-Hispanic, 10 that they were Black or African American, non-Hispanic, seven that they were American Indian or Alaskan native, one that they were Asian or Pacific Islander, eight that they were Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and two that reported ‘Other’ ethnicity. In terms of sexual orientation, 98 reported that they were ‘straight’, two that they were ‘gay/lesbian’, two that they were ‘bisexual’, and one did not identify their sexuality.

Results

As a preliminary step, we first tested whether there were any significant differences between the “partner” and “husband” groups; we expected none based on the results of Study

One. Independent-samples *t*-tests confirmed there were no differences in terms of masculine-feminine ratings ($t_{36} = -1.145, p = .260$), straight-gay ratings ($t_{36} = 1.007, p = .320$), preparation for graduate school ratings ($t_{36} = -.446, p = .658$), or fit with the university ratings ($t_{36} = -1.989, p = .054$). Descriptive statistics by group can be found in Table 4. Based on those preliminary tests, we combined the “husband” and “partner” groups for the primary analyses.

We analyzed the differences in ratings between the combined “partner” and “husband” group from the “wife” group using independent-samples *t*-tests. Because of the small sample size, exploratory nature of the research, and because the tests in this case were not considered related due to the nature of the data (which were independent items rather than related subscales as in Study One) the Type One error rate was set at .05 for all tests. Participants rated the wife essay as significantly more masculine/less feminine than the partner/husband essays ($t_{68} = -2.088, p = .041, \omega^2 = .046$). Participants also rated the wife essay as significantly more straight/less gay than the partner or husband essays ($t_{68} = 3.806, p < .001, \omega^2 = .162$). In addition, participants rated the wife essay as a significantly better fit with the university than the partner/husband essays ($t_{68} = 2.178, p = .033, \omega^2 = .051$). However, there were no significant difference in terms of perceived preparedness for graduate school ($t_{68} = .668, p = .506$).

Discussion

We found that a differences of only one word in an admissions essay associated with shifts in participants' assumptions of essay writers' sexual orientation as "gay" versus "straight." Moreover, raters reading the essays seemed to assume applicants were heterosexual, which appears to be disrupted by the mention of a partner or husband. It was not even necessary for the essay to mention a wife for participants to assume heterosexuality. In fact, for 42% of participants in the ‘husband’ condition in Study Two, where open-ended data were collected,

they assumed the author was female despite multiple cues (the male-typical name, male pronouns, and other indicators) based on the mention of a husband. The condition with no mention of a significant other was rated as similar in sexual orientation as that of the essay mentioning a wife. It is perhaps this disruption of assumed heterosexuality that led to a more negative perception of essays referring to a partner or husband. It appears that participants assumed the word “partner” indicated a same-sex partner given that the essay with “partner” was rated similarly to that with “husband”. Taken together, it appears there is no need to induce a belief that the writer is heterosexual as this is a preexisting assumption, but it is easy to controvert this belief and subject the author of the essay to LGBQ identification with a shift of only one word.

The consequences of this shift are substantial. The results demonstrate that individuals do appear to imagine essay authors as sexual subjects, and that those subjectivities are associated with shifts in how the applicant is viewed. It is particularly noteworthy that changing only one word was associated with this shift. Also noteworthy is the emergence of “fit” is a standout variable in the present study as fit with institution is often considered a key variable in whether a student will be admitted. Will the student fit with the faculty? Other students? The institution? In this case, the reading of sexual orientation through a mere wording shift of a single word in an application essay was related to rating the applicant as less of a fit. The wording of the open-ended responses suggests that as participants evaluated the essays they adopted the role of a faculty member responsible for admissions. Many critiqued in detail the imagined applicant’s experiences, grammar, and professional goals, all of which point to the participants’ adoption of an evaluative faculty role. In other words, although no respondents explicitly discriminated against authors they viewed as gay, it is possible that the presence of this understood

sexualization lead to an automatic heuristic in which participants treat the essay to greater scrutiny. This is consistent with prior research in which speakers believed to be gay receive more critical comments than a speaker believed to be straight giving the same speech (Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002), or in which syllabi are critiqued more carefully when they are thought to be from a gay professor than a straight professor (Anderson & Kanner, 2011). That is, it may be the case that these biases occur at the *implicit* level, where the individual may be unaware that he/she is using a higher level of scrutiny or thinking more carefully about fit than he/she would for a different essay author. This would be similar to the finding that people who normally espouse egalitarian racial beliefs show physiological signs of distress, even when they report no psychological distress, when exposed to close proximity to members of other ethnic groups (Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Hodson, & Houlette, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine if we could induce reading of sexual orientation with small changes in the essays, and to see if that would be related to changes in how the essays were rated. Based on the results, it seems that one-word changes in admissions essays can induce reading of sexual orientation, and that such readings have consequences for how raters handle those essays.

The present study has limitations. The sample size is small, and comprised of students. A closer-to-life sense of graduate admissions could be gained from sampling faculty members. It is also common that graduate school applicants submit additional documents with their essays, such as a curriculum vitae and letters of recommendation. Including additional materials more closely approximate the admissions task might lead to more authentic graduate school application ratings. However, it was not the purpose of the present study to recreate the admissions process, but merely to test how small differences in an essay can be related to differences in how applicants are perceived and evaluated, particularly in the area of sexual

orientation. In other words, studies like the present study are not meant as simulations of actual decision making processes, but as tests of how identity categories might make a difference when those processes play out in real-world situations involving holistic reviews of application essays along with other materials. For the purposes of the present study, the results demonstrate that individuals did perceive sexual orientation based on a one-word shift in essays of applicants they had never met, and, similar to the findings from implicit racial bias studies, that perception affected their appraisal of the applicants. As a result, this research design is promising for use in exploring sexual orientation in higher education and in other related areas.

Beyond the implications of the present study for future research and the promise of this design for other applied psychological research, the findings have real, practical meaning as well. The finding that a face-value reading of simple application essays results in imagining authors as sexual subjects, and that subjectivity leads to particular changes in how applicants are evaluated, critiqued, and judged is meaningful not only for higher education professionals, but may have broader implications. Particularly because the imagining of sexual identification as placed on the applicant seems to have then become a trait that influenced how other aspects of the author were imagined, including fit with the university. In other words, the imagining of the author as a sexual subject led to the apparent othering of the author and subsequent ratings of lack of fit. Although this study is prospective, these findings have meaning within and beyond higher education.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics by Experimental Group for Study One

Group	Bem Masculine	Bem Feminine	Masculine/Feminine	Straight/Gay
Wife	4.56 (0.84)	4.28 (0.84)	3.33 (1.52)	6.15 (1.03)
Wife-Color	4.40 (1.00)	4.15 (0.87)	3.38 (1.50)	5.79 (1.28)
Partner	4.89 (0.71)	4.55 (0.56)	2.82 (1.13)	4.18 (1.42)
Partner-Color	4.78 (1.03)	4.14 (0.79)	3.08 (1.32)	4.29 (1.40)
Husband	4.42 (0.91)	4.42 (0.71)	4.73 (1.62)	3.13 (2.10)
Husband-Color	4.22 (1.26)	4.20 (0.74)	4.80 (2.04)	4.20 (2.04)

Note. Descriptive statistics in this table are given as: M (SD). Masculinity is the low end of the rating scale, and femininity the high end. ‘Gay’ is at the low end of the rating scale and ‘straight’ is at the high end.

Table 2

Post-Hoc Tests for Masculinity-Femininity Rating Item

Experimental Group		Mean	SE	p
		Difference		
Wife	Color Variant	-.042	.418	>.999
	Partner Variant	.510	.461	.942
	Partner-Color Variant	.250	.418	.996
	Husband Variant	-1.400	.480	.140
	Husband-Color Variant	-1.467	.552	.225
Color Variant	Partner Variant	.551	.472	.927
	Partner-Color Variant	.292	.430	.993
	Husband Variant	-1.358	.490	.185
	Husband-Color Variant	-1.425	.561	.273
Partner Variant	Partner-Color Variant	-.260	.472	.998
	Husband Variant	-1.910	.528	.028
	Husband-Color Variant	-1.976	.594	.058
Partner-Color Variant	Husband Variant	-1.650	.490	.053
	Husband-Color Variant	-1.717	.561	.105
Husband Variant	Husband-Color Variant	-.067	.608	>.999

Note. Masculinity is the low end of the rating scale, and femininity the high end.

Table 3

Post-Hoc Tests for Gay-Straight Rating Item

Experimental Group		Mean	SE	p
		Difference		
Wife	Color Variant	.356	.414	.980
	Partner Variant	1.972	.457	.004
	Partner-Color Variant	1.856	.414	.002
	Husband Variant	3.015	.476	<.001
	Husband-Color Variant	1.948	.547	.032
Color Variant	Partner Variant	1.615	.468	.043
	Partner-Color Variant	1.500	.426	.036
	Husband Variant	2.658	.486	<.001
	Husband-Color Variant	1.592	.556	.155
Partner Variant	Partner-Color Variant	-.1152	.468	>.999
	Husband Variant	1.043	.523	.555
	Husband-Color Variant	-.024	.589	>.999
Partner-Color Variant	Husband Variant	1.158	.486	.346
	Husband-Color Variant	.092	.556	>.999
Husband Variant	Husband-Color Variant	-1.067	.603	.680

Note. 'Gay' is at the low end of the rating scale and 'straight' is at the high end.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics by Experimental Group for Study Two

Group	Preparation	Fit	Masculine/Feminine	Straight/Gay
Control	5.61 (1.56)	5.42 (1.50)	2.97 (1.56)	4.58 (1.12)
Wife	5.44 (1.64)	5.53 (1.27)	3.06 (1.13)	5.28 (1.49)
Partner	5.14 (1.39)	4.64 (1.14)	3.50 (1.34)	4.09 (1.57)
Husband	5.31 (0.87)	5.31 (0.87)	4.06 (1.69)	3.56 (1.63)

Note. Descriptive statistics in this table are given as: M (SD). Masculinity is the low end of the rating scale, and femininity the high end. ‘Gay’ is at the low end of the rating scale and ‘straight’ is at the high end.

Appendix 1
Writing Sample

In order to complete your application to the Ph.D. program in Psychology at Midwestern State University, answer each of the following questions in 150 words or less. Your responses will be used to evaluate your readiness for graduate school, your qualifications for the program, the quality of your written expression, and the match between you and the program.

1. Describe your professional and educational experiences and goals. Why are you seeking admission to this program, and how does it fit with your experiences and goals?

My primary goal, educationally, is to work toward and obtain a Ph.D. in psychology. I hope to work in an academic job teaching psychology and conducting research. I think my background prepares me well for these goals. I worked as a T.A. for Dr. Irvin at Northern State University and also presented research with Dr. Stevens. In addition to these experiences, I know that the knowledge and experiences I will gain at Midwestern State University will help to prepare me for a future in teaching psychology. I am seeking admission to the program because I want to further my knowledge of psychology and deepen my understanding of the discipline, so that when I begin working with students I will be able to successfully teach them the concepts and skills they will need, as well as to ignite a passion for psychology in those students.

2. Graduate work can be difficult and emotionally taxing. Describe your beliefs about self-care and how you support yourself emotionally and psychologically.

It is very important to take care of oneself emotionally and psychologically, particularly during stressful periods like graduate school. This requires times of relaxation, rest, as well as keeping healthy interests other than school. One of my main sources of support throughout my master's program was my **wife/partner/husband** who will continue to be a source of emotional and psychological support if I am admitted to the Ph.D. program. Another strategy for dealing with stress that has been particularly helpful for me is to simply immerse myself in the natural world, even finding a park to sit look out at the green grass, and watch as the sky turns from **blue/sapphire** to **red/crimson** and finally to black. Taking these times to forget about other obligations for a couple of hours can be extremely beneficial for self-care, in my opinion. Healthy family relationships, friendships, and making appropriate time for relaxation are all important aspects of my beliefs for remaining emotionally and psychologically healthy throughout graduate work.

3. Why do you believe you are a strong candidate for admission to the program? Describe relevant experiences and accomplishments that enhance your application and qualifications for graduate work.

I am a strong candidate for the program because I have demonstrated an ability to excel in graduate work while at Northern State University, which I attended while working full-time. I also managed to work as a T.A. for Dr. Irvin at the same time, which demonstrates my qualifications for the program as well as my ability to excel in graduate level work. I also believe I can meet all expectations for research. I have produced research presentations working with Dr.

Stevens including work on the psychology of student memory, which I believe fits well with Midwestern State's current line of work on the psychology of memory. My master's thesis was also in the area of psychology of memory, which is under preparation for publication, and further demonstrates my ability to work in a research environment.