

Statement of Purpose

Following nearly ten years of employment as an aircraft mechanic, I took a hard look at where my life was going. Although I was responsible for important work, requiring intensive technical knowledge and mechanical skills in manufacturing and maintaining aircraft - felt compelled to include myself in a larger arena. Each airplane that I repaired and that flew away was a poignant reminder that I was standing still. Consigned to the tedium of long commutes and time clocks – my daily routine was empty of genuine enthusiasm and curiosity. Predictable, the content of my days offered little beyond another paycheck, another weekend, another Monday. I realized that in order to redirect my life and fully experience the world, I would have to confront the uncertainties that change would bring.

My first step was to face an embarrassing truth and re-enrolling at the age of thirty, I earned my high school diploma. I could have forgone this step of earning a diploma but I was compelled to alter how I approached my past and in doing so, how I would meet my future. Resigning as an aircraft mechanic and enrolling full time at my local community college I attained my associate of arts degree. Unquestionably, these initial accomplishments contributed to my deep-rooted curiosity about human behavior and motivation. Focusing my academic direction I then earned a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB). While working part time and attending college full time proved exhausting and at times frightening, nevertheless, the decision to change my life was revealing itself as the correct path. In preparing for a career within psychology, I recognized that a doctorate in this field would be essential. Within this goal in mind, I resolved to strengthen my academic and practical background by entering the master's program in general/experimental psychology at CSUSB.

Having proposed my master's thesis on the perception of family resources and the psychological adjustment of parents caring for a child with autism, I expect to defend by October and earn my master's degree. Data collection for my thesis topic was based on protocols created during my work as a research assistant at the University Center for Developmental Disabilities (UCDD) at CSUSB. The UCDD has over 120 families with developmentally disabled children who receive behavioral treatments and family services. The opportunity to work directly with these families was sobering when considering factors affecting family dynamics. However, it offered practical as well as conceptual understanding within this area. Additionally, involvement with the UCDD was fundamental in understanding the steps of setting up a research investigation from its earliest stages. During my time there, I was able to: research literature related to the field of autism and developmental disabilities, evaluate measures used for test construction, write test items, pilot test questions and testing administration procedures, and interview parents and siblings for data collection. Seeking to expend my research experience I also participated in a study investigating the effects of amphetamine on glial cells. This study, utilizing an animal model, offered the chance to learn laboratory techniques related to: handling, injecting, surgery, perfusion, cryostat brain slicing, slide moulding, and finally digital microscopic cell counting. This study will be published this year.

This man is matter-of-fact about having made a major error in his first career choice. His bravery in returning to school is admirable.

Be sure to run laundry lists of skills, techniques, and even equipment you can operate, as this writer does here.

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

Eager to compliment my basic course requirements for the master's program, I have completed two extra upper-level statistics courses (multivariate and structural equation modeling) as well as two additional clinical courses (family dynamics and pervasive developmental disorders). Moreover, having been selected from among many candidates to instruct and introductory experimental course, I have just completed a full academic year instructing a laboratory section. My responsibilities included facilitating experiments and teaching the associated APA writing style and content format to upper-level psychology students. Additionally, following my teaching assistantship, I was hired as a writing consultant for my university's McNair Scholars Program. As a writing consultant, I am responsible for reviewing students' research content and writing styles across a range of disciplines including: physics, economics, geology, as well as diverse subjects withing psychology. Though these opportunities to interact and advise undergraduate students require long hours of detailed review – I found them extremely rewarding and they have made me, I feel, a more well-rounded person.

To understand the application of psychology, I have sought out volunteer opportunities as well. As a crisis counsellor for a local suicide/crisis hotline, for over three years, I have assisted individuals who are overwhelmed by the burdens of stress. In addition, as an unpaid assistant at Patton State Hospital, a state forensic treatment facility, I assisted staff in reintegrating patients for release into community halfway programs after many years isolated from society. Currently, I have begun training to volunteer at a rape crisis center that will require that I meet with victims and act as an advocate and assistant during their initial hospital and police investigation. Moreover, employing my expertise as a photographer, I have documented artwork and activities at a local museum.

In changing the direction of my life, I also decided to reenlist in the United States Air Force Reserves. Reenlisting as a photographer rather than in my previous military career as an aircraft mechanic has opened an esthetic outlet fostering creativity and even fun. As a supervisor in a combat photography unite tasked with visual documentation of worldwide military activities, I have been able to pursue my interest in people and travel through a medium that integrates aspects of both psychology and art – a rare opportunity in the military. The experiences and paths I have led are diverse; adopted as a child from Korea, living and working in Europe, traveling around the world, as well as the life of a student have all etches their marks within me. I believe the breath and depth of my life experiences are my best qualities. Through them I can appreciate how perspectives are influenced through ethnicity, culture, geography, and even history. My competence in the laboratory, as a teaching assistant, as a researcher for the UCDD, as a paid writing consultant for the McNair Scholars Program, volunteer efforts helping people during crises, and even my work as a photographer with the USAF have solidified my dedication to the field of psychology as a career choice. My goal is to complete a clinical Ph.D. program, commit my life to the field of psychology and learning, and be of service to others.

I am highly interested in the topic of psychotherapy and anxiety and would be excited to work under the direction of Dr. Tchanson. Additionally, Dr. Lehman's work with anxiety and depression would be particularly interesting. I would be an enthusiastic member of either one of these professor's research team.

This student is establishing teaching, writing, and statistical skills, virtually assuring that he will get an assistantship. Teaching, writing, and statistical skills are the trifecta for graduate assistants.

Combat photography? Wow. That's a conversation item.

Notice how he mentions this adoption bombshell in passing, without elaborating at all. Another great example of how sometimes less is more.

This essay needs more "why here" than this. Strive in your essays to make a close connection to faculty, especially research faculty. The general rule is to identify three or more with whom you have affinity.