Brittani Whaley graduated from Oswego East High School where she spent three years on both the varsity soccer and basketball teams. At NIU, she is a health and human sciences major with an emphasis in pre-physical therapy and a member of the Pre-Physical Therapy Club. Brittani hopes to obtain a doctorate in physical therapy and eventually become a clinic director. Writing this essay was important for Brittani because it gave her an opportunity to share her story with others, intending to show the hardships that homosexuals face and the need for equal treatment.

Brittani wrote this essay in Nyssa Bulkes's English 103 course during the fall of 2010.
A LOVING PARENT
BRITTANI WHALEY

Having love toward someone or something without bounds and without circumstance—this is the purest kind of love there is. This is unconditional love. Having this type of love is one of the hardest things to achieve. But is it possible to possess this type of love for a person? No matter what a child does, in his or her parent’s eyes, he or she is still loved. There is something deep down in a parent that makes him or her feel love for his or her child regardless of the person his or her child becomes. Some people call homosexuality the ultimate sin and feel that homosexuals are the scum of the earth. The love between parent and child is so strong that a parent can see past the differences and love his or her child, homosexual or not. An analysis of my personal narrative, an interview of a friend, and of David Sedaris’s *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim* reveals a test of love between parent and child through homosexuality and some of its possible outcomes: parents completely accepting their child and setting aside all differences, acceptance by a single parent and denial by another parent until realizing love will always prevail, or having one parent deny his or her child’s differences.

No matter how badly I screwed up, my mom and my dad both loved me more than ever. When I started to drink, they were disappointed but never once did they not love me. When I went behind their backs and got more tattoos, they were upset. My mother was furious, but my parents never stopped loving me. No matter what I did, I knew that I would always be loved, but somehow, even with that knowledge, I was fearful of what I was going to tell them next. I had considered all of the consequences: never seeing my dad again, possibly living with my dad and never seeing my mom again, but I never considered that I would still be loved the same. I had heard so many horrible stories from friends, about their families turning them away and I didn’t want to be like them. However, I knew there was still a chance that I would end up like them, with no family. Despite all of my fears, I knew I would eventually have to tell my parents, so I did.

My senior year of high school, I came home from school, and my mom and brother were sitting in the living room. My mom
asked me to sit down, and my family began to have a heart-to-heart. My mom at one point said, “I just want you guys to know that you can come to me with anything and I will still love you.” Right at that moment, I knew I had an opening, and I knew I had to speak up. I told my mom and my brother that I had something that I then felt obligated to say. We all sat down, as all attention turned to me. Extremely nervous to say anything, I asked my brother to leave the room. Being the older and very protective brother, he moved to the kitchen, which was still within ear shot of what I was saying. Fully aware of this, I decided I didn’t care and that I would allow him to listen in. After a brief freak-out moment, I continued by saying, “I’m bisexual.” My mom giggled and said, “I love you.” My brother walked over and said, “Stand up.” I stood up, and he proceeded by giving me a hug and asking, “Will you be my wingman?” a typical brother-sister moment between us. I had the first conversation done and one more left to go with my dad.

Two days before my high school graduation, I walked into my house to my dad lying on the couch. I lay down next to my dad as we watched the Ellen DeGeneres Show. Feeling the extreme irony at that moment, I decided that it might be a good time to have that conversation with my dad. Being a daddy’s little girl, this conversation was going to be harder on me, or so I thought. I turned to my dad and I said, “Daddy, I want to tell you something.” There was a long pause but finally I said, “I’m bisexual.” My dad turned to me and said, “Kay,” and then he turned back to the television set. It definitely wasn’t the reaction I was expecting, but it was also a much better reaction than I had anticipated. I had found unconditional love. Still to this day, my parents love me more than ever.

Similar to my story, my friend Lauren had quite the experience telling her parents about her sexuality. In an interview with Lauren, I got another perspective not only on unconditional love, but on unconditional love involving homosexuality. Lauren has been very open about who she is for about five years now and has received many different reactions involving her sexuality. When people find out that Lauren is gay, at times, they turn her away and refuse to accept her. “I have lost a lot of friends because I told them who I am,” she told me while fidgeting with the zipper on the bottom of her pants. Clearly, not all of her friends supported her decision to be open and to tell people who she is. Her friends
showed her that unconditional love does not exist among everyone. In a follow-up interview with Lauren, she informed me that she was scared about telling her parents that she was gay because of the way her friends reacted. “I had been more comfortable telling my friends because I felt their beliefs were more in my favor than my parents’ beliefs were. This made me really nervous that my dad and especially my mom would turn me away,” Lauren told me, in response to a question about her reasoning behind being so nervous about telling her parents. Lauren explained to me that she was really nervous because she didn’t want to tell her parents, and the only reason she was telling them was because her girlfriend’s dad was making her tell them.

Lauren eventually told her parents that she was gay and received mixed reactions from her parents. “My dad was really supportive. He didn’t really care that I was gay,” she said. Lauren’s father still held that unconditional love for his daughter. Even though Lauren had just told her dad that she was gay, he loved her more than ever. However, when Lauren told her mother, the mood was slightly different. Lauren told me, “My mom didn’t really accept it. I think to a point she was in denial. She really didn’t acknowledge it for a really long time.” Lauren’s mom didn’t want to believe that her daughter was gay and ignored the fact that Lauren had confessed this to her. Even during this time of denial, Lauren’s mom never stopped loving her daughter. She still put a roof over her head, continued to provide her with meals, put her through high school, and told her that she loved her every day. “She eventually came around to it and now has accepted it,” Lauren told me with a slight grin on her face. Because her mom loved her so much, she set aside Lauren’s differences and decided to love her no matter who she is.

Lauren and I had very similar stories to tell that both convey a very similar message. My parents both accepted my differences and loved me for who I am. My parents never denied me because the love between us was so powerful. In Lauren’s story, her father felt the same way that my parents felt. He accepted her for who she was and continued to love her no matter what. In contrast to my story, Lauren’s mother did not accept her differences right away. Her mother denied the fact that Lauren was different from most other people. However, Lauren’s mother continued to love her. Because her mother had such a strong love
for her, she eventually set aside her differences. Her mother realized that love was a stronger power and that no matter what, Lauren was her daughter and she was going to love her. Both sets of parents were given a test of love and both sets decided that love was going to win.

In David Sedaris’s *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*, Sedaris tells stories of his life including how he was kicked out of his parents’ house by his father because he was gay. Sedaris explains to his readers, “I wouldn’t know it until months later, but my father had kicked me out of the house not because I was a bum but because I was gay” (Sedaris 89). Sedaris’s mother on the other hand accepted him for who he was, showing extreme remorse when his father kicked him out on the curb. “My mother assumed that I knew the truth, and it tore her apart … She cried until it sounded as if she were choking. ‘I’m sorry,’ she said” (Sedaris 89). Sedaris had only one parent who supported him, his mother, and he struggled to gain the approval of his father. Sedaris was never completely removed from his father’s life. He worked for his father and saw his father at family occasions like his brother’s wedding and the birth of his brother’s daughter. Even though Sedaris managed to stay in his father’s life, he was never able to gain the love that his father showed his other siblings, especially his brother. While trying to strike up a conversation with his father and brother before his brother’s wedding ceremony, Sedaris began a sentence before being interrupted by his father, “‘We’re trying to watch some TV here,’ he said. ‘Jesus, do you mind?’” (Sedaris 173). Sedaris’s father treated him as an insignificant part of the family and of any conversation. With Sedaris trying to start up a conversation, Sedaris’s father passed off the conversation as irrelevant and continued to watch the news. Because he is gay, Sedaris was unable to receive the love and attention that he deserves from his father.

Both Lauren and Sedaris had one parent who accepted them for who they were and one parent who denied their differences. Lauren’s father was always there for Lauren and always loved her. Similarly, Sedaris’s mother continued to love her son and showed him the love that he deserved as her child. Lauren and Sedaris each had one parent who loved them no matter what and chose love over denial. On the other hand, a major contrast between the two stories was that Lauren’s mother continued to
love her and still put a roof over her head. In Sedaris’s story, his father kicked him out of the house and showed no love for his son. Another contrast is, Lauren’s mother eventually accepted Lauren for who she is and Sedaris never gained the acceptance of his father. They both had the parent who went through denial of their differences, but Lauren was lucky enough to have her mother come around to the idea and accept her as she is. Sedaris was never as lucky as Lauren; his father never came around to the idea and never showed love toward him again.

Sedaris’s and my stories showed differences while conveying two separate messages. In my situation, both of my parents demonstrated that love was a stronger power than the power of hatred. My parents decided that they loved me regardless of my actions or who I was. Similar to my story, Sedaris and his mother share a message with my parents. Sedaris’s mother loved him because he was her son and nothing was going to change the fact that she loved him. With Sedaris’s mother, love, too, was the stronger power. In contrast, Sedaris’s father never felt that love was the stronger power. Sedaris’s father conveys a message of hatred and the message that parental love can be broken by homosexuality. His father never accepted him for who he was and that showed the sad alternative to what should happen. Sedaris was never lucky enough to have his father treat him like a son, but I was lucky enough to have the love and support of my parents from beginning to end.

Through analysis of my personal experience, an interview with Lauren, and Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim, a test of love between parent and child through homosexuality is revealed. Through my personal experience, a person can see that some parents will accept their children no matter their sexual preference. With my interview of Lauren, a person can see that some parents will deny their child’s differences at first but will eventually come around and realize that love is the stronger power. Through Sedaris’s book, an individual can tell that sometimes love cannot overcome the distaste for homosexuals. The test of love between parent and child should never be a test. No matter a child’s sexual orientation, a parent should always be supportive. It is unfortunate that not all children have the same experience that I did. The love between parent and child is constantly tested; no test is harder than
the test of homosexuality. How the parents react to homosexuality shows the power of love.
WORKS CITED

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