Cottey College
&
the Cottey College English
Department
Present

Write On, Sister

The Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls
Academic Writing Contest
2022

About the Contest

The Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls Academic Writing Contest was developed to enhance the prestige of academic writing in the disciplines at Cottey College. All students are invited to submit writing to the contest. Internal judges from Cottey College perform initial assessments of the pieces. Then, finalist external judges, typically professors or professionals in the relevant disciplines at other colleges and universities, rank the best pieces in each category.

The winners are honored at a public ceremony; for the 2021-2022 academic year, a synchronous webinar was held. The full texts of the winning pieces are shared online via this publication.

The contest is financed through a generous endowed fund established by Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls, a 1959 Cottey graduate. Ms. Sauls sees writing as fundamentally important to success in any endeavor, and sponsors the writing contest as a way of furthering that vision.

For more information about the contest and its past winners, as well as the recording of the 2022 awards ceremony, visit the [contest website](#).

The co-sponsors of the contest, Dr. Jonathan Green and Dr. Sarah Polo, wish to thank the internal and external judges for their service and commitment to student writing.

Contest Judges

External Judges

Composition: Dr. Julie Perino

Academic Writing: Dr. Ann Reed

Professional Writing: Professor Donna Lenharth

Internal Judges

Dr. Carmen Bourbon

Dr. Jon Green

Dr. Jorge Dioses

Dr. Julie Tietz

Dr. Kathy Pivak

Dr. Oindrila Roy

Dr. Sarah Polo

Dr. Trisha Stubblefield

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Composition

2ⁿᵈ Place:
Madison Kucera, "Project 2 Podcast Script"

Hello, and welcome to *First Year Writing Seminar The Podcast* where we hear from different people who speak on certain events in their life that have led them to a certain conclusion. On today's episode, we'll hear from [name], a first year student at Cottey college who is going to be discussing her experience with hitting rock bottom, and what self efficacy and motivation have to do with the world we live in individually and as a group. I do want to put in a quick little trigger warning. Today's guest will be speaking about eating disorders in graphic detail, and if that's something that could potentially be destructive to you, I urge you to listen to a different episode. With that being said, please enjoy the following listening.

Hi! I'm Madison Kucera. I'm a first year student at Cottey College studying secondary education. In our first year writing seminar, we were challenged with the task of deciding what we believe in, and chalking all of it up to one statement using one of four dimensions talking about global awareness. I believe that dimension one, which talks about self awareness and integrity, is most important in our ability to be globally aware, and that you must first experience your individual lowest low to fully understand how strong you are and the impact you can have on others.

To begin with, you have to be well physically and mentally before you can even approach trying to be there emotionally for someone else. I mentioned in the beginning of the podcast that I was a first year student in college. I'm also a sister, daughter, friend, and employee. I'm also a recovering anorexic and bulimic. Anorexia is an eating disorder that is characterized by restricting what one eats to a point where it's harmful. Bulimia is characterized by any eating behavior that is followed by a "purge", or a way to rid oneself of that meal or food item, including induced vomiting, excessive exercise, or laxative abuse. I began a cycle of destructive eating patterns when I was fourteen, and as I got older, I progressively got more drastic in my hunger to lose weight and achieve perfection and control. Along this road, I lost a lot more than just pounds. I lost my menstrual cycle, some of my hair, my sleep, my sanity, my ability to maintain body heat, and most of all, my grip on reality. I was so hyper focused on making sure I didn't gain weight, eat anything, or slip up that everything that used to matter didn't anymore. I replaced any friends I could've had with a scale in a bathroom, and instead of friendship bracelets and class rings adorning my hands, scabs and cuts lined my knuckles from purging. During this time, one thing became very clear. My relationship with myself was extremely unhealthy. I was in no position to help myself, let alone anyone else. Asking for help and having someone step in and give you a hand is necessary sometimes, and that's not an easy conclusion to come to. When talking about dimension one, this concept is extremely applicable. Character traits that stick out to me when thinking about my experiences with eating disorders are dependability and self

awareness. In order to help someone else, whether the problem is big or small, you must be someone dependable at every step. If you can't depend on yourself to sustain a healthy lifestyle by eating meals and taking care of yourself, you aren't able to give that to someone else. Being self aware enough to know you need help also allows you a better insight as to when other people might need your help.

Continuing, your experiences and challenges fundamentally change the way you look at the people around you, and your perspective is what motivates you to take action. (First day in the treatment office vs last day) I remember walking into the children's behavioral health office for the first time and feeling completely floored. Across a waiting room of colorful books and monotone voices, there were kids who looked nothing like Idid. Kids of all sizes, ages, and backgrounds all had one thing in common. At first, I hated this waiting room. I didn't wanna be grouped in with the kids everyone is afraid of or can't understand unless they have a masters degree. I wasn't anything like them, and to categorize me as needing help or being crazy wasn't fair. The trait of honesty plays a big part in dimension one when speaking about global awareness. There are many reasons we lie to ourselves. The main one for me was the truth was too painful, shocking, or sometimes, all together too heavy. By being honest, you're able to cultivate a real relationship with the world and those who inhabit it. How often do we walk past someone on the street without knowing anything about where they came from or what they do? To us, they're a roadblock, a distraction. And if I was honest with myself, they were pieces of myself that I couldn't even put into words yet. As my time in treatment continued, I kept seeing the same faces. I felt myself begin to change in my own head. As I began the hard work of being honest about what my eating disorder did for me, I started to realize the similarities between me and the kids in the waiting room. All of a sudden, the kid who was so thin she couldn't wear leggings or the five year old who wouldn't speak weren't side characters anymore. They were bits of information that I was able to use to get better. In order to serve a bigger purpose in the world, we have to begin looking at ourselves for what we are and looking at other people for what they are. Lying to yourself about your situation, eating disorder or not, gives you no room to change the world or make even a little bit of difference. Dimension one places emphasis on understanding that your experiences and struggles are not what make you imperfect, but rather what make you you. As you continue through life trying to figure out a million things at once, being honest about how you feel and why you feel that way is the gateway to ultimate success in other areas of our lives, such as careers, relationships, or academics.

Finally, you have to understand how much you're worth in order to bring out the worth in other's idea of needing to hit rock bottom in order to help others when they hit rock bottom. In order to truly understand how to be globally aware and help others achieve great things, an understanding of rock bottom is needed. Rock bottom isn't the end, just a new redirection. My rock bottom was lying on the bathroom floor in my house at 2 am. I was so dehydrated that I couldn't stand up, but every time I tried to be sick, there was nothing to throw up in my stomach. My throat was raw and bloody from the constant stomach acid damaging my esophagus. All I could do was cry, and even that was miniscule as I had barely anything to make tears in me. In just a t-shirt, I crawled to my room and found an old granola bar which I quickly snarfed down so I could finally throw up. This

moment was the first moment in this entire ordeal I had ever looked at my eating disorder and thought 'What the hell are we doing?'. And it was only for a second, but somehow it meant more than just a few words to me. Rock bottom is what you make it. At my lowest, I had to find help from somewhere other than myself. But in order to do that, I had to take accountability for what was happening to me. That doesn't mean the eating disorders were my fault. It means that keeping them a secret and defending them was my fault. Accountability is a big part of dimension one, and in order to understand the world around us, we must understand our part in it. Much like understanding what I was contributing to my anorexia and bulimia, we must understand what we as individuals contribute to an issue. For example, if I'm passionate about climate change or environmental activism, the very first step of making a change is making myself change. Whether it be reducing animal and plastic intake or recycling more, change starts with one person. In order to truly recover or pick yourself up, you have to acknowledge the role you play in your own circumstance much like the roles we play in our own world. I also believe rock bottom moments help us motivate ourselves. In dimension one, motivation is an important characteristic because it explains why we strive to make the changes we do. That moment on the bathroom floor was one of many precursors that told me that I had to change something or I wasn't going to make it. Much like different movements throughout history such as the civil rights movement and the women's suffrage movement, sometimes things have to get to their worst for you to realize what you have to do to fix the situation at hand.

To sum up why I'm talking to you, I want to again reiterate the importance of self awareness and integrity. I believe that dimension one, which talks about self awareness and integrity, is most important in our ability to be globally aware, and that you must first experience your individual lowest low to fully understand how strong you are and the impact you can have on others. In order to be globally aware, you must first be self aware of your needs, ambitions, fears, and attitudes towards a plethora of different issues. What I believe in is what I talked about today in this podcast, but it's also what I will keep in my head as I make decisions that affect the rest of the world.

Composition

1ˢᵗ Place:
Alexandria Lay, "To Defend the Indefensible"

The writing and delivery of political speeches is an inherently rigorous process that puts to use the talents of speechwriters in an effort to sway or solidify an audience's opinions. In few other speeches are their talents truly pushed than the State of the Union Address especially in a time of crisis. On January 29th, 2002, George W. Bush would give his second State of the Union Address a mere 4 months after the unforgettable September 11th terrorist attack. In this yearly address to Congress and the American people, Bush reviews the status of the country and how it has been altered by the gravity of recent events. Bush's speech maintained a comforting but vague cadence but leaves questions about the deeper meaning of his words. For example, in 1946 author George Orwell published an essay called "Politics and the English Language" in which he discusses how political writing uses these devices to "defend the indefensible" (Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"). One such device is meaningless words. Which are words that are lacking in an agreed-upon formal definition or meaning that are meant to appeal to the emotions of the audience. Bush's use of meaningless words throughout his State of the Union Speech allows him to identify with and exploit his audience while maintaining plausible deniability as to the true meaning of his speech.

President Bush uses the word "America" or "Americans" an impressive 56 times throughout his speech. It is primarily used in the speech to build a sense of belonging and community with the audience. It is frequently followed by words like "we" or actions like "work", "prosper", or "fight" (Bush, "Address"), but what does "America" or "American" truly mean in this context? In the eyes of some, it could mean things like apple pie, baseball, the word y'all but in someone else's opinion, America could mean something vastly different like inequality and racism. It does not fully abide by the more literal definition of America as just a place people live or else he could use a synonyms term like "country" or "citizens." However, Bush avoids the general definition. Bush's use of America or American is very intentional, allowing people to build their own picture. It is meant to build a connection between the audience and their country by unifying them as one group. It also leads them to feel closer to the speaker themselves as Bush frequently uses "we" in conjunction allowing his audience to feel something of a personal relationship to him despite not knowing him. All together this helps Bush create a pathos-based appeal to his audience using sentimentality to unite them as a group with his vague definition. As Orwell points out "the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different." (Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"). Meaning that by not assigning an obvious definition Bush can connect with his audience without acknowledging a formal definition.

This particular State of the Union was given only a short time after the deadliest attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor. In light of this, it is unsurprising that the main theme of the speech is 9/11. Terrorist and terrorism are also frequently used meaningless words they are used approximately 36 different times throughout the speech. Bush never formally gives any criteria for who counts as a terrorist beyond ambiguous quotes like "so long as nations harbor terrorists, freedom is at risk" (Bush, "Address") and "terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil" (Bush, "Address"). On the other hand, the FBI splits terrorism into two separate categories international terrorism and domestic terrorism. Their definition for international terrorism is "Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations (state-sponsored)" (FBI). So why does Bush never use a formal definition in his speech? Why does he instead offer hazy approximations of the country's enemies? As Orwell states in his essay political language is designed to "make lies sound truthful and murder respectable" (Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"). In other words, Bush's nonspecific definitions of his "war on terror" and "terrorists" are to give him leeway for his decisions and actions. After all the audience does not know Bush's personal definition of what makes a terrorist or what qualifies as acceptable losses in stopping them. This dehumanization and inexact definition of the enemy gives the audience a sense of false security that they are being protected from the evil that inherently hates them while not needing to think about the possible consequences of Bush's actions.

Security is another word that shows up with stunning frequency making it another word worth looking at. It is often paired with words like "our" and "nation" to give an implied sense of solidarity and comfort. Necessary traits to win over supporters in a time of crisis. However, just like the previous two words, security is equally as vague in its implications only offering unclear promises such as "America will do what is necessary to ensure our Nation's security" (Bush, "Address"). A literal definition of security is "things done to make people or places safe" (Merriam-Webster). Much like the definition for terror this formal definition is never used instead of being replaced with vague notions of the word. Also like terrorism, the words meaning is up to the audience's interpretation and offers no insight into Bush's personal definitions of the word or where he may draw the line. So sure America may be "secure" but at what cost how much is too much and where does one draw the line? Because while some may draw the line at wiretapping phones others may believe that the act does not go far enough. This meaningless word is especially notable considering the Bush Administrations eventually strained its relationship with the public over surveillance and personal privacy after passing the Patriot Act post 9/11. Making these quotes in his speech early suggestions of what he was willing to do.

In conjunction with security is another significant meaningless word "freedom". Incredibly, similarly to his words on security freedom comes up several times throughout the speech often in the context of it being something we need to protect or sacrifice for as Bush states "the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high." (Bush, "Address"). What is freedom truly? Its definition is rather broad according to Merriam Webster freedom is "the power to do what you want to do the ability to move or act freely" (Merriam Webster). But does Bush mean freedom from terror, violence, fear? Like most meaningless words this word is used with the intention of invoking the audience's approval

by giving them something to fight for that they all view as essential to their daily lives. It gives the audience a singular focus that the enemy is against them and their freedoms. That fighting for these freedoms is a necessary evil that must happen or else they will be taken.

President Bush's State of the Union Address has a vast amount of meaningless political buzzwords meant to carefully manipulate the audience's emotions while simultaneously keeping it vague enough to disavow him of responsibility should he go too far. His use of pathos and textbook examples of Orwell's meaningless words helped him build a relationship and reassure his audience that he could protect and defend America. When looking at the speech through the context of Orwell's essay we are able to more critically consider the true meaning behind the seemingly innocent words that Bush used in his 2002 address. This is important as it allows us a deeper look into what Bush actually means in his speech giving us a clearer view of his thoughts and goals.

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Academic Writing

2nd Place:
Emily Marsh, "Gillette Commercial Addresses Hegemonic Masculinity"

Gillette's campaign via YouTube, "The Best Men Can Be," provided a door to a necessary and overdue conversation about toxic masculinity that is emblematic of the political climate in today's society. This idea that Gillette critiques that "boys will be boys" is psychologically damaging and leads to gender stereotypes, lack of accountability, and a culture that prioritizes and celebrates stereotypically masculine values, which is especially damaging to marginalized groups. In this paper, the "boys will be boys" trope is synonymous with hegemonic masculinity, or the idea that masculine traits are superior to feminine traits, which will be heavily critiqued and evaluated.

Gillette's commercial can be examined in two parts: The first half, which depicts different clips of hegemonic masculinity, and the second, which shows how the culture has recently started to change. In the first part, young boys are competing, bullying, and being bullied, men are hypersexualizing women and treating them as objects, people are bored and desensitized to each of these scenes, men interrupt women, and fathers chant "boys will be boys" while one boy is repeatedly hitting another at a barbeque. In the final half of the commercial, a famous actor, Terry Crews says "Men need to hold other men accountable" (Gillette, 2019), the narrator implies that the #MeToo Movement made this possible, and says that society needs to teach boys not to use violence or aggression to solve their problems or prove they are "real men."

As the clip illustrates, hegemonic masculinity has historically been used to justify bullying, sexual harassment, aggression, and a myriad of other unacceptable behaviors that are said to be products of male biology. It is important to question any biologically deterministic views because they lead to phenomena such as the ones listed above. One study, for example, found that those who closely identified with and enacted "normal," typically male roles were more likely to have homophobic beliefs, be more hostile, and believe that men should be more dominant in relationships (Sinn, 1997). Further, because hegemonic masculinity is a dominant ideology, men who believe that women are sexual objects, or that men should be emotionally detached, control the narrative of male social groups (Bird, 1996). Men who hold differing beliefs conform to the heterosexism in the group. Taking this into consideration, it is especially crucial that men hold other men accountable, because sexism (which reinforces toxic masculinity) often happens when women aren't present. Although this is true, expressing beliefs that are different from a group makes people uncomfortable (Aronson & Aronson, 2019). However, because people are more likely to listen to someone who has power over them, adults need to teach young boys how to be accountable. The Gillette commercial shows men leading by example and

showing young boys that they should be kind to each other. This may lead to a shift away from hegemonic masculinity and toward a more progressive approach that values men's positive attitudes and actions.

Mental Health, Marginalized Identities

Although the Gillette commercial addresses some of the main issues with hegemonic masculinity, there are a few ways that the company could do more. For example, there isn't any depiction of how toxic masculinity might be bad for men's mental health and self-worth. In a meta-analysis of 78 studies, Wong and colleagues (2016) observed a correlation between conformity to masculine norms and worse mental health. In addition, they found that men who identified with these norms were less likely to seek treatment. While the first correlation was only slightly significant, it shows that, because the hegemonic culture forces men to hide their feelings, it's more difficult for some men to process their emotions. Because they are taught that talking about feelings is for women, and is therefore inferior to suppressing them, they are unlikely to seek emotional or medical treatment; this has a negative effect on their mental and physical well-being.

While mental health is important for everyone, these stereotypes more significantly harm queer men and/or men of color; the Gillette commercial didn't address these intersections. Because minoritized folks are generally given more barriers, it's important to discuss how hegemonic masculinity affects those in these identity groups. Queer men, for example, have added stress because what it means to be a man and what it means to be a gay man are very different. Research shows that queer men who subscribe to masculine norms (like emotional stoicism and self-reliance), and experience high levels of stress about being queer, have more depressive symptoms and report lower self-esteem than those who don't (Modrakovic et al., 2021). Another study found that higher rates of depression in queer men are correlated with riskier sexual behaviors, which are known to be correlated with higher rates of STIs (Fischgrund et al., 2012). Gay men are also more likely than gay women to internalize homophobia. Herek and colleagues (1997) found higher rates of homophobia in gay men than women, while bisexual men and women scored higher than their homosexual counterparts. They also found that homophobia is closely linked to self-esteem for gay men, with lower self-esteem correlated with higher rates of homophobia. This correlation wasn't found with gay women. This may be because those who subscribe to masculine norms are aggressive and hostile toward gay men but not lesbians. There is a homoeroticism attached to lesbians that isn't applied to gay men, which is a product of a heteropatriarchal fear of being gay. The internalization of hegemonic masculinity is more harmful to queer men because part of their queer identity is a direct contrast to a toxically masculine one.

In addition to not addressing mental health or queer men's experiences, Gillette's commercial didn't describe how men of color might be affected more than White men. Because this topic is so broad, this paper will only focus on Black men's experiences. Additionally, while most studies used quantitative research, Brassel and colleagues assert that quantitative research may miss the nuances of Black men's conceptions of masculinity

(2020). As such, qualitative research will be used to support this section's convictions. First, the idea of masculinity was found to be different in White and Black men (Brassel et al., 2020; Hammond & Mattis, 2005). While White men's conception of masculinity was focused on the individual, Black men saw it in a relational way; White men even attributed their privilege to individual characteristics while Black men saw it as structural. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity affects Black men differently because they adhere to masculine norms as a way of climbing the social hierarchy (Brassel et al., 2020). In other ways, they resist this masculinity because they see their "family" as more than just those most immediate to them. Black men were more likely than White men to feel responsible for other Black folks and people in their community, in addition to their close family. Finally, Black men are negatively affected by hegemonic masculinity because they must deny it and internalize it to be able to live as men while simultaneously living as Black.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Women

While Gillette's commercial focused on men, it made it clear that this issue is also about women. The ad uses the #MeToo Movement as a way to discuss hegemonic masculinity because this movement was a direct effect of countless claims of sexual harassment. These instances never stopped because the United States cultivates a culture that actively produces and maintains masculine ideals. It follows, then, that hegemonic masculinity can lead to violence against women and the sexualization of women. For example, people who are exposed to more sexualized images are more likely to support sexist beliefs and are more tolerant of violence toward girls and women (Liss et al., 2019). Additionally, when people are exposed to the hypersexualization of girls and women frequently, they are more likely to hold sexist beliefs. Strouse and colleagues (1994) found that, when adolescents watched more pop music videos—which often oversexualize women—girls were especially likely to believe that sexual harassment was normal and natural. Because masculinity is defined and disseminated as the opposite of femininity, girls and women are most affected by this normalization of toxicity. Only by deconstructing the gender binary can people finally end the reign of hegemonic masculinity.

Improvements for Gillette

While Gillette's ad might be considered empowertising—the phenomenon where ads make people feel empowered but don't offer any real solutions—this was actually a risky move for the company. A lot of men were angry at them for their advertisement and talked about Gillette contributing to the "wussification" of America; some even stopped using their products (Smith, 2019; Warren, 2019). Although Gillette's commercial was not able to address mental health or intersectionality, the website where they encourage people to donate to nonprofits includes options to donate to trans folks, veterans, Black folks, and children in under-served communities.

Gillette has done a lot as a company, but they can still do more. They didn't discuss their company in the video, but they might use their razors to their advantage. For example, they could set up workshops in under-served communities where men

teach adolescent boys to shave. They would foster a safe environment for adolescents to bond with men without violence. At these workshops, they could donate free razors to boys and their family members. This would help address the problem because community is the most important aspect of activism and because it would help give working class folks products that they might not normally be able to buy. In conclusion, hegemonic masculinity is starting to be addressed but it is a lot more complicated than many people believe. There is still a lot of work to do to deconstruct what it means to be a man in the United States.

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Academic Writing

1st Place:
Bronwyn Reagan, "Woman Leader: Nell Shipman"

It has been assumed men have always dominated the film industry but this is only true from the late 1930's up to the modern film era. Before World War II broke out, women/minority groups predominantly were the ones creating movies. Silent films were a smash for audiences around the world but with the emergence of talking pictures, and later women entering the workforce during World War II, women in film ceased to be important and were soon forgotten (Bridges & Robson, 2016). One such forgotten figure was Academy Award-winning cinematographer, Nell Shipman (1892-1970). Shipman was Canadian-born, silent film actress, writer, producer, and co-director/director. She pioneered independent filmmaking and created her own film company, Nell Shipman Productions, located by Priest Lake, Idaho. Memorable works include Back to God's Country and The Grub-Stake (Shipman, 2001). My interest in Shipman comes from a personal investment in art, film, and the history of Idaho (my home state). I not only wished to discover long lost women leaders through history, I hoped to rekindle my passion for the arts and to gain a better understanding of leadership throughout the ages.

In this paper, I will provide a detailed study of Shipman's leadership style, drawing examples from written works on Shipman paired with leadership theories presented in Peter G. Northouse's book, Leadership: Theory and Practice (2018). Readers will gain an overview of Shipman's childhood and career, addressing pivotal events including the good and bad parts of her life. This paper will require readers to briefly suspend their beliefs and/or presupposed ideas of what an ideal leader might look like. The reason being so that an objective and non-idealized view of leadership does not cloud a person's judgment of what leadership largely entails (although, a critical eye will be applied and is not to be completely ignored). Analytical topics will include Shipman's personality/characteristic traits, her ability to adapt to various situations, her aptness toward authentic leadership, and lastly, her moral/ethical development. A conclusion will follow after each topic has been addressed to give readers a chance to reflect on possible implications regarding the topics discussed.

BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW:

Nell Shipman was born Helen Foster-Barham (Nell being a nickname her father later bestowed) to her parents Arnold and Rose Barham in 1892, Canada. Shipman's birth was unusual as she was a stillborn. Having been brought up in the Victorian era, it was expected for women to keep a level head and push through the harsh realities of life. In short, it was

the British way to remain emotionless. Soon after a somewhat callous remark from Mr. Barham suggesting they could always make another baby, Mrs. Barham ran out the door with the dead child in her arms. At the edge of a cliff and mourning the loss of her child, suddenly by what appeared to be an act of God, the once lifeless body opened its eyes and started to breathe. This, of course, was only the beginning of Shipman's adventures. From the start, Shipman was fiercely independent and not one to conform to the societal norms of her time. It was truly a mystery to Shipman's family as to the type of person she would become and the life she would lead. (Shipman, 2001).

By the time Shipman was thirteen, she was a professional actress performing all over the United States (US) with a Vaudeville troupe. Life as an actress was hardly glamorous as some might imagine. For one, child labor laws didn't go into effect in the US until 1938 (United States Department of Labor, 2021), meaning she worked long hours and received little pay as a young actress. Secondly, acting as a profession wasn't taken seriously and was often looked down upon. While the hours were long and conditions brutal, Shipman still found quite a bit of success. Around age 18, Shipman drew crowds to see her perform tricks on the back of horses among other death-defying stunts. Audiences everywhere were enamored with her abilities. One person who was especially interested was Ernie Shipman, a 39 yr-old, thrice married, Broadway promoter (Bridges & Robson, 2016).

Ernie and Nell Shipman were married in 1910 and soon after, their son Barry was born. Shipman was encouraged by her husband to pursue screenwriting but not without some personal motive for wealth. Ernie Shipman later went to prison for outstanding debt pre-dating their marriage, leaving Nell to sell personal belongings in order to financially support herself and her son. Despite the troubles, the network built up by Shipman's husband allowed her to continue writing screenplays and eventually forged her way as a co-director/director. It's worth noting that there is some dispute regarding whether Shipman was recognized as a director or simply a co-director. The films she was a part of generally did not list her as a director, but based on personal accounts, it was evident Shipman did a significant amount of directing as opposed to mere co-directing (The Canadians: Nell Shipman, 2015). For sake of continuity, the term 'co-director/director' will be attributed to Shipman for the remainder of this paper. Shipman was not only still acting, she was known as a screenwriter and co-director/director by roughly 1915. Shipman had done some acting in films before 1915, but it wasn't until the release of God's Country and the Woman that the public eye fully recognized her as a movie star. In this film, Shipman took on a more active role in what modern society would term as an 'animal activist.' In a few of Shipman's earlier film roles, she had witnessed animal cruelty, "My concern for animals acting in motion pictures began at Vitagraph [a motion picture studio] during the shooting of a Curwood movie when I saw a bobcat shocked by electricity to make it hop and snarl, then doped so it would lie still. It died" (Shipman, p. i, 2001). Determined to prevent future cruelty to animals, Shipman demanded the absence of whips and/or guns on set and that all animals were to be treated humanely. Shipman's love for wild animals extended to the point of creating her own traveling zoo of animal actors.

Some time after God's Country and the Woman, Shipman was offered a major contract with Samuel Goldwyn Studio which she ultimately turned down. Instead, she ventured on her own while partnering with other filmmakers such as Bert Van Tuyle to pursue independent filmmaking. Independent filmmaking allowed Shipman to explore film locations such as Priest Lake, Idaho, without the restrictions of the studio industry. Additionally, Shipman refused to conform to the studio standards for actresses, giving her further reason to leave the studio. The petite/delicate bodies, painted faces, and brainlessness of movie screen actresses were not Shipman's idea of what woman's role in society was (Shipman, 2001). Having formed her own film company and written a new screenplay, Back to God's Country reached movie theatres in 1919. The movie was sensational while equally shocking. Back to God's Country contained the first nude scene in film history (Bridges & Robson, 2016). While nothing particularly revealing was shown on screen, the showing of a woman's back (let alone bare shoulders) stirred up audiences. Other films such as The Grub Stake and The Girl from God's Country followed in the subsequent years.

Even though Shipman's films were incredibly popular and grossed large amounts of money, her lack of formal education (and lack of self-control in some cases) made it difficult to manage her finances which ultimately led her to make unwise investments. Additionally, with the emergence of major film studios such as Universal, Metro-Goldwyn, and Paramount whose aim was to push out independent filmmaking, Shipman eventually lost her film company and her zoo. This was hard for Shipman to accept but she still maintained an air of optimism. As a result she continued to write screenplays and even children's books. Eventually she wrote her autobiography, The Silent Screen & My Talking Heart, which was originally published in 1987 (17 years after her death in 1970). The most recent publication of Shipman's autobiography was in 2001.

Shipman never regained the same kind of high regard as a respected filmmaker as in her earlier years but she still managed to make a living. While Shipman experienced a bittersweet ending to her career and endured the heartache of several marriages ending in divorce, much of her work greatly influenced modern, female independent filmmakers (The Canadians: Nell Shipman, 2015). Shipman's stance on women's role in society and humane treatment of animals inspired many changes within the film industry. By no means is the film industry today perfect but it is certainly better off than when it first started.

LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS:

Traits Approach: Shipman had a rather interesting life by her own account and according to historical scholars, however, there is reason to be cautious of anecdotal stories of Shipman's leadership abilities. As such, taking a psychological approach and examining Shipman's personality traits may provide further insight as to the type of person she was. This specific focus on correlating factors between personality and leadership falls under the "Traits Approach" according to Northouse (2018). The theory suggests that a particular set of traits are what make a leader. This implies a genetic predisposition toward certain characteristics

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associated with leadership. The traits approach can be problematic as it tends to be highly subjective and tacitly claims "leaders are born, not made" which means environmental factors are not necessarily taken into consideration. Nonetheless, the traits approach can be beneficial in terms of understanding historical figures such as Shipman. The Big Five Factors will be used to examine Shipman's personality as it is one of the most reliable assessment tools because it has been rigorously tested and has proven to be stable across cultures (Myers & DeWall, 2017). Note, however, that there is room for interpretation as this examination is based on observations drawn from Shipman's writings and others' accounts.

The breakdown of Big Five Factors are Consciousness (self-control, orderliness), Openness (creativity, independence), Agreeableness (conforming, nurturing), Extraversion (sociability, assertiveness), and Neuroticism (sensitivity to stable vs. insatiable emotions) (Northhouse, 2018) (Myers & DeWall, 2017). According to studies pertaining to personality and leadership, extraversion is the strongest factor linked to effective leadership followed by consciousness, openness, low levels of neuroticism, and lastly, agreeableness (Judge et al., 2002). This makes for interesting dynamics when compared with the personality traits as expressed by Shipman. A dissection of each factor, as it relates to Shipman, is as follows:

- Extraversion: Knowing Shipman's career centered around artistic endeavors, it would not be too presumptuous to assume she had high levels of extraversion. In recollecting a Christmas/New Year's dinner, Shipman describes enjoying company, good food, music, and dancing. "We fed the animals early, tuned the radio so we got San Francisco and, after awhile, the rhythm of a big band coaxed us. Sid [a young actor] and I began to dance" (Shipman, p. 152, 2001). Parties were a common way for Shipman to be sociable in addition to expanding her professional network. Such passion for life made Shipman incredibly likeable. Further evidence to support the likelihood of Shipman's high levels of extraversion comes from a study regarding creative success in the arts and sciences. According to the study, "Extraversion [...] emerged as a consistent predictor of creative achievement in the arts, independent of the effects of the other Big Five traits..." (Kaufman, et, al., 2016). This indicates a strong connection between extraversion and those in the arts regardless of what the other factor levels might have been.

- Openness: Similar to extraversion, there is a positive correlation between those in the arts and high levels of openness. Here is where an important distinction must be made. It's not enough to say all people in the creative arts are open, or in any case, it's not an adequate assertion. According to Kaufman, et al. (2016), openness splits into two categories: intellect (not necessarily associated with IQ) and openness to experience. Focusing on openness to experience, the creative elements of a person like Shipman will manifest themselves in the form of adventure seeking, tangible ideas, and physical activities. This split suggests possible limitations when it comes to technical and/or abstract problems that appeal to the intellectual side of creativity. Openness was one of Shipman's strongest personality traits which led to many innovative ways of filming stunts and capturing landscape (tangible and visual mediums) but in areas of finance (technical/abstract problems), she tended to falter

(The Canadians: Nell Shipman, 2015).

- Neuroticism: It's not uncommon for those who are high in openness to be higher in neuroticism. Additionally, there appears to be a negative correlation between neuroticism and self-control/consciousness along with a negative correlation between openness and self-control/consciousness (Zhang et al., 2019). In understanding the relationship between these factors, it is relatively safe to assume Shipman had higher levels of neuroticism. One such incident includes a time when Shipman walk out toward Priest Lake in the middle of winter, contemplating suicide. It was her son Berry who saved her from throwing herself into the freezing water (Trusky, 2013). Note, however, that a significant portion of those who are in the arts are usually higher in neuroticism (meaning it's a rather common occurrence). With that in mind, it doesn't necessarily mean that a person with neurotic tendencies can't be a leader. Simply, they may have more challenges.

- Consciousness: Referring back to the previous paragraph, it is likely Shipman had low levels of consciousness as she seemingly had high levels of openness and neuroticism. As a word of caution though, it's not entirely clear in her writings or in others accounts whether she was a tremendously organized person or not. Moreover, her lack of technical skills in financing may not be due to poor self-discipline, rather, poor education. Since this particular aspect of Shipman's characteristics traits wasn't well documented, the assertion that Shipman was low in consciousness is being drawn from generalized correlating factors.

- Agreeableness: Surprisingly, agreeableness is not a significant factor when it comes to leadership (Judge et al., 2002). Nonetheless, it's still worth examining as certain elements of the agreeableness factor may have a link to ethical concerns as expressed by Shipman. Similar to openness, agreeableness splits into two categories: politeness and compassion. Focusing on the compassionate side of agreeableness, research shows there is a positive correlation between compassion and those who are in the arts and/or of liberal leaning (Hirsh et al., 2010). This information is especially important as it will later provide a lens in which to view Shipman's moral and ethical outlook, among others too. The purpose of this section was to give an overview of what Shipman's personality mostly consisted of and is the framework in which a good portion of this paper is built on. We know that Shipman was likely high-to-average in extraversion, openness/intellect, and neuroticism, while average-to-low in consciousness and agreeableness. These factors will help assist any further development/understanding of Shipman's leadership style.

Situational Approach: In general, Shipman was excellent when it came to adapting to various situations. This, of course, is typical per the nature of filmmaking as one is required to be flexible when working with a crew and actors coming from various backgrounds. This adaptive quality falls under the "Situational Approach" which is a leadership model used to describe the different leadership styles that emerge based on any given situation. Furthermore, a person's leadership style becomes largely dependent on the level of

competence and commitment exhibited by followers (Northhouse, 2018). The model itself has two sections divided between leaders and followers which are then further divided into four separate categories:

- Leaders: delegating (low supportive and low directive behavior), supporting (high supportive and low directive behavior), coaching (high directive and high supportive behavior), and directing (high directive and low supportive behavior).

- Followers: developmental level 1 (low competence and high commitment), developmental level 2 (low competence and low commitment), developmental level 3 (high competence and varying commitment), and developmental level 4 (high competence and high commitment).

Depending on the followers' level of competence and commitment, the leader will adjust the way in which they convey information and form relationships with their followers. In order for this approach to be successful, the leader must be sensitive enough to their followers' needs to appropriately diagnose the situation(s).

When it came to diagnosing the situation, Shipman frequently demonstrated her ability to adapt to various situations through her professional relationship with Bert Van Tuyle. She trusted her partner to make decisions on her behalf and let him direct her films. As such, their partnership was very much a collaborative one. Shipman assumed a coaching (high directive and high supportive behavior) leadership role with the acknowledgment that her partner was at developmental level 4 (high competence and high commitment). Van Tuyle worked incredibly hard when assisting Shipman during the editing process of her films, furthering Shipman's appreciation and reliance on his skills (Trusky, 2013). Nonetheless, he still had his problems. Van Tuyle was known to have poor mental health which was greatly exacerbated during harsh winter conditions in 1923-1924, Idaho. "Van Tuyle's foot, frostbitten while making Back to God's Country […] became gangrenous and he became delirious with pain. With the assistance of locals, Shipman rescued him, managing to transport him down the frozen lake to the hospital […] making national headlines'' (Trusky, p. 3, 2013). Headlines read as "… NELL SHIPMAN, MOVIE STAR, AND SICK PARTNER CONQUER UNTOLD DIFFICULTIES IN TWO-DAY BATTLE OVER 30-MILE STRETCH AT PRIEST LAKE" (Shipman, p. 150, 2001). In this situation, Van Tuyle expressed low competence and low commitment when it came to his physical and mental health. In recognizing that her partner was at developmental level 2, Shipman immediately assumed a directive leadership role (high directive and low supportive behavior). Much of Shipman's heroic actions reflect the fact she cared about her followers. This characteristic can be linked to ethical concerns regarding her followers and her compassion toward those suffering (including animals).

Authentic & Ethical Leadership: The next two topics are combined as they are largely related to each other and tie back to previous topics. Further reflection on personality and authenticity includes one specific theory on authentic leadership that looks at characteristics interacting with different modes of action. For example, a particular set of values may lead to certain behaviours reflecting such values. Another example is that self-discipline may lead to consistency or stability when under stressful situations (George,

2003). Shipman's tendency toward certain concerns of the heart often led to expressions of compassion. As noted earlier in this paper, there is a positive correlation between compassion and those who are in the arts and/or of liberal leaning (Hirsh et al., 2010). This means that there is likely a strong connection between personality and authenticity. Additionally, this is an easy concept to connect with Shipman's moral/ethical development. Much of the way in which she looked out for the otherwise helpless and decisions made based on what she felt would benefit her crew (and even the local community in some cases), was partially due to her proclivity toward compassion.

Certain benefits arise when a person can use their natural tendencies (in terms of personality) to behave in an authentic manner. Since Shipman was open to experiences, and happened to be an actress, she was able to take on different personas while remaining authentic (meaning she rarely compromised her values). Keep in mind though, being "too true" to oneself and one's values can become problematic in other areas, leading to what can be best described as an authenticity trap. An authenticity trap refers to when a person let's their seemingly fixed personality traits dictate their behaviors. In doing so, the person then casts a positive light on such behaviors and soon becomes blinded by their own sense of what's true or good (Ibarra, 2015). While Shipman was generally considerate, there were certainly regrettable moments in her career. Shipman neglected to pay her actors until after she received commission from the box-office upon the release of The Grub-Stake, but even then, not all actors were paid. This was due to the fact she had gone over budget and refused to stop production (something in which she later felt remorse over) (Trusky, 2013). In this instance, Shipman placed her values of creative exploration over others and let problematic behaviors manifest themselves. Shipman knew she was being dishonest with herself regarding the needs of her followers when she chose to avoid organizational responsibilities.

Interestingly enough, Shipman's behavior bears a striking resemblance to what would be indicative of the fifth stage of moral reasoning according to Lawrence Kohlberg's hierarchy of moral development. The fifth stage of moral reasoning is where an individual bases their moral decisions on a social contract, tailors values according to what the individual in question thinks a good society looks like, and thus, striving to live in a manner aligned with such values. This stage of moral reasoning falls under the postconventional level, meaning people functioning within this level tend to be independent thinkers (Northhouse, 2018). There is some room for debate, but generally speaking, Shipman was fairly autonomous in her thinking and demonstrated a strong sense of independence, putting her at the fifth stage of moral reasoning. Furthermore, knowing Shipman was high in openness, it's possible she was skeptical of seemingly narrow views. Rightfully skeptical when people questioned her abilities as a filmmaker but not always when people challenged her motives. In part, this is a general criticism of the postconventional level of moral thinking. When a person places their personal values over what is truly best for society, they tend to alienate themselves. This level of moral reasoning should not be taken as a bad thing necessarily, rather, one should know the signs of falling into an authenticity trap. It's worth reminding readers that while Shipman's values were occasionally misplaced, much of her views on ethics lead to good things. The forming of her zoo provided a sanctuary for many animals without a home. Additionally, her kindness and

engagement with the local community created a collaborative environment in which to work. This would not have been the case had Shipman valued the type of recognition she would have received had she signed on with Sammual Goldwyn. For her, the beauty of filming in a place like Idaho with the people she cared about was far more important.

CONCLUSION:

Shipman was truly a phenomenal woman in pioneering independent filmmaking. In this paper, readers gained alternative perspectives regarding the role of personality in shaping a person's leadership style via the Big Five Factors. Too, depending on the situation, different leadership styles can emerge if a leader is sensitive enough to the needs of their followers. Later, the relationship between personality, authenticity, and ethical development covered broad yet integrated concepts to highlight the pros and cons of Shipman's approach to leadership. Shipman was by no means a perfect person but in recognizing her faults, we can better understand our own faults. By allowing audiences to observe her struggles and successes, Shipman is passing on her wisdom to the next generation of women leaders.

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Professional Writing

Audrey Novinger, "Cover Letter for Job at YMCA

Audrey Novinger
(email)
(phone number)
1000 W Austin Blvd.
Cottey College
Nevada, MO 64772

November 20, 2021

YMCA Hiring Committee
Osage Prairie YMCA
500 W Highland Ave
Nevada, MO 64772

Dear YMCA Hiring Committee:
I am applying for a position as a lifeguard at your pool. I was made aware of this job when I spoke with your CEO, about the need for more lifeguards. Last summer I taught group and private swim lessons to children, and I have extensive swim experience that makes me a strong candidate for this position.

In my previous job I taught children the four basic swim strokes and water safety through the city of Columbia, Missouri's Parks and Recreation. I recorded each swimmer's progress and designed lesson plans for group and private lessons. My swim team background allowed me to demonstrate strokes with confidence. I helped young children who feared entering the water to completely submerge their heads and swim with assistance all while having fun. My attention to detail helped me keep an eye on the swimmers at all times and manage the younger age groups with ease.

My completion of rigorous language courses also provides me with skills for this position. In May 2021 I earned a Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish and English, which allows me to communicate with a variety of speakers. As a lifeguard I am confident in my ability to communicate with swimmers to ensure they have a positive experience at the YMCA. I am enclosing my resume with a more detailed list of my accomplishments for you to review. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak further with you about this position. I am available for an interview on Mondays and Fridays between 1 pm and 3 pm, or any time at your convenience. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Audrey Novinger
Encl.: Resume

Professional Writing

1st Place:
Molly Zosel, "Boo Who?: A Study of Spectral Identity at Women's Colleges"

Introduction

This study will focus on spectral identity at women's colleges: Who becomes a ghost? Do people think about ghosts primarily as women, men, neither? What time periods/historical events/locations do people associate with ghosts, and why? How does a time period or location relate to gender? How does the audience, specifically at a women's college, understand and retell their ghost stories, and to what extent is that informed by the gendered environment?

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the ways spectral gender is informed by location, era, and folklore, specifically in a women's college environment. This study will provide insight into the social phenomenon of hauntings and their histories as interpreted and understood by young women and non-men pursuing higher education. Many colleges boast ghost stories, often dating back to their founding, and Cottey College is no different.[1] University or college ghosts tend to be several generations removed from the current students, with rituals or traditions associated with the stories. I believe Cottey's ghostly folklore fits into the same genre as other schools', but the ghosts at women's colleges, including Cottey, primarily manifest as women, essentially matching the school's demographics.

Methods

This study uses mixed methods. Data will be interpreted through narrative and oral history lenses with a grounded theory approach.

I will conduct 45 minute to one hour, recorded semi-structured interviews with each participant. These initial interviews will include open-ended questions regarding belief in the paranormal, first or second-hand experience with the paranormal (if any), and ghost stories they are familiar with. I chose semi-structured interviews because they allow

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[1] Lesa Alison-Hastings, "Things That Go Bump in the Night," Summer 2005 Viewpoint - Ghosts and Ghoulies, 2005, https://www.cottey.edu/pdf/viewpoint/vp_archive/su05_vp/su05_ghosts.html; Lesa Alison-Hastings, "Things That Go Bump in the Night," Winter 2005 Viewpoint - Ghosts and Ghoulies, 2005, https://www.cottey.edu/pdf/viewpoint/vp_archive/su05_vp/su05_ghosts.html; Colette Lefebvre-Davis, "Local Residents Share Ghost Tales and Frights," Nevada Daily Mail, October 31, 2006, https://www.nevadadailymail.com/story/1175478.html.

for question expansion and evolution based on the participants' responses. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also permits exploration of dorm- or suite-specific inquiries.

Interviews will be conducted in person or by recorded video/telephone calls based on each participant's availability and comfort level. Interviewees will be given the option for their interview to remain confidential, at which point only Dr. Quick and I would have access to their data.

I will also conduct an in-person focus group session, during which participants (5-10) will discuss Cottey's ghost stories and ghosts in general for approximately one hour.

By collecting and analyzing the data from interviews and focus groups, as well as conducting a review of scholarly articles and studies related to supernatural phenomenon from both a historical and anthropological perspective, I will explore the ways that ghost stories relate to gender representation in the afterlife as well as the connotations associated with said representation. I am conducting my research at Cottey because of Cottey's reputation as a haunted college. Many students will already be familiar with ghost stories related to the college, even if they have no experience with the paranormal or are unfamiliar with ghost stories generally. To compare Cottey's stories with ghost stories as a genre, I will ask participants about other ghost folklore they are familiar with prior to arriving at Cottey.

Semi-structured interviews allow me to collect the most information in a uniform manner from each participant, providing a stable and comparable data set. My research requires an analysis of storytelling, limited personal histories, and general topic discussion; interviews offer the most comprehensive and straightforward method of data collection. The questions for the focus group and interviews are the same, with the intention of eliciting more detail and data from the focus group's interactions.

Additionally, I will review and incorporate for comparison stories from other colleges with similar demographics/histories (women's colleges, former women's colleges) and colleges in general for comparison between co-ed and single-sex settings.

I will transcribe my interview and focus group recordings using Otter.ai, a web application that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to transcribe audio recordings and allows for password protection. I will code themes deductively, according to my project's topic: ghosts, locations, gender, demise, appearance, with the expectation that additional themes will emerge. I will also code for repetition and comparisons or similarities/differences. To accomplish this, I will rely on Bernard, Wutich, and Ryan's work on finding themes.[2]

When analyzing the interviews, the unit of analysis (UA) will be ghosts/folklore at Cottey with the unit of observation (UO) of students at Cottey and Cottey records about its ghost stories. For the focus group section of my research (storytelling: how the stories are

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[2] H. Russell Bernard, Amber Wutich, and Gery Wayne Ryan, "Finding Themes," in *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2017), pp. 53-73.

told, who knows what, observing reactions), the UA is social phenomena and folklore and the UO is a group of students. For interviews (storytelling with the inclusion of first/secondhand experiences both at and outside Cottey), the UA is stories and the UO remains students but is also places/times for individual experiences. Per Blackstone, I do expect the UA and UO to shift slightly for some questions and answers, meaning the below list is not exhaustive.[3]

Interview and Focus Group Questions

1. Before arriving at Cottey, would you say you believed in the paranormal:
    a. Not at all
    b. Maybe or unsure
    c. Absolutely
2. If absolutely, what aspects of the paranormal do you believe in?
3. If maybe or unsure, what aspects are unsure about? Why?
4. If no, why?
5. After arriving at Cottey, would you say you believe in the paranormal:
    a. Not at all
    b. Maybe or unsure
    c. Absolutely
6. If absolutely, what aspects of the paranormal do you believe in?
7. If maybe or unsure, what aspects are unsure about? Why?
8. If no, why?
9. Are there people in your life who have had paranormal experiences? Please describe the experiences.
10. Prior to coming to Cottey, had you ever had a paranormal experience? If so, please describe it.
11. Since arriving at Cottey, have you had a paranormal experience? If so, please describe it.
12. What do you think of when you hear the word "ghost?" Has this changed since arriving at Cottey?
13. When you think of ghosts, do you picture them as male, female, neither? Why?
    a. What about in relation to Cottey? Please describe these ghosts.
14. What ghost stories were you familiar with prior to arriving at Cottey? How did you first hear these stories? When you think of the ghost stories you know, are the ghosts male, female, neither? Do any of these ghosts have names? How do you picture them?
    a. How about ghost stories about Cottey specifically, or stories you heard for the first time here? How did you first hear these stories? When you think of these stories, are the ghosts male, female, neither? Do any of these ghosts have names? How do you picture them?
15. What kinds of places do you picture when you hear "haunted" or "ghost?" Why? What are those ghosts like? How do you imagine them?

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[3] Amy Blackstone, "Research Design," in *Principles of Sociological Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* (Saylor Academy, 2014), pp. 56-59.

16. Are there specific events or periods in time that you associate with ghosts? Why? What are those ghosts like? How do you imagine them?
    a. How about Cottey's ghosts stories? With which time periods do you associate these stories? What places on campus do these stories involve?

Literature

- Mount Holyoke College Alumni ghost tour website and video
- Cottey College archives and yearbooks
- "Gender and Ghosts" by Jeannie Banks Thomas
- Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore by Diane E. Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie B. Thomas
- "Manifesting Spirits: Paranormal Investigation and the Narrative Development of a Haunting" by Marc A. Eaton for the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
- "Personality and Paranormal Belief: A Study among University Students" by Pradeep Kumar, Satvinder Singh Saini, Rajni Sharma, and Krishan Kumar for the Journal of Psychosocial Research
- "A social anthropology of ghosts in twenty-first-century America" by Joseph O Baker and Christopher D Bader for Social Compass
- "Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College Campuses" by Elizabeth Tucker
- "Methods in Folk Narrative Research: Their Status and Future" by Lauri Honko

Timeline

Fall semester:
- Refine research questions and methods
- Recruit participants for interviews/focus group
- Conduct interviews, focus group
- Begin collecting information from other colleges

Winter Break:
- Transcribe interviews, focus groups
- Post-interview and focus group coding and data analysis

Spring Semester:
- Complete data analysis
- Compose study results
- Present results to Dr. Quick

Conclusions

This study's findings will broaden the understanding of ghost stories at Cottey both in their content and the meanings of those stories to the student body. Student interpretation of ghost stories and school haunting folklore in general is associated by some folklorists to be a sign of a proud, healthy student-school relationship and help "initiate entering students into a new community and a new stage of life."[4] Spectral gender

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[4] Elizabeth Tucker, *Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College* Campuses (University of Mississippi, 2007), 4.

identifications are expected to match the school's demographics, underscoring the student body's own self-identification with each other, Cottey, and its history.

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Creative Writing

1st Place:
Eden Weatherall, "Future's End"

Everything in the waiting room was blindingly white. The sort of white that strained your eyes and gave you that persistent headache over each temple.

Ayana sat leaned back in a cushioned chair, instinctively clutching her belly as though to prevent a theft.

She was months from showing, but she liked to imagine she could feel an expansion within her, a warm little ball of life. Pregnancy had first made her terrified and angry, then stupid and giddy, and now she was a strange mixture of both.

This place was so at odds with her mood, everything bright and sterile, walls and floors scrubbed raw and furniture all sharply angled. Considering how much it had cost just to get a consultation at this place, she wondered why they couldn't have invested in some more comfortable chairs.

There was a smattering of other women in the waiting room, all of them fashionable and expensive-looking, reading magazines or tapping on phone screens with manicured nails. All of them were tall and fit, with symmetrical features and thick hair. Ayana couldn't help but squirm under their scrutiny. She knew she was out of place here, in her thrift-store pantsuit and glasses.

And it wasn't just her clothes that made her stand out. There was something else about her that people always managed to detect. In a place like this, her otherness reached all the way down to her DNA.

A doctor of Amazonian proportions came out of the adjacent room with a clipboard tucked under her arm. She was thin as a whip and had jet black hair in a straight sheet down her back. She conferred for a moment with the receptionist before calling out Ayana's name.

As she rose awkwardly from her chair, one of the women glanced up from her magazine, staring her down with a piercing gaze. She had talon-like red nails and a scowl on her pinched and painted lips. Ayana could feel her judgement as she crossed the room to meet the doctor.

A look of surprise crossed her face as she took in Ayana's appearance, but it was quickly replaced by professional neutrality.

"Hi," she said brightly, showing off a straight, titanium-white smile, "Ayana Baker?"

Ayana nodded mutely.

"You can follow me on back to my office."

They walked down the stark hallway and into a surprisingly cozy room with a hefty wooden desk and maroon carpet. The walls were adorned with photos of smiling parents holding fat infants and giggling toddlers. The doctor took a seat on one side and gestured for Ayana to sit down across from her.

On the desk there was a framed photograph of Dr. Jennifer Doudna receiving her second Nobel for her work in gene technology back when Ayana's parents had been infants. The scientist had a vaguely perturbed look on her face as she shook that hand of the presenter, a look Ayana recognized from an identical photograph that had sat on the wall of the principal's office at her old high school.

Progressive Academy was an elite private school on the other side of New Jersey where she'd lived when she was young. They'd never admit a kid like her now, but things had been more lenient back then. At least, more lenient than they were today.

She remembered walking in those big, glass double doors on registration day when she was fourteen. Her nerves had melted into awe when she saw those long, beautifully tiled hallways and posters for things like "Club for Introductory Biomed and Medtech." She'd clutched her registration paperwork so hard that it crinkled in her sweaty palms, as though worried someone would try to take it from her. She remembered the fierce pride on her parents' faces when they'd seen her acceptance letter, and the anxiety they'd tried to hide from her that first day she left for classes in her ill-fitting uniform.

Her sophomore year the principal had called her parents in for a meeting after her third failed science test in a row. She'd been told to wait outside while the three of them talked, but she could hear through the crack in the door. That picture was so vivid in her mind: kneeling on the cold tile with her ear pressed to the wall, feeling like a woman on trial waiting for the verdict to condemn her.

"We're all about second chances here at Progressive." The principal's deep voice reverberated from the other side of the door. "We've hesitated to reach out in order to give Ayana the time to improve and reach the same level as other students here. Unfortunately we've not seen the necessary progress to convince us that she has been correctly placed."

"What does that mean exactly?" Her mother's tone was the same one she had used that time she'd found a stash of cheap drugstore vodka underneath Ayana's bed.

"It's common for children like your daughter to struggle at schools like this- we make it a point to challenge our students quite extensively. Certain students have a difficult time keeping pace with the others."

"You mean non-GMH kids."

"We don't prefer that term. All students are equal to us—"

"This meeting would suggest otherwise."

Her father made a low shushing sound, but her mother cut it off.

"That's what you mean isn't it? My daughter doesn't fit in at your school because she's not genetically modified."

The principal cleared his throat uncomfortably.

"Mrs. Baker, I'll be very frank with you. Ayana is one of a small proportion of students accepted to Progressive who is not... GMH as you call it. Students here enjoy a very rigorous curriculum, but it is manageable for many only because they've been granted certain advantages. Ayana will prosper more at a school suited to her abilities."

There was the sound of a chair scraping. Her mother's voice was strong and impassioned, but the quivering current of shame that ran beneath it was detectable only because Ayana had heard it so many times before.

"Well allow me to be frank with you, Dr. Carpenter, when I say that I find this meeting both insulting and discriminatory. We weren't in a... situation have Ayana modified but let me assure you that we don't intend to let her lose out on any opportunities because of it. She got into this school and this is where she'll stay."

The principal responded with something placating, but Ayana was no longer listening. Humiliation had wormed its way into her every pore- she was dripping with it, melting into a puddle of it. She had never felt so ashamed than she did then, crouching on that linoleum floor, listening to her mother try and defend what she herself regretted above all else.

That same squirming feeling of guilt returned as she sat across from the doctor at her desk.

"I'm Dr. Christa Lee," the woman said brightly, "You're welcome to call me Christa. I'm a prenatal geneticist here at Future's End. Before we talk about a procedure for your child, why don't you tell me why you came in today."

Ayana stared down at her hands intently.

"There's not much to tell really. I'm just looking for what's best for my daughter."

"Wonderful. I can assure you our clinic is one of the best for genetic modifications to suit all of your needs and wants."

"Sure, yeah. I was just wondering if you could tell me what the process might look like, payment, stuff like that."

"Sure!" Dr. Lee dug in a desk drawer and pulled out a pile of paperwork. "Prices differ depending on how much you decide to have done. Our base rate is $60,000, which covers the basic procedure where we map the fetus's genome and target any genes that might present risk for future disease and potential physical flaws. After that, price for

additional gene targeting according to preference, such as for intelligence, athleticism, facial structure, all of that, will be decided on."

The doctor eyed her up and down, taking in her eyeglasses, her sun-spotted skin, her unusually unimpressive stature.

"We can discuss whether or not that will be affordable."

"I have the money," Ayana assured her quickly. Her savings were more extensive than one would expect- all the money she'd planned to use for grad school and the million other dreams that had since dwindled had at least opened one small world of opportunity. And although affluence meant something much different now than it had in her childhood, the assets her father had left her and her mother weren't insignificant.

Dr. Lee looked taken aback by her confidence but shook it off rather quickly and dug through her stack of papers.

"In that case, we have a pamphlet of our most popular modifications. Is there anything specific that you had in mind?"

Ayana stared at the colorful pamphlet that slid across the desk to her. The chubby baby on the cover stared up with huge, beautiful blue eyes. She flipped through it with her thumb, seeing categories like "Language Ability," "Leg Height," even "Skin Tone." Each was followed by pages and pages of description, diagrams and photos. She shut it quickly, bile rising up in her throat.

"Um... I.. I guess I'm not really sure yet."

Dr. Lee nodded, pursing her lips.

"I see. You have a little bit of time to decide. According to your paperwork, you're about a month along, and you'll need to have the procedure within the first trimester, which means we'll need to schedule you in the next few weeks. The first procedure is minimally invasive, where we take a DNA sample. The surgery itself will take place the week after, where we perform gene therapy on the fetus itself."

"And that part... that's invasive. You operate on her, right?"

"We administer directly to the fetus, correct."

Ayana swallowed hard.

"I'm not 100% sure yet... about having the operation."

Dr. Lee looked at her. There was pity in her eyes, but it was the sort one gave to a misinformed child or the beggar you pass without making eye contact. It was a look of charity, not understanding.

"I understand your anxiety, Ayana. This decision isn't always easy for patients from your background. But considering how far you are in your pregnancy, we'll need to hear back from you tomorrow at the latest."

Ayana left the clinic a few hours later, stacks of informative booklets, medical paperwork and pamphlets filling her arms. Dr. Lee had gone over the majority of it with her, but it seemed as though only about half of it had stuck.

The sun had set by the time she pulled out of the parking lot, dousing the sky above the city deep red. The silhouettes of skyscrapers looked painted on a crimson canvas. The neon sign of the gene clinic stuck out in sharp relief, writing the words Future's End in white letters on her review mirror.

She passed the campus where she worked on the way home, the steepled roofs of the university rising just into view from the highway.

It was there that she'd met Cecil.

She'd been there working the front desk of the bookshop, some random staff member in her thirties, and he'd walked in with the rest of his university friends. He was tall and muscular, with a head of wild black hair and a charming smile. He looked like most of the other university boys, but there was something innately goofy and awkward about him, remnants that hadn't been spliced out.

Ayana remembered being embarrassed when he glanced her way, covering her face with her hair as though it would hide the thing that was most obvious about her. He'd bought biology and pre-med textbooks and they'd chatted about it, about how she'd studied medicine back in undergrad when she was still in her twenties. Their conversation wasn't really special or even that stimulating, but she'd been fascinated by a purplish birthmark on the right side of his chin that marred his intended flawlessness. She became enamored with the way he made no attempt to hide it, the way he looked at her with a lazy sort of lustfulness, the way he snorted when he laughed.

She'd ignored the way he never let his friends see them together and how their hook-ups always seemed to take place at sleazy hotels further from the campus neighborhood than strictly necessary. She cursed herself for answering his drunk calls and letting him pick out trashy lingerie that made her look ten years older than she was. The whole affair was so ridiculous that she couldn't even tell anyone about it.

She'd never thought she was in love with him- he was too young for her, and he lived in a whole separate world from hers. But for a few fleeting weeks, he'd let her pretend she was living the life she'd always fruitlessly imagined.

After their contact slowly lessened and faded from existence, she stopped seeing him on campus as much. And she hated the way she sometimes looked up hopefully when she was working the desk, chastising herself for being so stupid and naïve.

She hadn't even bothered to try and contact him when the test came back positive.

She turned off the highway onto the streets of her neighborhood. About a decade back, this had been a respectable part of suburbia, but it had fallen into disarray in recent years. The houses were huge and ornate in a dated fashion, with large yards and decorated verandas. But the sidewalks were narrow and grown over and the road peppered with potholes. It was like the city had simply forgotten people still lived here. Her house came up on the right, box-shaped and small, with an ornate architectural design that had long gone out of style. She'd loved this house when her father first bought it for him and her mother, thinking it cute and cozy- a great place to visit on her weekends away from school. She'd never imagined that one day she'd be stuck there.

One spring before her dad died, she and her best friend Sasha had come to stay during the break. She remembered it vividly only because it had been their senior year and both were waiting on acceptance letters to the dozens of medical schools where they'd applied. The afternoon before Easter the two of them were camped out at the kitchen table, obsessively refreshing their emails. She'd already gotten at least twenty cold yet personalized rejection letters stating that, despite her credentials, her time spent at an elite undergraduate program and her stellar grades and track record, she was just "not the type of student they were looking for in their advanced programs." Several suggested she look for something more "realistic", others implied that joining the workforce was more "suitable" for a person of her background. Scholarships too had dried up, all going towards "more qualified" candidates.

Sasha's annoying drumming on the table edge had constantly picked up speed as the seconds ticked by.

"They're not going to let us in- this is the last one I applied to," she'd said, her voice heavy with dejection. A sharp pang of annoyance coursed through Ayana's blood.

"How do you know? You and I both have great transcripts and resumes, we went to great colleges- we're perfect."

Sasha shook her head. "They won't think that once they see our birth certificates."

Ayana pushed her glasses up her nose.

"They can't reject us just because we're not GMH-ers."

Sasha shrugged. "It's not illegal."

"Well it should be."

Ayana had gritted her teeth in frustration and continued pounding the refresh button, but she'd known, even back then, that Sasha was right. There was a reason they'd both had no luck getting into med school and had been living off microwave noodles for the past year and a half. It wasn't because they weren't smart, or because they weren't capable. It was because they weren't, and couldn't be, smart and capable enough.

When the notification finally sprang up, she didn't even have to read past the opening lines to feel the now-familiar pang of disappointment.

Thank you for your application. Unfortunately, we regret to inform you…

Sasha had glanced over her shoulder and let out a long, slow breath of air.

"Oh Ayana, I'm sorry. I didn't make it either."

"It's fine," she'd said huskily, shrugging off her friend's touch, "Its fine. It doesn't matter."

"It's not like there aren't any other schools—"

"You know for a fact nowhere else is going to be different."

Sasha looked as though she would respond, but Ayana's mother had entered the kitchen. She read the look on the girls' faces before either of them could utter a word.

"More bad news?"

Ayana shrugged moodily, "It's not like its unexpected."

"Well, how many more do you have left?"

"None- that was my last."

Her mother had pursed her lips in poorly-hidden frustration.

"Some schools are still accepting applications I'm sure—"

Ayana hadn't known if it was her exhaustion, her built up annoyance or simply the too-recognizable look of discontentment on her mother's face, but something inside her had snapped.

"It's not going to matter Mom. Even if it did get in, what then? I'd fail to get a residency. I'd make one mistake and get fired or sued. It's not going to stop- everything is going to be like this. We're just… we're fucking screwed."

Sasha went wide-eyed and politely excused herself from the room, but her mother was rooted to the spot, staring almost expressionless.

"Listen, I'm sorry you're unhappy with the choices we've made for you, but don't give up just because you're upset. There are other options…"

"None that'll make you happy."

"It's not about me…"

Ayana had stood so quickly she nearly knocked her laptop onto the floor.

"Is it not about you? Because that's all you ever say to me. It always comes back to you and dad, and the things you did before I was born. But I was never unhappy until you told me I should be!"

Her mother looked as though she'd been slapped in the face. "Ayana, you know that isn't true. Yes, we didn't know as much back then as I wish we would have, but that doesn't mean we don't love you just the same. I just wish things were easier for you—"

''Then why don't you make things easier for me and stop looking at me like you wish I was never born!"

Before her mother could respond, she'd stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

It wasn't the first or the last fight they'd had in that house, but it stuck out in Ayana's memory, especially as she drove home from the clinic. Maybe it was because her mother's words had begun to ring true. She was starting to wish things were easier for her too.

When she got inside her mother and Sasha were seated on the couch, watching some vapid TV program on a ridiculously high volume. Sasha lived with a couple of roommates in an apartment a few minutes away, but she crashed at Ayana's house more often than not.

It was a comfort now that she was getting more nervous about leaving her mother alone.

Both looked up and offered a short greeting when she entered.

"Hey you two," she said warmly, painting on a grin. Her mother smiled thinly as she kissed her on the head. "Did you take your meds yet?"

"Oh really," her mother griped, swatting her away, "That's the first thing you ask? Go worry about yourself for once." Sasha laughed and jumped up to take Ayana's coat and purse.

"No, she hasn't. But we should probably let her finish her show first. I think it's getting to the good part- not that I actually know what's going on."

The two women departed to the kitchen, leaving her mom bundled on the couch, her eyes fixed on the screen.

"Long day?" Sasha asked as she rummaged in the cupboards for something edible. Ayana leaned against the fridge, closing her eyes for a moment.

"You have no idea."

"Where did you go?" Sasha asked, pouring milk into a bowl of cereal.

"This place about 30 minutes away- it's called Future's End."

Sasha snorted. "That's an ominous name."

Ayana shrugged and drank the last of the milk from the carton before tossing it into the trash.

"It's weird, don't you think? A few years ago we were standing outside of places like that screaming protests and now you're paying hundreds of bucks just to walk through the front door."

"Yeah, well it's the cheapest place I could find that I would even let me come in for a consultation."

"My point wasn't about the money."

Her friend leaned against the counter, gazing at her meaningfully. Ayana sighed.

"I don't know if I'm going to go through with it yet. I just want to... explore my options."

"If that's what you want to call it, sure."

Ayana withered under her scathing tone.

"Please don't look at me like that, Sasha. If this was an easy choice I would have made it already."

She nodded with sarcastic understanding.

"Putting your kid's life in the hands of a greedy, classist corporation is a difficult choice indeed."

"Don't put it like that. You know why I'm doing this."

"I'm not sure I do. I've known you for years and you resented the hell out of GMH-ers before."

"I wasn't about to have a baby before. Besides, I don't want to argue with you about this- I've done enough arguing with my mother."

Sasha looked like she wanted to say more, but she took a bite instead to shut herself up. Ayana fidgeted uncomfortably. "Speaking of my mom..."

"She had a good day," Sasha was quick to reassure her, "She took her meds this morning without any reminder even. She got a little confused around noon, but that's normal I'm pretty sure."

She nodded, relieved nothing dire had happened while she'd been gone all day. It might have been paranoia, but the little things- misplacing her stuff, forgetting the day, leaving the house for non-existent appointments- had all seemed to grow more frequent in recent weeks. Ayana could have sworn that yesterday when she came down the stairs in the morning there had been a few seconds where her mother did not recognize her.

"That's good," she replied, her hand drifting to her lower abdomen as it had started to do whenever she was distracted. The involuntary movement wasn't lost on Sasha.

"She needs to get treated soon, Ayana. She doesn't say it to you, but she's suffering. A lot."

Guilt squirmed in her gut.

"I know- It's just hard to get in with the doctor and our insurance doesn't cover it…"

"You have the money."

A lump caught in Ayana's throat and all she could do was look at her friend helplessly. Sasha's hard gaze softened with sympathy. She put a comforting hand on Ayana's shoulder and guided her to a kitchen chair to sit.

"You're not like your mom, you know," she said quietly, "I know she always made you feel undervalued growing up, but I'm sure you wouldn't be that way. There'll be a big difference between you and your daughter. No matter what you choose for her, I know you'll always make her feel accepted. That's what counts Ayana. Not having her modified to fit in."

"But what about everyone else?"

"What about them?"

"You know what it was like for us- growing up, in high school, in college. Things have only gotten worse since then."

She knew Sasha carried the same scars that she did, even if she didn't admit it. The judgement, the rejection, the fear of failure- the pain of each was still acute and real. And every day it seemed she was finding some new obstacle put in her way. Grad schools and job interviews didn't used to require birth certificates and now they did. The protests and court cases she'd once demonstrated for had all but died out after being unendingly squashed. The hope she'd once held out for herself had withered and collected dust like a neglected houseplant.

In her mother's generation gene enhancement had been a fad for billionaires and celebrities. When she was growing, it was a staple of the upper-class- a necessity for everyone with wealth and merit. Now it was more than that—it was the line between dignity and desolation, the definer of prosperous or poverty-stricken.

She gripped the edge of the table as she spoke.

"What am I supposed to tell her when other kids tell her she's ugly? When she gets a rejection letter from every college she applies to? When she grows up and she can't even land a job interview?"

Sasha gripped her hands with such adamant force that her bones protested.

"You tell her that she is perfect just the way she is. That she's the way God intended, and she doesn't need some bacteria DNA to prove that she's worthy."

Ayana shook her head. "I'm don't think anyone can claim to know what God intended."

Sasha cracked a smile and slapped her playfully on the hand.

"You're so stubborn and annoying. You know what I mean."

A smile teased at Ayana's lips but couldn't quite penetrate her the rest of her face. She squeezed her friend's hands reassuringly.

"I know. I promise I'm going to make the right choice. I just need to be one hundred percent sure." Sasha nodded, not seeming entirely satisfied, but Ayana changed the subject, gesturing to the half-empty bowl on the countertop, "That cereal didn't happen to be your dinner, did it?"

Sasha shrugged guiltily.

"She said she wasn't hungry."

Ayana sighed heavily and hauled herself up from the chair.

"C'mon Sash- she needs a real meal. She can't take her evening meds on an empty stomach."

"I know, I know. There are some leftovers in the fridge- Chinese, I think. She'll like that."

It was doubtful her mother would like anything, but it was worth a shot. As Sasha rinsed her bowl and crossed to leave the kitchen, she kissed Ayana on the top of the head.

"Hey, I trust you, okay? You're a good person. You make good choices."

Watching her friend leave, she wondered when those two things had ceased to be synonymous.

Twenty minutes later, Ayana set a plate of reheated food in front of her mother and collapsed into her own seat at the table, exhausted beyond all reason.

"How did your appointment go?" her mother asked, picking suspiciously at her dinner.

"It was alright. The doctor was nice, but it's clear they don't get people like me there very often."

Her mother nodded stiffly, her lips pursing in her signature display of displeasure.

"Well, all people should be the same in terms of care. There's no reason for them to treat you any different."

"I know. It went fine." Ayana focused on her plate until she noticed her mother was still staring at her expectantly. "What?"

"What did you decide?"

The question opened a yawning pit in her stomach that left Ayana feeling abruptly nauseous and dazed.

"I don't know, Mom. I'm not sure I really believe in it. And you know how much money it is. We can't afford it along with your treatment."

Her mother set down her fork sternly.

"I've told you already, I don't want the treatment. I want you to take that money and spend it on your daughter. I've lived long enough."

"Yeah, well I want you to get it. And part of it is my savings, so I get to decide where it goes."

"Ayana, I am serious." Her voice was brimming with very real anger. "Your daughter deserves that money for her future. I'm not interested in spending thousands on a procedure that will only be relevant for another decade or so. My granddaughter needs to have a guarantee…"

Ayana kicked back her chair, making the dishes on the table rattle.

"Don't lecture me on what my daughter deserves, alright Mom? I'm very well acquainted with what she will and will not be able to do in this world. Whether or not I get her modified is entirely my choice."

"It's a selfish choice!" Her mother slammed her fist against the table, spilling noodles and vegetables onto the floor. "You're tricking yourself if you think depriving your daughter of a fighting chance in this life gives you some sort of moral superiority…"

"That's what you think this is about for me?"

"I can imagine why else you would condemn your daughter to a life of disappointments"

"Is that what you think I've had Mom? A life of disappointments?"

Her mother paused, her brow crinkling as she searched for her words. She looked so old and frail in the waning light from the kitchen window. The back of the chair dwarfed her stick-thin frame and the wrinkles on her face grew deep, like the cracks in shattered china.

"Correct me if I'm wrong," she hissed, "but I don't think you're where you'd like to be right now. Are you?"

In that moment Ayana had a sickening vision of herself in third person, standing hunched and angry in her dilapidated kitchen-- pregnant by some college kid, living off of three-day-old scraps and yelling at her elderly, ailing mother as though it would do any type of good. She wanted to protest, to prove that she was worth more than the paltry hand she'd been dealt. Instead, she gathered up the uneaten dinners and tossed them savagely into the sink, so hard that one of the plates broke into pieces, then swiped an orange prescription bottle off the growing collection on the countertop.

"Well, I'm sorry I'm such a huge disappointment to you," she snarled. As she swept past her mother on the way out of the kitchen she shoved the pills into her hands. "You're getting the treatment. I don't care what you say."

The next morning dawned a dishwater gray. Ayana rolled out of bed feeling the burden of having stayed up most of the night trying to make sense of all the pages Dr. Lee had sent her home with. She stumbled to the bathroom, feeling the telltale nausea she had come to expect this early. On her way she stopped in at her mother's room, peeking around the doorframe cautiously. She was curled up under her covers, her features screwed tight and barely visible over the top of the blanket. Her leftover annoyance from the night before was washed away by a powerful surge of affection. Bundled up so small, she looked almost like a child.

In the bathroom Ayana stared at her face in the mirror, realizing how much she looked like her mother. They had the same curved nose with the same pattern of freckles across its bridge. Their eyes were slightly too small, and stringy amber hair framed both of their squarish jawlines. She wondered what she might have looked like had some doctor like Christa Lee cut her mother open before she was born and fixed all those little insecurities. She'd look like all the girls she'd grown up with- big eyes, button nose, dainty, pointed chin. Her hair would be thick and more honey-colored, and she'd be taller and thinner, with smaller shoulders and broader hips.

She remembered what Cecil had once told her about her imperfections. She had cringed the first time he looked at her body and when he'd called her beautiful.

"I'm not," she'd said, laughing a little, "I can't be."

"I like you because you don't look like them," he told her, "You don't look like every other girl. You're refreshing."

Back then this had flattered her—now it made her skin squirm. She wondered, was there any part of him that had meant it? Any part of him that hadn't looked at her like some sort of exotic experiment, a novel hiatus from those bleach-blonde twenty-year-olds born and bred to fit his preference? In the moment his enthrallment had been so erotic, but in retrospect it made her feel like a bug under a microscope.

Had she really looked beautiful or had she just looked...bizarre.

Ayana wondered if her baby would look like her- if she'd have her red-orange freckles and that cube-like face shape.

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Not if I don't want her to.

Unbidden, the image of the red-clawed woman from the clinic popped into her mind, her unforgiving stare and doll-perfect features that could be nothing else but the result of someone playing God. She imagined a miniature version of that woman growing inside her womb, pristine and proportioned from its very first months. Her stomach turned suddenly, and she lurched toward the toilet to vomit up the little in her stomach.

A deep sense of unease had settled into her bones.

She picked up her phone off the counter and stared at the number Dr. Lee had given her. Her finger hovered over the call button for a moment before she shook her head and put it down again. Instead, she held her stomach, closing her eyes tight and imagining she could feel a little flutter there. It was too early she knew, but she wanted to believe there was some small part of her baby that she already knew, some connection that was forged already between the two of them. She wanted her daughter to somehow know that she was trying her best.

Her mother was awake when Ayana returned to check on her again. She was sitting up in bed, squinting at her phone screen while her reading glasses sat uselessly atop her gray-haired head. Ayana knocked on the doorframe and entered the room hesitantly, but her mom looked up and smiled normally as though nothing had ever happened.

"Good morning Mom," she said, affectionately lowering the glasses.

"Good morning," she replied absentmindedly.

"Do you want to come down for breakfast soon?"

Her mom eyed her skeptically.

"I heard you throwing up in there—I don't want you cooking for me."

"It's just morning sickness Mom."

"Right, right. When's your appointment?"

Ayana paused.

"My consultation is later today."

Her mom nodded and patted her hand.

"Well, make sure you let me know how it goes."

"I will."

Her eyes fell to Ayana's stomach, invisible under the fabric of her nightgown, but her expression changed, some unspoken worry twisting at the side of her mouth.

"I'm glad you're doing this," she finally said, "I'm glad you're doing what's right for that little girl. I'm just…" Her voice choked with emotion. "I'm just sorry I never did that for you."

Ayana had to look away to drive back the tears that rushed up behind her eyes.

"You must have thought I was such a terrible mother—I never gave you the chances those other kids had."

Ayana shook her head, forcing a rueful smile.

"Mom, I was never upset that I wasn't GMH. I was just upset that you wanted me to be."

Her mother looked confused, but she said nothing, only petted her daughter's arm tenderly as though trying to console her.

She stood quickly and straightened the bed covers.

"Come eat something soon, okay? You need to take your meds this morning."

In the kitchen Ayana leaned against the countertop while she cracked eggs into a frying pan. The wisteria vine that had continued to grow wildly no matter how many times she hacked away at it hung down over the window, tinting the morning light a dull lavender color.

Lavender—that's a good girl name.

Her core seemed to pulse with warmth at the thought, even if it was just in her imagination. Already she loved so fiercely and painfully that a part of her wished it would go away.

She startled and burnt herself when her phone rang. The number on the screen was followed by an automated suggestion: "Maybe: Future's End Gene Therapy Clinic"

Her hand hovered before she picked it up off the counter. She stared outside at the willful wisteria, and her fingers touched lightly at her lower abdomen. That white, white waiting room seemed to blare at her from the phone.

Maybe she could let it ring—for the near future.

Writing in Foreign Languages - Spanish

1st Place:
Caitlin True, "Oral Spanish Composition"

Quiero cambiar lo siguente de la sociedad en que vivo. Quiero cambiar la forma en que funcionan los sistemas escolares. No pienso que la forma en que funcionan los sistemas escolares estadounidenses sea beneficiosa para los estudiantes.

Mi primer problema con el sistema escolar de los Estados Unidos es la calificación. La mayor parte de mi tiempo en la escuela, desde el kindergarten hasta ahora, lo he pasado preocupándome por mis calificaciones. La mitad de las veces, no me importa lo que estoy aprendiendo; Solo me importa que obtenga una A. La calificación, la forma en que lo hacemos, devalúa el aprendizaje real y aumenta el valor en los resultados. Y este énfasis en el producto final también promueve el engaño. La escuela, al menos para los estudiantes, tiene menos que ver con la educación y más con sus calificaciones.

Mi segundo problema con nuestros sistemas escolares es Common Core. Tiene un enfoque estricto, de una sola manera para el aprendizaje, y esto a menudo lleva a que muchos estudiantes que aprenden de diferentes maneras sean excluidos o no les vaya tan bien en clase. También hace que sea más difícil para los estudiantes con necesidades especiales mantenerse al día con sus demandas debido a los rígidos estándares. Otro problema con Common Core es que le quita la diversión al aprendizaje; su estructura y muchas reglas hacen que los temas emocionantes parezcan aburridos.

Common Core también condujo a un aumento en la importancia de las pruebas. Las pruebas tienen un impacto significativo tanto en los estudiantes como en los maestros. Las pruebas son una gran parte de las calificaciones de los estudiantes y tienen un papel más importante a medida que envejecen. Las pruebas como los exámenes finales pueden decidir si aprueba o suspende una clase, y las pruebas como el ACT o el SAT pueden determinar si ingresará a la escuela a la que desea ir, cuánta ayuda financiera recibe y si incluso va a la universidad. Los maestros a menudo son evaluados en función de qué tan bien les va a los estudiantes en las pruebas estandarizadas. Si a sus estudiantes no les va bien, puede afectar sus trabajos. Esto hace que los maestros dediquen más tiempo a la preparación de exámenes que al aprendizaje real.

Hablando de maestros, no se les paga lo suficiente por el trabajo que hacen, y a muchos se les paga menos que el salario digno. Eso tampoco tiene en cuenta los gastos adicionales, como los suministros que no estaban cubiertos en el presupuesto de la escuela.

Los maestros a menudo tienen que comprar suministros como lápices o incluso pañuelos de papel de su bolsillo. No puedo decirte cuántas veces uno de mis maestros nos dijo que devolviéramos los lápices que pedimos prestados porque usaron su propio dinero para pagarlos.

Quizás mi mayor problema con nuestro sistema escolar es su impacto en la salud emocional y psicológica de los estudiantes. Muchos adolescentes tienen estrés, ansiedad, depresión, y a menudo carecen de sueño. La escuela a menudo se vuelve más importante para los estudiantes que su salud mental, y en muchos casos, eso no se considera algo malo. Los estudiantes rompen a llorar, se enferman de estrés, tienen ataques de pánico y mienten para salir de ir a la escuela.

Quiero cambiar nuestros sistemas escolares para evitar que estas cosas sucedan. Quiero que la escuela se convierta en una palabra positiva en lugar de negativa.