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Why my Sister Really Left: A Narrative Film

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A Homeschool Idyll

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Honors Research Project

Submitted to

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A Homeschool Idyll

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Introduction

This paper consists of a description and analysis of the making of the short film “A Homeschool Idyll,” a review of relevant literature, and relevant artifacts, including the film itself. There were two distinct parts to the research. The first half of the literature review examines how visual storytelling and film production techniques can be used to convey a powerful message via a short film. When planning a film, attention to detail is important; in writing a short film, it is important to prioritize simplicity due to time constraints. The second half looks at homeschooling research on parenting style and reasons for homeschooling, the impact of the Christian homeschool movement on homeschooling in the U.S., and outcomes for Christian LGBTQ homeschool students. Christian homeschooling parents tended to exhibit high levels of parental involvement and parental warmth. The Christian homeschooling movement’s ability to organize caused it to have an outsized impact on homeschooling overall. Christian LGBTQ homeschool students tended to have negative mental health outcomes. While there were generally methodological issues and a need for more research, the body of homeschool research is growing.

“A Homeschool Idyll” follows homeschooled high school senior Christine White on her journey toward college and discovering the truth behind her older sister’s estrangement. This journey eventually leads Christine to a choice: Will she continue to obey her mother and remain under her influence, or will she jump into a new world to reunite with her sister?

The 26-minute film begins with Christine retrieving the mail. She finds letters from two colleges, one a religious institution and the other a secular one. She also discovers a letter addressed to her from her estranged older sister, Jessie. However, her mother, Maria, intercepts the letter before Christine can read it. Maria opens the college packets and tells Christine that she was accepted into the religious university but not the secular one. Maria is again evasive about the letter at dinner that evening when Christine attempts to mention it to her father, John. The next day, Christine tries to ask her mother about Jessie. Maria gives her the official story: Jessie fell for 'worldly' beliefs and abandoned her family. However, Christine discovers another letter from Jessie in that day's mail. She secretly reads it, and what she finds leads her to search her mother's room. Christine finds not only an entire stash of letters from Jessie hidden in Maria's sock drawer, but also the letter from the secular university: an acceptance letter. Maria had been lying this whole time about Jessie not caring about her younger sister, and that Christine had not been accepted into the secular college. Shaken, Christine confronts Maria. Maria flies into a rage and drags Christine off to her room. A few hours later, a calmed-down Maria returns and informs Christine that not only will she have to wait a year to attend college, but she will also have to prove to her parents that she is ready to do so by writing a letter to Jessie telling her to stop writing. After hours of failed attempts and agonizing over what her mother has asked of her, Christine makes her choice. She dials the phone number that Jessie gave her and begs her sister to help her. Upon Jessie's instruction, Christine packs a bag and makes her way to the front door to wait for her sister. Christine's bittersweet final walk through her childhood home is interrupted by Maria turning on the light. A final confrontation ensues, and Christine stands up to her mother. Just in time, Jessie pulls up, and Christine makes a dash for freedom. The sisters leave Maria behind in despair that she has now lost both daughters. After a period of silence, the

sisters have their first face-to-face conversation in years. At Jessie's encouragement, Christine turns on the radio and gets to explore for the first time in her life. One year later, we see a much happier Christine entering a college classroom.

The film is primarily a coming-of-age story. It deals with some of the issues that conservative Christian homeschoolers face and touches on LGBTQ homeschooler issues. We see conflict between parent and child as the child begins to mature into an autonomous adult. The film also invites viewers to ask questions about how far parental rights extend over the child.

"A Homeschool Idyll" was my creation. I oversaw the preproduction phase. I performed the necessary research and wrote the script. Then, I secured shooting locations and equipment, obtained props, cast the actors, and created a shooting schedule. I directed the production process and oversaw production design and cinematography. I did most of the camera work. I also played a minor role in the film as Jessie White, Christine's estranged older sister. Once production was completed, I edited the film. I take full responsibility for the successes and failures of "A Homeschool Idyll."

The film took roughly a year to produce. Writing the script and doing relevant preproduction research lasted approximately a semester. The production stage was roughly two months, including casting, scheduling, and shooting. May through July was spent editing. "A Homeschool Idyll" is the largest production I have undertaken.

I anticipate that the audience most interested in "A Homeschool Idyll" will be fellow Christian homeschoolers who had similar experiences. While the events in this film are not autobiographical, I did draw a lot of inspiration from my childhood environment as well as the experiences of other Christian homeschoolers whose stories I read while making sense of my

own upbringing. However, I hope to reach audiences who are not as familiar with the world of Christian homeschooling to spread awareness and raise curiosity about the issues this demographic faces, as well as the impact the Christian homeschool movement has had on homeschooling in general.

Literature Review

Be it a short film or a feature-length production, research is an essential part of the preproduction phase in making a movie. This literature review focuses on laying the groundwork to produce a short film, currently titled “A Homeschool Idyll.” The film deals primarily with a family drama set within a Christian homeschooling backdrop. While the plot of the film focuses on the family story more than the minutiae of being homeschooled, researching the Christian homeschooling movement and outcomes for homeschooled students was necessary to accurately portray the setting. Researching filmmaking techniques proved to be another valuable component of the preproduction process.

Filmmaking techniques and research on the Christian homeschooling movement form the two main prongs of this literature review. The review will be divided into two main sections since the topics are so drastically different. The first portion will deal with answering the research question pertaining to film production techniques:

1. How can visual storytelling and film production techniques be effectively employed to convey a powerful message via short film?

This first question directly tackles the technical aspect of making a film. This section will discuss in practical terms what goes into creating an effective short film. This process includes choosing

equipment, writing the script, and selecting a cast and crew, to mention a few components. This question addresses the nuts and bolts of making a film, so to speak.

However, equipment and crew only go so far in making a film. When writing a script and designing the environment of a film, it is necessary to put some time into researching the chosen setting. That is why the next three research questions, which will be answered in section two, deal with various aspects of Christian homeschooling:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between authoritarian parenting styles and parents' decision to homeschool for religious reasons?
2. What has been the impact of the Christian homeschooling movement on homeschooling overall?
3. What are the outcomes for Christian LGBTQ+ homeschoolers?

Each question covers a different aspect of building the world and characters of "A Homeschool Idyll." The first question was asked to gain more insight into writing the parents' characters and directing the actors playing them. Researching outcomes for Christian LGBTQ+ homeschoolers was an important part of developing Christine's older sister's character and backstory, as well as informing how her absence is dealt with in the events of the film. Examining what the literature had to say about the Christian homeschooling movement's impact on the general state of homeschooling contributed to creating a broader view of the world the story takes place in.

While the questions are somewhat disparate, all three were essential parts of the worldbuilding and character design that takes place during preproduction.

Narrative Film Production Research

While generally not near as long as creating a feature-length film, creating a short film is an involved process. However, writing a short film is different than writing a full-length screenplay. A feature-length screenplay often follows the three-act structure and allows for greater complexity of storyline and character. According to Cooper and Dancyger (2000), the short film must make use of simplicity of plot and number of characters and has the ability to use more abstract devices like metaphor because of the lessened amount of available time.

Despite not having the length and complexity of a feature film, the short film must still go through the production process, from concept to writing to picking a cast and crew, all the way to shooting and editing. Goodell's *Independent Feature Film Production* (1982) goes through this process for a feature film. However, concepts discussed in the book, such as casting, shooting and continuity, and editing are applicable to short films as well. Both long and short films need actors, continuity, and editing. Another important aspect of creating a film is sound production. Not only is well-produced sound essential for proper filmmaking technique, but "good quality sound recording on the filming locations can (and will) greatly reduce post-production costs" (Fazakas, 2016, p. 107). Editing a film is just as important as shooting it, and many films are edited digitally today. With the availability of editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro, it is even easier for independent filmmakers to edit their films. For a quality film, sound production technique is needed.

Before a film can enter production, the screenplay must be written. Because a short film has less run-time, it cannot add too much complexity. There is generally no time to explore an extremely complicated plot with a multitude of characters, à la *Game of Thrones*. However, a simple structure does not equate to simple characters. It does, however, "mean that an economy

of style is employed to create that character” (Cooper & Dancyger, 2000, p. 5). In other words, the short film writer must be efficient in incorporating characterization into the film. Dialogue is one way to accomplish this, but a screenwriter must keep in mind that film is very much a visual storytelling medium. As per the saying “Actions speak louder than words,” character is very much defined by behavior. The short film writer must think carefully about a character’s behavior and appearance and then choose what details to put in the script based on what will best convey the character’s inner wants and self to the people who will turn the screenplay into a film (Cooper & Dancyger, 2000). The writer must be specific in his or her descriptions of the character. According to Cooper and Dancyger, writers are likely to use extremes in physical descriptions and character behavior. This makes the story and the characters more interesting and memorable for the audiences (2000). For the short film, behavior and specificity are essential to characterization.

Dialogue must also be considered. Particularly in a short film, “there is no time for lengthy speeches or excessive exposition” (Cooper & Dancyger, 2000, p. 139). Dialogue should be utilized to develop characters and advance the plot. However, there should not be too much dialogue. According to Cooper and Dancyger, there should be balance between dialogue and action. If there is too much dialogue, viewers will become disengaged (2000).

Once the script has been finished or nearly finished, it is time to cast the film and find a production crew. In higher budget productions, a casting director is hired; however, for a low-budget film, the producer might take on the task of casting (Goodell, 1982). The types of roles for most films are principal (main characters), secondary (supporting roles), and extras. When casting a film, it is normal to make choices based on actors the producer or casting director has already seen in films. However, according to Goodell, it is a good idea to shoot a screen test for

an actor who has never been on film. A screen test is a type of audition in which the actor performs a scene from the screenplay, typically in costume and makeup, on film for the producer. According to Goodell, “this is probably the most effective way to determine an actor’s suitability for a particular role” (p. 104). Goodell discusses the drawbacks of using cold readings and “cattle calls” as audition methods. Cold readings, where an actor reads material he or she has never rehearsed or seen before, are not the same thing as actually performing a prepared scene and thus are not entirely accurate judges of an actor’s ability. In casting calls, also called ‘cattle calls,’ multiple actors are auditioning for the same role. According to Goodell, the actors wait together to try out for the same part, which creates an unfriendly atmosphere, then they each read the same lines for the casting director, who they have probably never seen before. However, sometimes the only alternative is cold readings and casting calls. In that case, Goodell advises, “at least consider the problems it creates for the actors and judge them accordingly” (p. 108).

An important part of a smoothly produced film is continuity, “the consistency of the look and sound of each shot in the film” (Goodell, 1982, p. 89). An actor’s hairstyle not being the same from shot-to-shot, props being arranged differently, and the actor performing different actions in takes are all examples of continuity errors. To keep track of all the key details from shot to shot, a continuity breakdown sheet can be employed. According to Goodell, the information on these sheets encompasses all the important audio and visual details that the production crew needs to know to make a professional-looking film.

Another aspect of making a film that should not be overlooked is audio production. Even a low-budget filmmaker must pay attention to sound quality to make a competitive film. To do this, proper equipment must be used. According to a 2016 article by Fazakas, it is not possible to

skimp on the quality of the sound equipment used and still expect to come out with a professional quality project.

Ideally, filming and sound recording would always occur under ideal conditions, like having an ideal location with no ambient noise. However, this is often not the case. The soundtrack of a film must be carefully considered. According to Fazakas (2016), ambient sound must be added to the visual track and mixed to create a sense of continuity for the audience. These sounds can be created and added to the audio track separately; this technique is known as creating foleys. Since capturing the speech of the actors is the most important focus of recording sound on the set, it is important to reduce unintentional ambient noise. While there is only so much a production team can do to reduce ambient noises in an outdoor environment, it is possible to exercise greater control over the noise in indoor environments. The crew can close windows and doors and turn off any noisemaking appliances. According to Fazakas, it is best to have an audio recording system separate from the visual recording device, because the audio recorded with the camera is almost never as good quality.

Once the film has been shot, it is time to edit the audio and visual footage into a single, coherent narrative. Increasingly, this is done using editing software programs. A study done by Gilje (2011) examined how users worked with the editing software, specifically Final Cut Express, to create the edited scenes. The goal of the case study was to look at “how novice learners make use of sophisticated editing software for moving images as a ‘tool for thinking’ about the visual when editing moving images” (p. 45). Gilje’s study focuses on analyzing novice users working with the editing software and utilizing visual effects. The study itself took a sociocultural perspective. According to Gilje, a sociocultural perspective “emphasizes how

humans use different physical and psychological tools in order to communicate” (p. 48). In this case, the tool would be the editing software.

The study used ethnographic observational data and video data to analyze how the three students and the editing software interacted with each other during an important point in the editing process; the three students were editing a crucial scene in the film in which the main character faints (Gilje, 2011). The study analyzed the three female students discussing how to employ a Gaussian blur to achieve a fainting effect and working with a ‘blare’ sound effect provided by their teacher to distort a character’s voice. The analysis found that the students varied from fully utilizing to resisting the resources available. According to Gilje, the “filters and special effects, as they are brought into play, become a sort of mediator between different levels of understanding of the filmmaking task at hand” (p. 57). The students, although they did not complete their edit in the session observed and required assistance from their teacher, were able to interact with the editing software in a way that allowed them to more clearly describe what they wanted out of the scene, both on audio and visual levels. The analysis also highlighted how the evolution and increased availability of editing software has changed editing practices. The article focused on how amateur filmmakers use the editing software; often, while the three students were able to utilize the options available to them, they were unaware of the technical terms.

Gilje’s (2011) case study was a good starting point for analyzing how novice filmmakers and editors make use of editing software that has become more widely available with technological advancement. However, this was a case study of three seventeen-year-old female secondary school students. To increase the understanding of the subject and obtain more universal insights, it may be useful to perform more such case studies of both similar and

different individuals. For example, in future studies, researchers could observe three male students, or a mixed group of adults. A survey on how amateur filmmakers use editing software may also be a useful component for further research.

The process of making a film can be long, and it is not advisable to skip over the details. In order to have a well-produced film, even a short one, each part of the process must be carefully planned out. All sources reviewed agree on that. When writing the script, the writer must pay attention to detail when describing characters and action without including unnecessary details that are unimportant to plot or character (Cooper & Dancyger, 2000). According to Goodell (1982), screen tests are the ideal method for casting actors, and continuity is highly important when shooting the film. Good audio production values are not something to cut corners on, according to Fazakas (2016). In the editing session observed in Gilje's 2011 case study, the three students spent a great deal of time on one scene from their film. From beginning to end, the research and practice show that the filmmaker and their crew are responsible for planning and keeping track of a huge number of details. However, if this is successfully done, a competent-looking, finished film is waiting at the end of the path.

[Christian Homeschooling Research](#)

We now turn to the second major topic relevant to this project: reviewing the current body of homeschool research. Gaither's 2017 "Homeschooling in the United States: A Review of Select Research Topics" explains that while education at home has long been a part of most human societies out of necessity, homeschooling as a deliberate alternative to the public education system has its origins as a movement in the United States in the 1970s. According to "Context and Regulation of Homeschooling: Issues, Evidence, and Assessment Practices," "homeschooling has been legal in every state since 1993" (Carlson, 2020, p. 11). Since the

beginning of the United States homeschool movement, the population of homeschoolers has steadily grown. It is currently estimated to be at least two million (Carlson, 2020). The field of homeschool research has grown significantly since the beginning of the 21st century. There are, however, some hurdles the research must overcome, including difficulty in getting an accurate picture of homeschool demographics due to the lack of consistent regulations across the 50 states. Despite the obstacles, more and more researchers are making advances in this research field and continuing to refine the methodology.

There was no research in the homeschooling field directly addressing the first research question, pertaining to the potential relationship between authoritarian parenting styles and the decision to homeschool for religious reasons. Scholars have, however, examined levels of parental control versus child autonomy among homeschoolers in the 2021 article by Averett and Lacy, “Ownership Versus Partnership Parenting: Parenting Styles Within the Homeschool Movement.” The article’s main focus was on questions regarding the existing model of parenting styles within the framework of religious versus nonreligious homeschoolers but not on parents’ specific reasons for homeschooling. According to Gaither’s 2017 review of the existing literature, only 21% of parents homeschool for religious reasons. However, Gaither notes,

More qualitative studies of parental motivation, however, have revealed a far more nuanced and complicated picture, as the motivations in surveys interact with others in ways that change given family contexts. Even families that would be identified in surveys as stereotypical religious conservatives have, upon closer examination, complex and changing motivations for homeschooling. (pp. 220-221)

Averett and Lacy’s 2021 study, while not a direct answer to my initial research questions, was a step in the right direction. The study focuses on differences in parenting style between two

subsets of homeschoolers: secular unschoolers and Christian homeschoolers. There are two main axes that determine which parenting style category parents fall into: parental responsiveness and parental control. Parental responsiveness is “the degree of warmth the parent exhibits” (p. 2). Parental control “includes both the degree of structure and involvement the parent provides and, conversely, the degree of child autonomy (p. 2). The study’s main objective was to examine how well changes in parenting philosophies, including the rise of “intensive mothering practices” (p. 2), fit in with the existing parenting style typology. Traditionally, on the parental control axis, parental involvement and child autonomy are inversely related. However, according to Averett and Lacy,

the privileging of intensive mothering principles in the US means that mothers feel pressure to be highly involved parents, and this raises questions about the typology’s ongoing ability to account for differences and similarities in parenting style amongst today’s highly involved parents. (p. 4)

Averett and Lacy (2021) sought to examine whether the assumed inverse relationship between parental involvement and child autonomy needed revising. To do this, they surveyed a sample of Texas homeschoolers, interviewed a subset of twenty-two survey respondents, and observed several homeschooling conventions. Since the survey respondents skewed white, heterosexual, and female, Averett and Lacy made efforts to select non-white, non-heterosexual, male homeschool parents for the interview portion to “create an interview sample that was sufficiently diverse . . . so as to capture as much of the variation in motivations for homeschooling as possible” (p. 7).

Averett and Lacy’s findings did indeed make a case for parental involvement and child autonomy to be separated into their own axes. They identified two distinct parental styles:

“ownership parenting” and “partnership parenting” (p. 9). Partnership parenting, the category that the unschoolers tended to fall into, was marked by high levels of both parental control and child autonomy, contradicting the traditional inverse relationship. The Christian homeschoolers predominantly fell into the ownership parenting category. The researchers also found that while those in the ownership parenting category displayed high levels of parental control, many also exhibited high levels of parental warmth. The overarching value expressed among the Christian homeschool parents was obedience. Corporal punishment seemed to be supported in this community because, Averett and Lacy argue, this group holds the view that children are the property of their parents. While this article does not directly answer the question of whether there is a direct relationship between authoritarian parenting and homeschooling for religious reasoning, this study does indicate that among homeschoolers, the Christian subset gravitates toward higher levels of parental control.

While this article was helpful, it does suffer from a relatively small sample size, particularly with the sample of twenty-two interviewees. The research was also qualitative in nature. An attempt could be made to perform a quantitative study on this subject. More research will be needed to further investigate this new way of evaluating parental styles, and more research studying whether the Christian homeschool movement attracts parents who exhibit high levels of parental control.

While it is unknown whether homeschooling specifically attracts parents who fall into the authoritarian parenting category, the homeschool movement in the United States has long been associated with Christianity, to the point that Christian homeschoolers have had an outsized impact on homeschooling as a whole (Carlson, 2020). According to Gaither’s (2017) literature review, before the rise of institutional schools, many parents in the United States educated their

children at home out of necessity; however, institutional schooling became the norm as society grew. However, in the mid-20th century, sweeping societal changes “set the stage for the homeschooling movement: the growth of the postwar suburbs and the anti-institutional ideologies they helped establish, the Civil Rights and women’s movements, . . . and the polarization of the electorate into right and left wings in the late 1960s and 1970s, both of which were skeptical about established institutions like government schools” (p. 217). While more liberal unschoolers were influenced by unschooling pioneer John Holt, the Christian homeschoolers were largely influenced by the writings of R. J. Rushdoony, a Christian Reconstructionist (Gaither, 2017). This group of homeschoolers has had the largest impact on homeschooling in the United States, thanks in large part to their motivation to organize. Perhaps the most famous fruit of their organizing efforts is the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a major player in legalizing homeschooling in all fifty states and achieving today’s patchwork state of relative deregulation. Due to the lack of consistent regulation and diversity of the population, it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate demographic information on homeschoolers in the U.S.

Because of the nigh impossibility of obtaining accurate demographic information for homeschoolers, it is also difficult to perform satisfactory quantitative research on homeschoolers in the United States (Gaither, 2017). The Christian homeschooling movement is largely responsible for this situation, as the HSLDA had a major hand in lobbying to both legalizing and deregulating homeschooling. The HSLDA continues to fight measures to standardize or regulate homeschooling across the U.S. in the name of parental rights. Despite this handicap, however, the body of research continues to grow.

At this point, research has expanded to include studies on outcomes for LGBTQ Christian homeschoolers. This was a development necessary to answer the third research question, as there is an LGBTQ character in the script for “A Homeschool Idyll,” and more information was needed on what issues LGBTQ Christian homeschoolers might face. The authors of the article “Sexual and Gender Minoritized Youth in Christian Home Schools” identified a lack of research into mental health outcomes specifically for LGBTQ youth in a religious homeschool environment (Anderson & Lough, 2019). Anderson and Lough performed a secondary data analysis on results from a survey by Homeschoolers Anonymous Reaching Out (HARO), focusing on the answers from the subset of respondents who identified as something other than straight or cisgender. The article refers to LGBTQ individuals as Sexual and Gender Minoritized (SGM) individuals. “According to Meyer’s Minority Stress Theory, experiences and anticipation of victimization, microaggressions, and discrimination (i.e., minority stress), contribute to a pervasive negative impact on the mental and physical health of the SGM person” (Anderson & Lough, 2019, p. 439). Negative religious reaction has also been shown to cause minority stress, according to Anderson and Lough (2019). The pressure from this stress can cause multiple negative mental health outcomes, such as mental health problems, suicide, drug abuse, and risky sexual behavior. However, according to Meyer’s theory that Anderson and Lough (2019) cite, certain protective factors can mitigate these outcomes by relieving the pressure of minority stress. These factors are school support, peer support, support from another adult, online support, and family support.

For the study, Anderson and Lough (2019) sought to answer the questions of whether homeschooled SGM youth had access to those protective factors and what impact that access or lack thereof had on their mental health outcomes. The researchers looked at HARO’s SGM

survey respondents to analyze the relationship between access to protective factors and occurrence of the following mental health outcomes: mental illness, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, substance abuse, and self-harm. Additionally, Anderson and Lough looked at “key independent variables hypothesized to influence these mental health outcomes: (a) family attitudes towards sexual and gender minoritized (SGM) people, (b) educational supplementation, (c) internet access, and (d) non-sibling friendships” (p. 446). The analysis found that homeschooled SGM youth did experience many mental health challenges and had limited access to many of the protective factors put forth by Meyer’s Minority Stress Theory. The majority of respondents had experienced mental illness, and 90% of the SGM youth reported negative or very negative family attitudes toward SGM people. A negative family attitude toward SGM also seemed to predict attempted suicide. This study indicates that SGM youth in Christian homeschool environments are at greater risk for negative mental health outcomes; being assigned female at birth was associated with a greater risk of mental illness and self-harm.

This study was the first of its kind, according to Anderson and Lough (2019). While it is a step forward in gathering information about this subset of homeschoolers, it did have some significant limitations. First and foremost, the researchers were working with an already existing study rather than conducting primary research of their own. The survey they were analyzing was distributed via social media, which limited the sample to homeschoolers with both internet access and social media accounts. The survey was also based on self-report, which may have affected the validity of the responses. In addition, Anderson and Lough (2019) noted that eight out of ten respondents to the original survey were female. “Because the population demographics are impossible to fully know, and some known groups appear to be underrepresented, this likely results in a somewhat skewed narrative of homeschooling and its effect on sexual minority

youth” (Anderson & Lough, 2019, pp. 452-453). Anderson and Lough suggested utilizing quota research for future studies to obtain a more diverse sample. Despite this study’s limitations and sampling issues, it was a valuable step toward filling a research gap regarding SGM homeschoolers and growing the overall body of research on homeschooling in the United States.

In reviewing the literature surrounding homeschooling in the United States, several commonalities and key themes were noticeable. Every study discussed the incomplete data picture of homeschooling in the United States because of the general lack of oversight and the widely varied regulations from state to state. This lack of knowledge featured as a key limitation in many studies because of the difficulties it presented in designing studies that could adequately assess the homeschool population. The incomplete demographic data contributes to the methodological issues that plague many homeschool studies (Gaither, 2017). These holes in the data make conducting studies, especially quantitative research, difficult because there is no way for the researchers to know if they have a complete picture of the homeschool population in this country. This difficulty typically results in small, incomplete sample sizes and more qualitative studies than quantitative (Gaither, 2017). Another problem is that quite a few of the popularly cited studies have been performed by homeschool advocacy organizations, which introduces bias into the results (Gaither, 2017). This aspect of the problem, however, is improving as interest in the field increases and more researchers add to the body of knowledge.

The Christian homeschooling movement, particularly the HSLDA, played a significant role in creating these difficulties by advocating for deregulation and putting out studies themselves, many from Dr. Brian D. Ray (Gaither, 2017). According to Gaither, “though these Ray studies have large sample sizes and employ sophisticated statistical techniques, they suffer from serious design limitations and are often used disingenuously to make generalizations

beyond what their specific conclusions warrant” (p. 215). Due to their high level of organization, HSLDA has had an outsized influence on homeschooling as a whole.

In light of these issues surrounding the body of homeschool research, there are some things that can be done to improve the situation and further develop the field. One is to continue developing and building on the existing research. In order to gain a clearer picture of the homeschool population in the U.S., scholars must continue following up and developing their research. More efforts could also be made to obtain quantitative data. Researchers and children’s rights advocates could join forces to lobby for more standardized regulations across the country, both to protect children and to better facilitate quantitative data collection.

Areas where more research is needed include how parenting style affects the decision to homeschool and outcomes for LGBTQ homeschoolers. The link between authoritarian parenting styles and the decision to homeschool warrants more research, as do outcomes of homeschooled students raised with various parenting styles. More research on LGBT homeschoolers is needed. Anderson and Lough (2019) specifically noted that they believed their study was one of the first. The lack of research in this area was noticeable during the research phase of this literature review.

While there was some difficulty finding articles specifically pertaining to the research questions addressed in this paper, it was heartening to see that there is a growing interest in researching the homeschooling population in the U.S. There is much room for improvement where methodology is concerned, but the body of research has at least reached the point where some generalizations can be made about homeschoolers, and there are plenty of studies for researchers to springboard from to further develop the field.

Goals

My goal for this project was to apply the research skills and visual media production techniques I learned at the University of Akron to communicate a homeschooler's perspective on homeschooling. Specifically, I was aiming to provide perspective on the lives of religious conservative homeschoolers. Considering my own background and the fact that my theme had to do with some of the less positive aspects of homeschooling, I also set a goal to create a film that dealt with these themes while not unfairly maligning religion or the segment of the homeschool population that does not seek to isolate their children from society. I had aimed to have the preproduction phase of the project completed by the end of Fall semester 2021 with the goal of completing production and editing in Spring semester 2022. By the end of this project, I would hopefully have gained hands-on experience in each aspect of making a film.

I made the decision to focus on conservative religious homeschoolers because not only do I have first-hand knowledge of this demographic, but also because the population of homeschoolers in the United States is very diverse and impossible to satisfactorily squeeze into a twenty-minute short film. Thus, I directed my research questions towards this specific homeschooling demographic. I researched the impact of the Christian homeschooling movement on homeschooling in the United States and searched for articles studying any link between parenting style and homeschooling for religious reasons. Since I included an LGBTQ character, I also researched outcomes for religious LGBTQ homeschoolers to gain more insight into the hardships this character might have faced. While research was somewhat limited, especially for LGBTQ homeschoolers, it provided a suitable grounding influence on the film setting.

Since I was dealing with more negative aspects of homeschooling as well as sensitive topics from my own background, I wanted to be conscientious of whether I was portraying stereotypes of homeschoolers or making the parental figures too one-dimensional. Using scholarly research to ground the film's setting was an important step in achieving this balance. The main way I achieved this goal, though, was by centering the main plot on the family drama and the relationship between Christine and Maria. I made sure to put time into writing out character biographies and descriptions that delved into each character's history and motivations, especially Maria's. While she is the main antagonist of the story, I wanted to portray her not as a straight villain, but as a complex character who genuinely believes she is doing the right thing for her family. To accomplish this, I wrote in scenes that showed her as a loving mother and wife. I also discussed Maria's character and motivations with the actor playing her, and we worked to bring to life a unique character with her own inner life. In designing sets, I incorporated elements that showed some of Maria's interests and hobbies, such as gardening and devotional books. Christine's father, John, played a minor role in the film. Due to time constraints, I was unable to explore his character to the extent that I did Maria's. However, I talked with the actor playing him about John's life and motivations. The dinner scene showed him to be a family man and loving father and husband. By focusing on Christine and Maria's conflict and relationship, I was able to create a compelling story between two distinct characters rather than relying on stereotypes and black-and-white thinking.

I achieved my goal of gaining hands-on experience in every aspect of making a film. I was involved in all aspects of preproduction, production, and post-production. I even cast myself in the role of Jessie White. The film took longer to edit than I expected, so it did end up taking a

bit longer than two semesters to make. At the end of the process, however, I did have a cohesive short film.

Recommendations

In the course of completing my honors project, I drastically changed the topic of my film. What was originally going to be a film about a former high school bully became a story about a homeschooled high schooler reuniting with her sister. While I had completed the scriptwriting stage of the original topic, I felt the script and characters were lacking in authenticity. This was likely because I had no public-school background myself and lacked firsthand experience with bullying dynamics. Thus, the characters were not well developed, and their actions did not read as authentic. Because I could not connect to the characters and the story, I decided to change the topic to something for which I could draw from my own knowledge and experiences. Making this change allowed me to connect more with the characters' inner worlds and made it easier to visualize and execute the production. I recommend that future students who choose a visual media project choose a project that they emotionally connect with if that option is available.

When I first conceived the new film idea, I had titled the project "The Escape," since it is a story of Christine escaping her mother's control. However, this working title felt a bit too on-the-nose, so to speak. I eventually settled upon "A Homeschool Idyll." According to Merriam-Webster, the term "idyll" refers to a description of a peaceful, content scene typically set in a rustic environment, or "a lighthearted carefree episode that is a fit subject for an idyll" (n.d). Outwardly, the White family appears to be a loving, peaceful homeschool family; however, the events of the film depict quite the opposite. The idea for this title occurred to me because in my review of the literature related to homeschooling, one common methodological issue with many studies was that they were produced by homeschool advocacy organizations with the purpose of

painting a positive picture of homeschooling to the outside world, despite the more nuanced outlook that unbiased studies provide. I myself remember as a child being strongly discouraged from saying anything potentially negative about my homeschool co-op to non-homeschoolers. I felt pressure to paint homeschooling in a positive light as well, and for a long time after I feared speaking honestly about my experiences. The title “A Homeschool Idyll” refers both to that pressure and the ironically less-than-idyllic events of the film.

Since I changed the topic of my film to homeschooling, one concern I had was how to convey to viewers unfamiliar with homeschooling what being homeschooled is like on a day-to-day basis, as well as how the high level of control Maria exercised affected Christine’s options for getting back in touch with Jessie. I wanted to avoid taking up time with exposition dumps, as this was to be a short film with limited time to spend in the exposition phase. I also wanted to avoid boring viewers by telling and not showing. To get around the exposition, I centered my writing around the conflict between Maria and Christine and focused on the estranged sister as the main point of contention. I focused on writing a story about a teenaged girl who missed her sister and just happened to be homeschooled. I put homeschooling in the background. I relied on the set design to show viewers what the White family’s daily life looked like. When I did put homeschooling into character actions, I made sure to use it either as a transition, to further the plot, or as characterization. For example, the opening shot of the film is a pan around the White family living room set to a voiceover of Maria giving Christine a homework assignment. The pan shot shows the film’s characters and various possessions that tell viewers about what these characters do in their home. Maria’s voiceover introduces viewers to her position of authority while giving them an idea of what a homeschool science course might be like. I also borrowed homeschool textbooks from my mother to place around the house for viewers to notice. For

future student filmmakers, I absolutely recommend putting time into fleshing out characters and putting care into creating sets. Doing those two things makes showing instead of telling much easier and more effective.

Another thing that made showing rather than telling easier was the camera work and the types of shots I chose. Most of the film was shot with a handheld camera; I only had a few static tripod shots. The tripod shots were mostly used in scenes where Maria was in complete control. I opted for handheld or shoulder rig when the scene was focused on Christine and her emotional journey as she breaks free from Maria's control. I also found that there were some shots and angles I wanted that a tripod or shoulder rig simply could not achieve. My time as a member of ZTV's Lowdown filming live concerts challenged me to be more creative with my camera work as well as get more comfortable with moving away from the tripod for shots, and I drew from that experience when shooting this project. Anyone doing this type of project in the future should consider the emotional tone of their scenes when planning shoots, and they should not be afraid to get creative or go out of their comfort zones.

While there were a lot of successful elements, there are also things I would do differently that I can keep in mind for my next project. While I am not entirely certain that this was avoidable, I do wish I had been able to muster a slightly larger crew for this project. I did not consistently have extra crew members to handle sound recording and things like setup, so setting the scene did take a bit longer. Not having a lot of extra people did make recording sound a bit more challenging at times. In the scene where Maria drags Christine up the stairs to her room, I had to maneuver both the camera and the zoom mic up the stairs while walking backwards. While I was ultimately successful, having an extra person or two for spotting and sound work would have been safer and less complicated. While having a film crew is not always possible, it

does save time and results in a better-quality final product. For my next video project, I will gather more people to assist with production if I have the opportunity.

I believe one major thing I could have done better was to go through my script further in advance to plan out in more detail exactly how I would execute the shots in my storyboard/shot list. Filming the production took about a month. My goal was to have it done before the end of spring semester, and before a couple of my actors had major scheduling conflicts begin. In addition, I was juggling set design, creating shot lists, and being the director and cameraperson. When I wrote my script, I did not write with exact production techniques fully in mind. In the production phase, there were a couple new techniques I had to search for on the internet and study a day or two before the shoot, namely day-for-night and how to shoot a scene in a moving vehicle at night without risking our lives. I then had to adapt the techniques to the resources I had available. Overall, the final product turned out well, but the next time I do a production like this, I will take some time between writing and production stages to look over the script with more of a cinematographer's eye for the specific techniques needed to carry out the scene.

The most difficult scene to shoot was the car scene between Christine and Jessie. The scene took place inside a moving car at night. While I had shot a scene or two inside a moving car before, I did not have a way to affix the camera to the dashboard, and I had never had to get shots of a subject in the passenger seat of a car that was supposed to be moving. In researching how I could accomplish this, I came across a technique called 'Poor Man's Process,' which entailed filming inside a stationary car with crew members to handle lighting and simulate movement, then editing the background in post. Since I had limited crew, this option was not feasible, and going out to film on location at night would have been too dangerous. Instead, I opted to shoot on the bottom floor of a parking deck and use day-for-night. The actor playing

Christine captured my lines as I drove around the level, and I shot their portion with as extreme a closeup as possible to block out the stationary background while jiggling the camera a bit to uphold the illusion of movement. The scene turned out well for what I was working with, but I likely could have produced something more polished had I taken some time earlier in the process to work through the details of creating the effects for the scene.

Because I was learning new techniques as I went, I also underestimated how long editing the production would take. This film clocked in at around twenty-six minutes by the time I finished. The car scene, again, was the most complicated. Not only did I use day-for-night to achieve the desired effect, but I also placed a mask over car windows to hide the parking deck. This entailed adjusting said mask frame by frame. For future students undertaking this type of project, I recommend researching and knowing the necessary techniques ahead of time to be prepared.

Overall, the project went well. While it was a learning experience and more complicated than any other production I had directed, at the end of it I had a cohesive film. The Covid-19 pandemic delayed completion somewhat. However, without the delay I would not have gotten the courage to switch topics and create a project that I was truly invested in.

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Link to Film

“A Homeschool Idyll” Film

<https://youtu.be/Tmlixyr6AeE>

Credits

Director: Sarah Shively

Christine Eleanor White: Emily Kay McNeeley

Maria White: Michelle Stuper

Jessie White: Sarah Shively

John White: Brian Day

Camera Crew: Sarah Shively, Emily Kay Mcneeley, Tanner Martin

Sound Team: Sarah Shively, Emily Kay McNeeley, Tanner Martin, Mohammed AlShaikh

Director of Photography: Sarah Shively

Production Designer: Sarah Shively

Screenplay: Sarah Shively

Editor: Sarah Shively

Music: "Elevate" (bensound.com)

Executive Producers: Dr. Kathleen Clark, Juan Contreras

Assistant Producers: Chris Keppler, Dr. Amber Ferris

Special Thanks to ZTV for Equipment

Appendices

Appendix A: Script for "A Homeschool Idyll"

CHARACTER LIST

CHRISTINE WHITE - Seventeen-year-old homeschooled high school student. She's a quiet, slim girl who doesn't seem to have much backbone. Typically a sweet, quiet girl. Christine shared a strong bond with her sister.

MARIA WHITE - Christine's mother. Mid-forties. She is a housewife and homeschooling mom. Very religious, dresses conservatively. She is the dominant figure in the White family home.

JESSIE WHITE - Christine's older sister, about 21 years old. (Let's say. We can change this when we take Ken's notes into account if needed). When Jessie was a teen living at home, she dressed modestly like how her mother wanted. She doesn't look entirely happy. There's something sad about her even when she smiles. She doesn't come on screen until the end, but when we finally see her as she is now, she looks more like herself.

JOHN WHITE - Christine's father. Mid-to-late forties. He's a solidly built, conservative man with short hair. He's usually away at work during the day but enjoys spending time with his family in the evening. While he does share Maria's religious beliefs and fully supports her homeschooling efforts, he does tend to bring a more practical view to the table, such as asking that Christine apply to a nearby secular college in case she doesn't make it into the Christian university.

THE WHITE FAMILY HOME - OPENING CREDITS
Roll opening credits. While credits roll, we see various family photos and personal belongings like a gym bag, a jacket, a journal, or a Bible, belonging to someone by the name of "Jessie." We mainly see four individuals in the photos.

The father is a solidly built man in his mid-forties. He wears his hair close-cropped and favors button-down shirts.

The mother in the photos looks to be about mid-forties. Age and conservative, frumpy clothing work in tandem to add several years to her appearance.

There are two teenage girls in the pictures. Both girls are wearing 'modest' clothing. Longer shorts, nothing too formfitting. The older of the two is an athletic blonde with a sad smile.

The younger teen is slim with darker hair and has a 100-watt smile any time she's next to her sister in the photos. End credits.

FADE TO BLACK

WHITE FAMILY LIVING ROOM - MID TO LATE AFTERNOON

Fade into a slightly cluttered family living room. Afternoon light filters in through the front door and windows onto the family photos and various paintings that line the walls.

Pillows add softness to the comfortably dilapidated couch and chair.

The land line is half-buried on the end table under magazines and college brochures. An authoritative voice comes from the dining room.

MARIA (O.S.)

For this assignment, you'll compare and contrast the evidence for evolution and Intelligent Design, and explain the weaknesses of the theory of evolution. The teacher's guide says the paper should be about five to seven pages, and you should use at least three sources. I'm going to go work on dinner. Review your assignments and let me know if you have any questions, Christine.

Throughout this monologue, we meander ever closer to the dining room.

As the voice goes silent, footsteps indicate that someone is moving to the kitchen. Pages turn from the dining room.

A metallic CLUNK resounds from outside. A chair scrapes back; excited footsteps pound into the living room, revealing CHRISTINE, a modestly-dressed teenager with long hair and glasses.

She races towards the source of the clunk, throwing open the front door.

CUT TO

WHITE FAMILY FRONT PORCH/MAILBOX - CONTINUOUS

Christine throws open the mailbox lid and jams her hand inside.

She pulls out the usual ads and a bill or two, but today there are also two large manila envelopes and a smaller standard one, all addressed to Christine! The larger envelopes are both from universities. Christine looks at them excitedly.

The plain smaller envelope carries a return address with the name 'Jessie White'.

Christine's breath catches in her throat as her fingers graze this name. Christine lights up and runs back into the house.

CHRISTINE

Mom, Mom!

The screen door bangs shut behind Christine.

CUT TO

THE WHITE FAMILY LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christine rushes from outside to tell her mother the news.

CHRISTINE

The colleges-

Only to nearly crash into an angry MARIA in the middle of the living room.

Maria is a conservatively dressed woman in her mid-forties.

She carries herself with a solid, unyielding stance.

MARIA

Didn't I specifically tell you that you are not to bring in the mail anymore?! What are you doing?

Christine stumbles backwards a couple steps, holding the large envelopes in front of her chest almost as if they are a shield.

CHRISTINE

I - um - I just -

MARIA

(interrupting) Give me those.

Maria holds out her hand. Christine complies.

Maria snatches the mail and looks through it. When she gets to the smaller envelope, her hands clench and she attempts to subtly hide it among the bills and ads.

When she sees the large envelopes, her irritation turns to excitement.

MARIA

Christine, sit down!

Christine sits down on one end of the couch. Maria takes a seat on the other end, anticipatory fingers fumbling with one of the envelopes.

MARIA

These are from Faith College and North State University. We get to see if you got in! Let's look at the one from Other University first.

Christine leans forward in tentative excitement.

Maria finally gets one corner of North State University's envelope open. She tears the rest and pulls the enclosed letter out.

Her eyes scan the page. For an instant, her eyes widen and her lips tighten into a thin line. Then she wills her face to relax.

MARIA

Oh...sweetie, I'm afraid you didn't make it in. This is a rejection letter.

Christine crumples a bit.

MARIA

(quickly)

But we still have the letter from Faith College! Let's see what it says.

Maria shoves the letter from North State University back inside the envelope and stashes it between her leg and the couch armrest.

She lifts up the Faith College envelope and painstakingly slides it open. Maria takes out the letter.

Reads it.

Maria and Christine are on the edge of their seats.

Another beat.

Maria bursts into a smile and laugh and lunges across the couch to envelope Christine in an embrace.

MARIA

Christine, I'm so proud of you! You did it!

CHRISTINE

(muffled) Did I get in!

MARIA

You got in! And you have a scholarship! Oh, I'm so happy!

Mother and daughter hug. Maria holds Christine at arms length. Christine is beaming.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Wait until your father hears about this, he'll be so proud!

CHRISTINE

Mom, there was a third letter. I think it's from-

Maria freezes, a worried look growing on her face. Then pulls her face back into an elated smile.

MARIA

Honey, it's probably a scam. We get junk mail all the time. Don't worry about it. Now, come help me with dinner!

Maria gets up and leads Christine off into the kitchen, the envelope with Jessie's name on it forgotten on the sofa.

CUT TO

WHITE FAMILY DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dinnertime in the White family home. The family of three sits around the wood table, surrounded by bookshelves and homeschool projects.

John and Maria sit at opposite ends of the table with Christine between them. There is one empty chair across from Christine.

Silverware clinks as the family finishes their meal.

JOHN

So, after the power came back on I was able to run the recovery program and get the files back. And that was my day. Anything exciting happen here?

MARIA

(chuckling bashfully)

Actually, Christine has some exciting news for you. You wanna go get dessert, honey?

Christine nods excitedly and disappears into the kitchen. She returns with a frosted cake and a large butcher knife. John is pleasantly surprised.

JOHN

What's the occasion?

MARIA

Why don't you tell your father what you got in the mail today, Christine?

Christine sets the cake down at her mother's end of the table and moves back to her seat.

CHRISTINE

I got a letter from Faith College today. I was accepted!

MARIA

And?

CHRISTINE

And I got a scholarship!

JOHN

Congratulations, sweetie! That's great news! I'm proud of you!

John gets up from his seat and gives Christine a hug.

JOHN

Did anything come from North State University?

CHRISTINE

Yeah, but I didn't get in. There was also a letter that had Jessie's name-

MARIA

(firmly)

It was just a scam, though.

Maria brandishes the large butcher knife.

MARIA

Okay, who wants some cake?

Maria stabs into the cake.

FADE TO BLACK

WHITE FAMILY DINING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun is shining and the birdies are singing on this fine homeschool midmorning.

Christine is having a Literature lesson with her mother. They are going over *The Stranger* by Albert Camus.

MARIA

So, Absurdists don't care either way if there is a creator. What can you think of from Camus' *The Stranger* that makes the book an example of the Absurdist worldview?

Christine is staring blankly off into space instead of the book in front of her.

CHRISTINE

Mom? . . . Do you think maybe Jessie got caught up in Absurdism, and that's why she left?

Maria looks up sharply and puts the teacher's manual down.

She stares straight at Christine.

MARIA

Christine, Jessie left because she decided the World was more important than her family and the faith I tried to raise her with. Don't think about her too much. Just focus on your studies and stay on the right path.

Christine shrinks in her chair. Her eyes return to the book.

CHRISTINE

Yes, Mom.

MARIA

Now. Absurdism versus Christian Theism. What are the differences?

Christine starts skimming and flipping through pages to find the answer.

FADE INTO

THE WHITE FAMILY DINING ROOM - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Christine is working on her math homework at the dining room table. Same spot she was in this morning.

Chopping, sizzling, and bubbling reveal Maria's presence in the kitchen cooking supper.

CLUNK! The mail is here. Christine startles from her seat as if to go get it. Maria strides out of the kitchen to intercept the mail.

She reappears a minute later, her attention on sorting today's ads and bills.

The bubbling in the kitchen suddenly turns into a steaming hiss.

Maria drops the mail on the table and rushes to stop the rice from boiling over.

Christine's gaze is fixed on one envelope that landed in front of her. The name attached to the return address reads: JESSIE WHITE.

Christine swallows. Furtively glances toward the kitchen.

Her hand darts out. The envelope disappears into Christine's possession.

Christine surreptitiously peers into the kitchen as she painstakingly lifts one corner of the envelope flap. Maria is at the sink.

Carefully, Christine pries open the envelope and inches the letter out.

Success! She hides it in her lap. Then tucks the envelope shut and shoves it in the mail pile.

Christine then unfolds the letter in her lap and places it in her book over the actual text. She reads the letter.

JESSIE (V.O.)

(do closeups of the important bits as we get reaction shots from Christine)

Dear Chris, blah blah, I like to think you're reading these, blah blah, I have a girlfriend now, blahblah, I miss you and think about you every day. Call me if you ever need anything. [phone number] Love, Jessie.

Confusion fills Christine's face. She swallows, looks at the kitchen. Looks at the letter. Maria reappears and grabs the mail off the table.

Christine jumps.

Maria looks at Christine, brows furrowed.

MARIA

Everything okay?

CHRISTINE

Y-yeah, everything's fine. Just, trying to figure out my math homework.

MARIA

Alright. If you need help, I can work with you after I finish dinner.

Christine nods.

FADE TO

WHITE FAMILY DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON, THE NEXT DAY

Christine is right back in her usual spot at the dining room table, this time working out of J. Wile's Apologia biology textbook.

Maria breezes through with her purse. She's dressed to go out for an errand. She stops briefly to let Christine know.

MARIA

I'm going to run some errands. I'll be gone for about an hour.

CHRISTINE

Okay. See you later.

Maria continues into the kitchen. A moment later, the back door slams shut.

Christine stills, attention focused on the side of the house. As soon as she hears the car start, she's up from her seat and on a mission.

CUT TO

JOHN AND MARIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS Christine stands at the threshold of her parents' bedroom.

For an instant, she hesitates. Then looks at the letter in her hand. She's in.

Looking around at the various dressers and shelves on either side of her parents' room, Christine decides on her mom's side.

She settles on the big dresser in the center. Kneels down on the floor and places a trembling hand on the bottom drawer. A deep breath. Her eyes go skyward.

CHRISTINE

God, please forgive me.

She returns to the drawer. A couple more breaths to get her hyped up.

Christine pulls the drawer open.

Looks like there's just socks inside. Exhale.

Christine throws up her hands, and drops them.

CHRISTINE

Why am I doing this? There's no way she-

Christine freezes, her hand in the sock drawer. She feels something just underneath the layers of solid-colored crew socks.

She pulls out an envelope identical to the two she found in the mail over the last several days. Addressed to her, Jessie's name on the return address.

Quivering fingers open the envelope. Inside is another letter, addressed to Christine.

Christine's eyes take in the letter. Flashing to parts like, "I love you"; "Call me if you ever need anything"; "I try to call every day"; a phone number.

Christine gulps. She looks down into the drawer, afraid of what she might see.

Now only slightly buried under the socks, Christine's snooping has exposed more of the envelopes.

Christine tears into the drawer. She unearths at least five more letters.

She rips each one open, growing more and more frantic.

They're all from Jessie.

Christine drops the letters and folds in on herself. Almost sobbing. As she's looking down, Christine notices a manila envelope.

She reaches out a trembling hand, picks it up. Brings it to where she can read it. It's the envelope from North State University.

Christine looks between the college envelope and the sock drawer where more letters for Christine from her sister lie waiting to be opened by their intended recipient.

Christine doesn't want to do this, but she has to know. She takes the letter out of the manila envelope and reads it. The letter flutters to the ground beside her.

It reads: "Dear Christine White, We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted into North State..."

Christine is staring straight ahead in shock. Her world has come to a standstill as she realizes the meaning of what she's just found. The phone rings. The phone is the only thing that exists now.

Slowly, Christine turns toward the land line on her mother's night stand. The phone is still ringing.

As if in a dream, Christine rises to meet the ringing. Numb limbs carry her toward the inevitable.

A hand reaches out to grasp the phone and end the ringing, answer the question. Christine's hand brings the phone to her ear.

PHONE (JESSIE)

Christine? Hello, Christine? Um, It's me, Jessie.

CHRISTINE

(in an low moan)

Oh my god.

PHONE (JESSIE)

Christine! Is it you? I missed you so much! I've been calling every day trying to reach you. Have you been getting my letters? I'm sorry-

The phone falls from Christine's hand. Christine falls to her knees, weeping. The phone is still talking.

PHONE (JESSIE)

Christine? Are you there? Is everything alright? Christine?
Christine?

FADE TO BLACK

WHITE FAMILY KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Maria unlocks the door and returns home. She shuts the door to the outside world and locks it back up.

MARIA

Christine, I'm home!

Silence.

MARIA

Christine? Hello?

Maria looks around the kitchen. Then makes her way to the dining room.

CUT TO

WHITE FAMILY DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Only to find Christine sitting at the head of the dining room table, hunched over a pile of the letters from Jessie and the North State University acceptance letter she discovered just one hour ago.

Christine looks up with an ashen, tear-stained face as her mother enters the room.

Maria stops cold as she takes in the scene and realizes that she's been found out.

CHRISTINE

Mom...

MARIA

Christine... where did you get those?

CHRISTINE

You already know.

Maria's eyes bulge in anger as she opens her mouth to launch into a tirade.

CHRISTINE

Mom, I'm sorry! But I found one of the letters in the mail, and I had to know...what happened to Jessie, why I'm not allowed to answer the phone or get the mail anymore. Why did you do it, Mom?

Christine swallows nervously after her little outburst.

Maria steps forward and grips the chair in front of her to get ahold of herself. To regain control of the situation.

MARIA

Christine, I am your mother. It is my job to protect you.

CHRISTINE

Protect me from what, Mom?

Christine holds up a letter.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

From my own sister?

MARIA

Your sister chose to completely abandon all of our values! She chose a lifestyle that will only lead to despair and brokenness. I don't want to see that happen to you too, Christine.

CHRISTINE

How would just writing back make me end up like Jessie?

MARIA

If you let the World influence your life too much, it will lead you astray just like her. And I don't think you're a strong enough Christian to handle this, Christine.

CHRISTINE

Mom! I go to church, I study the Bible and pray every day! What more do you want to see?

MARIA

Jessie did all those things too, and look where she is now!

Christine slams her hand down on the college acceptance letter.

CHRISTINE

Then how come you let me apply to a non-Christian school if my faith is so weak?

MARIA

That was your father's decision, not mine. If it were up to me, you wouldn't have applied in the first place, and after today, I'm glad I didn't tell you that you were accepted!

CHRISTINE

And what if I actually wanted to go to North State, huh? What then?

MARIA

You're delusional! Talking about church and prayer after you go through my things and defy me?! Do you seriously think you'd end up any different than Jessie?

CHRISTINE

What? No, Mom-

MARIA

Oh so you want to be like her?

CHRISTINE

What if I am?

Maria loses it. She descends on Christine and slaps her, then drags the shocked girl up from the table and off to Christine's room.

MARIA

Over my dead body! I will not stand by while another one of my daughters spits all over the values I tried to raise you with! NO! Get over here!

CHRISTINE

Mom, stop! Stop!

Maria opens Christine's bedroom door and shoves her in and onto her bed.

CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARIA

You stay in here, and you think about what you've done. I thought you'd turn out alright at least.

Maria turns around to leave.

Christine gets halfway up, sobbing.

CHRISTINE

Mom, please-

MARIA

I've never been more disappointed with you in my life.

The door slams shut, and Christine is left alone.

She falls back onto her bed, weeping.

FADE TO

CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Christine has cried herself to sleep.

The bedroom door opens, and in walks her mother. Maria kneels down next to Christine and smooths back her hair.

Christine blinks awake. She recoils a bit when she sees who it is.

CHRISTINE

Mom?

MARIA

Hey honey. I spoke to your father about what happened earlier today. He was not happy. We don't think you're ready to go off to college yet.

Christine props herself up on her elbows to look more fully at her mother.

CHRISTINE

What?

Maria stands up.

MARIA

You'll still get your high school diploma; you just won't be going straight to Faith College. Your father and I thought it would be best if you waited a year.

(beat)

And part of being ready means surrounding yourself with good influences. Jessie is not going to be a good influence. You will need to write her a letter asking her to stop trying to contact you in order for your father and I to be assured that you can handle leaving for college.

Christine looks on in horror.

CHRISTINE

But Mom-

Maria sits down by Christine and wraps her arms around her.

MARIA

I know, it's going to be hard for you. It's been hard for me too. It hurt your father and me so much when Jessie chose to live in sin with another woman. We loved her so much, and wanted the best for her, but she's blinded by what the World calls love. I just don't want to see that happen to you. I love you so much, Christine.

CHRISTINE

I love you too, Mom.

Maria kisses the top of Christine's head.

MARIA

Now I'm going to go get ready for bed. Why don't you pray for strength to do the right thing, and to reconcile your desires? Goodnight, sweetheart. I love you.

Maria smooths Christine's hair one last time before getting up from the bed. She softly shuts the door on her way out.

Christine sits motionless on her bed for a few moments, processing. Then she sighs and drops her head into her hands.

Montage of Christine pacing around, kneeling, sitting, then lying on her bed. She sits down at her desk and tries to write the letter to Jessie, but just ends up crumpling the attempt. She takes the one letter from Jessie that she saved, reads it again. Throws it on the floor in a fit. Crying silently.

Until finally late at night, sitting on the floor at the end of her rope, Christine glances at where the letter from Jessie fell.

We read the words, "If you ever need anything, call me. I'll pick up. Love you, sis. And the phone number in the bottom corner. Christine shakes her head.

CHRISTINE

I can't do this anymore. I'm sorry.

She picks up the letter.

CUT TO

THE WHITE FAMILY LIVING ROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Christine pokes her head out of her bedroom. The house is quiet except for snores coming from her parents' room. She steals out of her room and tiptoes to the living room.

Sneaks over to the landline and eases the phone out of its cradle. Deep breath. She slowly dials the number. And presses talk.

Christine holds the phone up to her ear as it rings. And rings. On the sixth ring, Christine is about to give up, when -

JESSIE (PHONE)

(groggy)

Hello?

CHRISTINE

Jessie? Are you there?

JESSIE (PHONE)

(immediately alert)

Christine! It's good to hear you again! How are you? Is everything alright over there? Is it safe to talk?

CHRISTINE

Jessie, I need...I need help.

JESSIE (PHONE)

Of course, anything.

CHRISTINE

I found all your letters, Mom was hiding them. And now they won't even let me go to college if I don't write you back saying I never want to hear from you again.

JESSIE (PHONE)

Oh...god. I...I can stop.

CHRISTINE

No! Jessie, come get me out of here, please! I don't want to be stuck here. Mom's really scaring me.

JESSIE (PHONE)

(beat)

Okay. I'll be there in an hour. Pack a bag with some clothes and whatever else you need, and wait outside. And be quiet.

CHRISTINE

Thank you.

JESSIE (PHONE)

Hey, everything's going to be fine.
I'll see you soon, okay?

CHRISTINE

Okay. See you.

Christine hangs up the phone and takes a shaky breath. She sits still for a moment to steady herself and keep the tears welling up in her eyes from spilling over.

CUT TO

CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christine pulls a duffle bag out of her closet and shoves some clothes inside.

Empties her piggy bank. Grabs a few favorite books off the shelf. A teddy bear.
Her hand hesitates, but the Bible makes it into her duffle bag.

CUT TO

THE WHITE FAMILY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Christine grabs some Oreos from the pantry.

CUT TO

WHITE FAMILY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Bag packed, Christine takes one last walk through the house.

We see flashbacks of Christine's memories as she walks through.

The kitchen where she helped her mother cook dinner. The dining room where she learned lessons. The living room where she spent family game nights with her parents and sister.

FADE TO

WHITE FAMILY LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Christine ends her goodbye at the front door. She silently unlatches it, preparing to make her escape.

VOICE

What do you think you're doing?

Christine whips around, back against the door. It's her mother.

MARIA

Christine. What are you doing with that bag? Where do you think you're going at this late hour?

Christine cowers against the door.

Maria moves closer.

Christine takes a deep breath.

CHRISTINE

I'm leaving.

MARIA

(scoffing)

No you're not. Don't be silly. Where would you even go?

Christine stands a little straighter.

CHRISTINE

With Jessie. I'm going with Jessie.

Maria stops in her tracks.

And turns pale with rage.

MARIA

Christine Eleanor White, get away from that door right now, or else-

CHRISTINE

Or else what? What else can you do to me that you haven't already done?

Maria steps closer.

MARIA

If you walk out that door, you will no longer be my daughter. Is that what you want?

CHRISTINE

What I want is to be with people who won't lie to me and imprison me 'for my own good.' You told me for three years that Jessie didn't want anything to do with me or this family. You told me that she abandoned us, but you and Dad were the ones who abandoned her! I've had enough of your lies, Mom!

Maria reaches out to Christine.

MARIA

Christine, I just don't want to lose the one daughter I have left!

CHRISTINE

You already have.

Headlights and the sound of an engine signal Jessie's arrival.

Christine steels herself.

CHRISTINE

Goodbye, Mom.

Maria lunges for her daughter.

MARIA

Get back here!

Christine throws herself out the door, just evading her mother's grasping hands.

She runs through the night, to her sister's beat-up early 2000s car.

Christine yanks open the door and throws herself into the passenger seat as her mother runs out onto the front porch screaming for her to come back. The car pulls away from the house.

CUT TO

INSIDE JESSIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Reunited at last, the sisters sit in silence at first, catching their breath. Jessie's old car rumbles along, the rainbow air freshener dangling from the rearview mirror.

Christine nervously glances over at her sister. Jessie's hands grip the steering wheel.

JESSIE

You okay?

Christine startles, turning to look at Jessie for the first time. This new Jessie is an older, more seasoned version of the girl from the family photos at the beginning. She has a firm grip on the steering wheel and an unwavering gaze.

CHRISTINE

Um, I think so. Yeah. Where do we go from here?

JESSIE

Well, from here, we're going to go home and rest. We'll figure the rest out tomorrow. And you can meet Emily.

CHRISTINE

I missed you, Jess.

JESSIE

Chrissy, I'm sorry I didn't try harder to reach you. If I'd known Mom was-

CHRISTINE

Jess, it's okay. I don't think either of us could've seen that coming. I'm just happy you never really forgot about me.

JESSIE

I never would.

Another silence as Jessie drives further away.

JESSIE

Would you like some music?

Christine looks longingly at the radio.

CHRISTINE

Um, sure. What do you want to listen to?

Jessie grins.

JESSIE

Why don't you play around with the radio and see if you find something that you like?

Christine hesitates.

CHRISTINE

Are you sure?

JESSIE

Nobody's going to get mad at you for picking something you like here, Chrissy. Least of all me. Go on. See what you find.

A hesitant smile begins to steal across Christine's face. She looks at Jessie one more time. Jessie nods reassuringly.

Christine presses the button on the radio.

FADE TO

EXT. JESSIE'S CAR - VERY EARLY MORNING

Jessie's car zooms down the empty road towards the morning.

Different snippets of music as Christine switches between stations. She's free now.

A COLLEGE CLASSROOM - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

A much happier Christine walks into a brightly lit college classroom.

She's dressed in more modern clothing and, despite the weight of her backpack, walks like a weight has been lifted from her shoulders.

Christine takes her seat in the class with the other students.

END

Appendix B: Production Design Notes for “A Homeschool Idyll”

Filming Locations

Needed:

Saul’s house

- A front porch with a mailbox
- Living room
- Dining room
- Kitchen
- Parents’ bedroom
 - My room at Front St. if I get a new mattress in time
 - Reconfigure Saul’s room
 - See if I can use Mom and Dad’s room (LAST RESORT)
 - Ask friends with parents or queen-size beds
- Christine’s bedroom
 - Saul’s room
- Jessie’s car
 - My car
- College classroom
 - Just about any classroom on campus

Production Design Notes.

Note: This is also the storyboard/shot list. I cannot draw to save my life. Writing out how I wanted the scenes to look was more helpful to me than confusing myself with stick figures.

So I know what I need for props. Now, what we need to do is get the props, storyboard scenes, and figure out how we’re going to organize shoots. I want to organize by location as much as possible. Like, do all the dining room scenes at once, all the living room scenes, etc.

Go scene by scene. Write out the locations, blocking, setup ideas. Props, costumes, how long you think each scene will take. Figure out what order you want to shoot the scenes in.

SCENE: OPENING CREDITS 0

This is all just pictures. Either stills of family members or props.

I’m not sure I like the family photos for opening credits idea that much. I just don’t really want to go to the trouble of finding extra locations. We should for sure take at least one family portrait to have in the

living room. The props I have listed here are all easily obtainable. If the series of family photos falls through, I can just put the opening credits to some music and fade into the first scene.

Put opening credits over the pictures.

Props

- Bible
- Journal
- Gym bag
- Jacket
- Family photos
- Get a few with the whole family
- Just John and Maria
- Individual pics
- Jessie and Christine
- Mother-daughter
- Father-daughter

SCENE: LIVING ROOM 1

This is the opening scene. Basically, we want it to look like a family living room. We should have some photos on the walls, a landline phone on an end table with a bunch of magazines on it, the place should look lived in.

Basic Room Props

- Family photos
- Land line
- Magazines and catalogs, newspaper. Magazines should be family-oriented
- A few books (Christian nonfiction preferably)
- Pillows

Sound Effects

- Maria's voice
- Maria's footsteps
- Pages turning
- A clunk from the mailbox outside
- Chair scraping back
- Christine's footsteps

Characters

- Christine
 - Long hair
 - No makeup
 - Preferably glasses

- Modest clothes. Nothing too tight or showing too much skin. Stuff like loose boot cut jeans or loosely fitted skinny jeans, denim skirt. For tops, she'd wear sweaters or a basic long-sleeved tee or T-shirt. Nothing trendy or fancy. If we can find some old straight-leg jeans, that'd be good.

For specific shots, I'd like to try to storyboard a few, even though I suck at drawing. I want to fade into a meandering long take around the living room as Maria's talking. I want the camera to go still when we hear Christine get up, then have her run into frame. We'll follow her to the front door as she opens it and runs to the mailbox. Probably switch to OTS once she passes the camera. Try panning, snapping, and just cutting. Pick what works. Then as soon as she goes out the front door, we cut to the next scene. Which will probably be mostly closeups, depending on the actual location.

SCENE: FRONT PORCH 2

This scene continues right where we left off in the living room. I'm not sure I want many wide angles for this scene. Both for practical reasons (we might not be filming at the same house) and because I really just want the focus to be on Christine, the mailbox, and the letters. Christine does live a fairly isolated life, so her home is the main environment for her.

Props

- Large envelopes from each of the universities
- A smaller envelope addressed to Christine from Jessie
- Some random ads and bills addressed to John, Maria, or Current Resident
- A mailbox

Audio

- Screen door banging shut

Specific shots kind of depend on where exactly we're filming this. I didn't really like Saul's mailbox that much just because of the awkward location. Christine would have to kind of stoop down. I could use it, I'd just have to get the foley from somewhere else. But for specific shots, I know I would like a closeup of Christine opening up the mailbox and getting the stuff out. If we used Saul's it might be nice to get a shot from just off the front porch. I do want a closeup of the mail so we see the important items. Either POV or OTS. And I do want some reaction closeups of Christine's face. Low angle, I think.

SCENE: LIVING ROOM 1A

Set and props from the first living room scene. This is a scene between Christine and her mother. It starts out as a tense scene, but the tension breaks when Maria sees that Christine got accepted into Christian University.

Props:

- The mail
- College acceptance packages
 - Letter
 - Stickers?

- Brochures

Audio:

- Envelope opening
- Screen door banging shut

Characters

- Christine (same clothing)
- Maria
 - Same type of clothing as Christine but more overtly feminine.

Maria is the central figure in this scene. She should be shot from angles that make her look larger than Christine and more powerful. Christine should look smaller. We'll come back and think of some more specific shots, but the 180 will be facing the couch. So we'll angle off that. I don't imagine we'll be needing OTS shots of Maria. I want there to be some mystery about what's actually in the letters. This is the first scene where we get a hint that something's off about Maria though, so I want some focus on her reactions.

SCENE: DINING ROOM 3

The dinner scene later that day. We'll have dinner stuff out on the dining room table. We should also have school supplies stored around the room, as the dining room is also the main school room. John, Maria, and Christine are sitting around the table.

Props:

- Dinner plates that have been used
- School supplies (notebooks, pencils, paper, binders, markers, notecards)
- Textbooks
- A cake
- A butcher knife

Audio:

- The cake getting stabbed with the knife
- Silverware clinking against the plates

Characters

- Christine
- Maria
- John: Wears button-down and nice pants. He recently came home from work.

We'll get the standard wides, mediums, and closeups for the convo. We could do all this from the side of the table with the empty chair. We'll have to make sure it's obvious that there's a chair there, and it's empty though. I also want to make sure to get a low angle shot from the table of Maria stabbing the cake. Make sure, again, that Maria is shot from angles that make her look dominant.

SCENE: DINING ROOM 3A

This is the next morning. Christine is having a Literature lesson. This is the next phase of buildup to Christine's discovery. Seeing the letter addressed to her has caused Christine to start thinking about Jessie again. This is a typical school day, so we'll have Christine's other textbooks and supplies on the table.

Props:

- School supplies
- Textbooks
- The Stranger by Albert Camus
- A teacher's manual
- A printout of War of the Worldviews by Stobaugh
- Maybe a project poster or 2?

Get your standard establishing shot. If it's nice out, try to include the weather to get that sunshine and birdies vibe. Try to get some shots or pan around the room to show the kinds of stuff in there. Then we move to our establishing shot of Christine and Maria. Again, we want to always frame the shots so that Maria looks like the larger, more dominant figure. We'll get some close ups for Christine just in case, but for this scene I don't think we should have any shots where it's just Christine in frame. Natural lighting here.

SCENE: DINING ROOM 3B

Same location, just later in the day. Christine is still in the same spot doing math homework now, her mother is in the kitchen. This is the next buildup to the Big Reveal, and the plot point that drives Christine to investigate her mother's room.

Props:

- Homeschool setup
- School supplies and textbooks
- Math textbook for Christine to work off of
- Calculator. Find your TI-84+
- That day's mail. A mix of ads and bills, and some random junk mail.
- The letter from Jessie. Both envelope and letter
- Ideally, we won't need these, but just in case the angles aren't possible:
 - A pot on the stove
 - Vegetables and cutting board with knife

Audio:

- Chopping vegetables
- Bubbling pot
- Sizzling
- Sound of pot boiling over
- Paper noises

- Pencil noises
- Mailbox clunk
- Sink water
- Jessie V.O.

Until Maria asks Christine if everything is okay, Christine is the focus of this scene. I'm going to try to angle the shots so that we can't see Maria working in the kitchen. Christine is seated for this whole scene, so it will be easy to frame Maria to be larger when she does come into frame. Maybe snap to Maria when she walks through the dining room. I do want a closeup of the letter from Jessie. And some shots of the mail. Environment shots for atmosphere so it's not just a bunch of shots of Christine.

SCENE: DINING ROOM 3C

We are once again in the White family dining room. It's the next day. In this scene, Maria leaves for some errands, and Christine gets up to go snooping as soon as she's out the door and driveway.

Props:

- School supplies
- Textbooks
- A purse for Maria. It's a sensible purse. Very practical.
- Ideally a biology textbook for Christine, but it can be anything really. Just to make it clear that she's doing homework.

Audio:

- Back door slamming shut. And locking.
- Car starting up and leaving the driveway.

Quick scene. Establishing shot. Cut to Maria coming in, dropping her line, going out. Cut to Christine listening to audio, then getting up.

SCENE: JOHN AND MARIA'S BEDROOM 4

This is the scene of the big discovery. The Thing that completely shatters Christine's conception of her life and who she can trust.

Props:

- Dressers for parents
- Stuff that would belong to John.
 - Men's deodorant, lotion
 - Loose change
 - Loose clothes
 - A tie?
 - Alarm clock
 - Various work awards and knickknacks
 - Hairbrush/comb
- Maria's dresser

- Lotions
- Beauty products, jewelry boxes
- Random stuff like loose change
- Hairbrush
- Hair accessories
- A Bible
- A drawer with a bunch of socks
- A bunch of letters from Jessie all addressed to Christine
- The acceptance package from North State University
- Bedside phone

Audio

- Door opening
- Drawer opening
- Paper rustling
- Envelope opening
- Phone ringing
- Jessie's voice on the other end

So I'm going to come back and figure out specific shots and effects for this scene. We're going to have to be careful with the shot of the door. Probably get a shot of one of the doors at Saul's house, then cut into my room and don't show the door for the rest of the scene. So I'll get some establishing shots of the room as Christine goes in, then the main focus will be on Christine, the dresser drawer, and the phone. This is a pretty focused scene. I might add some slow-mo effects, some kind of audio to drown out the 'room' noise. We need to make the audience feel Christine's complete shock at the depth of her mother's deception. Like the blood rushing in your ears when your world turns upside down and you feel the rest of the world come to a standstill at the revelation of this one particular thing.

SCENE: KITCHEN 5

Maria returns home. Very brief scene.

Props:

- Maria's purse

Audio

- Door unlocking and locking again.

Basically just a shot of Maria coming inside and looking for Christine. Might even be one continuous shot, but get some closeups just in case.

SCENE: DINING ROOM 3D

This is the big confrontation scene. Christine has been waiting for her mother to return home so that she can confront her about what she has found.

Props

- School stuff
- Christine's biology book
- All the letters from Maria's sock drawer
- Maria's purse

This is a confrontation scene, so the camera will mostly be on Christine and Maria. We should still frame Maria so she looks larger, but make less of an effort to make Christine look small. This is the first scene where she starts to find her voice. Find some parent dragging their kid off scenes. I think it'll be a wide, I just need to figure out some good angles.

TRANSITION IN SCENE: FROM DINING ROOM TO CHRISTINE'S ROOM 1B,

This is literally just Maria dragging Christine off to her room. We'll be going from the dining room, through the living room, up the stairs, and into Saul's room. We'll have to specifically block the shots, but we're just following them up there.

SCENE: CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM 6

Directly continued from the dragging. Maria shoves Christine into her room, yells at her some more, then leaves.

Props:

- Hair stuff on the dresser
- Knickknacks. Horses.
- A Bible
- Crafts she's made
- The jacket with Jessie's name on it from the opening credits
- Clothes
- An alarm clock
- Tissue box
- Nail polish (not too crazy with the colors though)
- Anything else you can think of to make it look like Christine's room
- Shoes

Audio:

- Door slamming

Get a wide shot from a decent angle. Medium-closeups. OTS.

SCENE: CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM 6A

A couple hours later. First Maria comes in and tells Christine that she needs to completely give up on Jessie if she ever wants to go to college. Then we have a montage of Christine being all angsty and trying to figure out what to do.

Props:

- All the stuff for Christine's bedroom

- Paper/stationary
- Pencil
- Letter from Jessie that Christine stole

Audio:

- Paper rustling
- Door opening and closing

So I want more focus on closeups when Maria's in the room. The montage will mostly be wider shots, because Christine is by herself.

SCENE: LIVING ROOM 1C

Christine calls Jessie and asks for her help.

Props:

- Phone
- Magazines and stuff on the table

Audio:

- Phone ringing and dialogue from Jessie's end
- Christine hanging up the phone

Other than the establishing shots, this'll be mostly focused on Christine.

SCENE: CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM 6B

First part of another montage that shows Christine packing her stuff and getting ready to escape.

Props:

- Duffel bag
- Clothes
- Piggy bank
- Books
- Teddy bear
- Bible

Audio:

- Duffel bag noises

This'll mostly be quick shots, a lot of focus on the stuff she's putting in. This is a quick montage thing.

SCENE: KITCHEN 5A

Christine grabs Oreos from the kitchen. Why? Who knows? She likes Oreos.

Props:

- A package of Oreos

Audio:

- Oreo package rustling

This is literally just a shot of Christine's hand grabbing the Oreos. We established in the last scene that she's packing a duffel bag.

TRANSITION IN SCENE: FROM KITCHEN THROUGH DINING ROOM TO LIVING ROOM 5B, 3E, 1D,

This is a scene of flashbacks. Christine is walking through her house one last time before leaving. We go from the kitchen, through the dining room, to the living room.

Props:

- Christine's duffel bag
- For kitchen
 - Food prep stuff
 - Utensils
- Dining room
 - School textbooks and supplies
- Living room
 - Board games

Audio:

- Sound of Christine's footsteps
- Silent for flashbacks

This scene consists of several mini-scenes, framed by Christine walking slowly through the house. For Christine, we'll have mostly medium and close shots, and some OTS. The flashbacks will all be wide shots.

SCENE: LIVING ROOM 1E

This is the final confrontation between Christine and Maria. Maria catches Christine sneaking out of the house, and Christine stands up to her mother and takes her freedom.

Props:

- Christine's duffel bag

Costumes

- Maria is in pajamas
- Christine is dressed

Audio:

- Front door unlatching
- Car engine

- Door being opened
- Car door opening and closing

This is the big confrontation scene. Camera will mostly be on Maria and Christine. We will not be shooting Maria from low angles though. I want to show that Christine is throwing off Maria's hold on her, and so I want Maria to look less powerful.

TRANSITION IN SCENE: FROM LIVING ROOM TO OUTSIDE TO JESSIE'S CAR 2A

Christine escapes from Maria's clutches and into Jessie's car.

Props:

- Christine's duffel bag

Audio:

- Car door
- Engine
- Maria's enraged screams

Shoot it like a horror chase scene. That Christine just barely escapes. If we can have Maria follow Christine out to the car and bang on the windows a bit, that'd be intense. So we wouldn't show Jessie just yet, but we would shoot some shots from inside the car for that bit. For POV.

SCENE: INSIDE JESSIE'S CAR 7

This is Christine and Jessie's first time seeing each other in several years. The mood is hesitant, and a bit shaken after having Maria go all enraged zombie on the car.

Props:

- A couple random bits of trash
- Maybe a picture of Jessie and her girlfriend hanging from the rearview mirror? Or just some cool tchotchke. Or a rainbow air freshener or something LGBT oriented.
- Christine's duffel bag

Audio:

- Car running
- Music from the radio

This scene is a bit calmer. So we'll be calm with the camera. Also, this is the first time we actually see Jessie. She just has whatever she threw on to come get Christine. Probably a hoodie. We'll shoot from inside the car.

SCENE: CLASSROOM 9

This is some time later. Christine walks into a college classroom, having made it into North State University with her sister's help.

Props:

- Backpack for Christine

Costumes:

- More updated clothes for Christine

Just a wide angle shot from the inside of a classroom showing Christine walking in. Maybe with some text saying "Six months later".