

SUBJECT TO SORORITY:  
WOMEN'S NEGOTIATIONS OF COMPETING DISCOURSES OF FEMININITY

by

LISBETH A. BERBARY

(Under the Direction of Dr. Diane M. Samdahl)

ABSTRACT

Based on the need to expand literature on sorority women and explore all women's negotiations of gendered discourses, this dissertation details the process and findings of an ethnographic study of a southern sorority. This ethnography was grounded in *a priori* theories of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler and their notions of discourse, discipline, subjectivity, and performativity and was guided by the following research questions: 1) What discourses of femininity are enabled within Zeta Chi sorority culture? 2) How are such discourses of femininity disseminated and disciplined within Zeta Chi culture? and 3) How do women in Zeta Chi negotiate the gendered expectations disciplined within such discourse? The findings of this study were presented through a creative analytic "pseudo" screenplay that illuminates the ways sorority women learned gendered expectations, were disciplined towards compliance, and sometimes resisted or re-interpreted expectations of the dominant discourse of "ladylike." The fact that some women resisted and re-interpreted expectations even within this strictly disciplined discourse of gender reinforces the possibility for us all to potentially "see" ways that we

are disciplined, to challenge that discipline, and to open new possibilities for our own gendered selves.

**INDEX WORDS:** Post-structural feminism, Alternative data representation, Femininity, Performativity

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LISBETH A. BERBARY

B.A., Ithaca College, 2001

M.S., SUNY Cortland, 2003

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Major Professor: Diane M. Samdahl  
Committee: Corey W. Johnson  
Kathleen deMarrais  
Elizabeth St. Pierre

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
August 2008

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfather Vincenzo H. Molea  
and his partner in crime Joseph Heimel

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It seems as though this section is the most difficult part to write of my dissertation. I don't know where to begin, who to begin with, or how to even begin showing my gratitude. The process of this doctoral degree began years before I entered a Ph.D. program at UGA. The confidence and perseverance it took to complete this dissertation was instilled in me as a child. With this in mind, I would like to first thank Mr. Amodeo, Mr. Dodd, Mr. Morse, Mr. Geelan, Mr. Toy, and Mr. Fitzpatrick—these wonderful men helped to make me the feminist I am today. I would also like to thank Michael Malpass, Linda Heyne, Stacia Zabusky, and Lynn Anderson for inspiring me to continue forward in academia.

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dreamed was possible. To Kathleen—I will forever think and draw in charts because of the time you spent with me mapping out my dissertation. It was truly an honor to have worked so closely with you. To Bettie and Elisabeth—you have both been role models in ways you can never imagine. I hope to one day be even half as smart—I will forever be impressed. To JoBeth—thank you for helping me find my voice. Without your writing retreats, I would never have had the courage to experiment with scholarship in the ways that have taken flight in this dissertation. To Corey—had your work not existed, there would not have been the possibility of mine. You paved the way for the acceptance of this creative analytic dissertation and helped make room for such scholarship within our field. I will always think of you as the “older sibling” who made it easier for me to “break the rules.” I couldn’t have survived these years without you. Finally, I have to give an extra special shout out to Diane for always being there for me, both professionally and personally—I would have never been able to do this without your guidance, high standards, attention to detail, humor, patience, and critical questioning. I promise to always keep asking questions—even ones that don’t have easy answers. Oh Captain! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done!

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## CHAPTER ONE

## REFLECTIONS OF CULTURE: I'M NOT A TYPICAL SORORITY GIRL

The following is an exploration of an interview conducted with a 20-year-old Southern White sorority girl. The interview focused on a cross-section of the participant's life story concerning the experience of rush and membership in a university sorority. The interview data was transcribed and coded, and is represented below as a diary organized around identified themes and fictionalized to the extent that stories in the four-hour interview were rearranged and melded into one chronological account. Presented alongside the diary is a fictional e-mail dialogue that explores researcher subjectivity, rationale, research questions, theoretical framework, and intention in a voice that lessens the potentially stark contrast between the academic voice and the intimate voice in the diary. While the participant approved the diary, these emails were not written or read by the participant, though they were constructed to closely resemble the intelligent, inquisitive woman who sat across the table the day of the interview.

*August 18, 2006  
10:34pm*

*Today has been a little intimidating because in general I'm not sure what to expect. Mom left this morning, and so far I like the taste I've gotten of a big university. I love not having to go home to a curfew, the freedom of college. I guess I just feel like I'm here, this is it. I guess college will be about growing up, but also having fun. Rush starts tomorrow and most of the girls from the dorm are going. I'm glad I did potluck for roommate pick because I really like Jenny, even if she isn't doing*

**Date:** Fri 20 Dec 14:47:23 EST 2007  
**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** Life History Interview  
**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Hey Julie- How have you been? I have finally finished writing up our life history interview! I attached a copy for your enjoyment. Let me know what you think.

You once asked why I was so interested in your story. Here's what made your interview so fascinating. It was filled with stories about the expectations, the pressures, the ideals that sorority women grapple with on a day to day basis. It highlighted the ways you navigated these narrow passages, the way you changed form and reason in order to weave your way through and around the often contradictory messages

*the whole rush thing. She is still a good girl and I think we'll get along. I still haven't unpacked everything but I should have time tomorrow before our big rush meeting. I'm just going to go through rush to see if I like it. I know Meg, Katie, and Mom are all in Kappa Psi, but I don't just want to go Kappa Psi because they did. We'll see. Hopefully my packet of info and my picture all made it in. Well off to bed. I hope I can sleep. I'm not sure what to expect tomorrow, what should I wear?*

August 19, 2006

9:45pm

*Wow, today was really ridiculous. Well actually the day was fun. Jenny and I finished setting up our room and then kinda just hung out all day. What was out of control was the rush meeting. I didn't know what to wear and so just threw on my Softe and a t-shirt because I didn't think the meeting was a big deal. When I got to the meeting it was a little intimidating because I have never seen so many beautiful girls in one room. Since not many people from Nardin High came to UMB with me I ended up just kinda tagging along with some girls from the dorm. When we walked in I was like wow! All the girls were so well dressed and had beautiful hair, tiny figures, bright eyes, white teeth with*

you received as a college student, a woman, a sorority member, a sister, a daughter and every other social position or category with which our society may label you. I knew that with your story we could co-construct a narrative that took others on your complex journey. I knew that if we brought them along with us they would be able to see the complicated decisions you must negotiate on a daily basis. While on the surface these decisions might have seemed ordinary, they are a part of a much larger bundle of expectations that all women produce, reproduce, and re-create within their day-to-day experiences.

After transcribing your interview verbatim and then reconstructing it around the themes you presented to me, I sat considering how to present it to others. I knew that in order to bring readers along with us, I needed to catch the reader and make the presentation of your account as compelling as possible by adding a sense of familiarity. I finally decided that in order to capture others, I would turn your interview data into a fictionalized diary. I choose to use a diary format after reading Brumberg's book *The Body Project*. In this book, she discussed reading diaries of women in order to gain a better understanding of the women's historical and current struggles with physical beauty. To me it seemed as if your experiences would best be told through this genre of writing because, as in Brumberg's book, the diary is often portrayed in connection to young women, intimacy, and struggle. I could have presented our interview in a very traditional way; however, I thought that this more intimate format would help connect the reader to you, and in turn, the reader to me.

And so emerged our co-constructed diary. While I recognize, as I hope you will also, that I constructed this diary based on my own experiences and ideas, I did write it in your voice, fictionalizing it only to the extent that names have been changed and that our four-hour collection of

*dimples, and I was just in my t-shirt thinking this is just a little meeting why are all these girls so dressed up? I mean the ladies in charge of it weren't even dressed nice, they just had on khakis and white t-shirts. Some of the girls were really nice and so genuinely like "How are you?" "Where are you from?" and that made a big difference. We found out that the next few days we are going from house to house and then at the end of the day we vote on our favorite houses and if they vote for you too you'll get to revisit them the next day until finally it comes down to three houses to vote on. I called Meg to see what I should wear since I never know and she recommended kind of casual, no tube tops or anything too revealing, maybe a halter, and shoes that are nice, but not flip flops, and not anything too painful cause I guess we are going to be walking a lot. I have to be up bright and early tomorrow to get ready to go to a meeting around 7am. Wish me luck!*

August 20, 2006  
9:07pm

*I am so tired! Today was fun, but boy am I ready for bed. Rush was so overwhelming! When I got there I was put in a group with a bunch of girls and we walked to the first house on our list. We*

numerous stories has been melded into one chronological account. I worked hard to keep the language of the diary as faithful as possible to your account, although at times I rearranged it and repeated expressive phrases accordingly. I also must admit that in order to show the complicated nature of your navigation through treacherous waters, I have purposely composed the diary in order to poignantly expose the contradictions, inconsistencies, and culturally imposed expectations expressed within your original narrative.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed constructing it! Let me know what you think.

Talk to you soon,

Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Tues 9 Jan 16:46:43 EST 2007

From: From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

Subject: Thanks!

To: jules242@lab.edu

Hey Julie,

I hope you had a good holiday and a happy new year! I got your corrections to the diary and I have made all your suggested changes. I just wanted you to know how much I valued your comments. They were so helpful! Thanks so much!

I also wanted to write because I have been re-reading through our diary since I sent it to you and though I wasn't planning on doing this, I thought I might write you a few e-mails to explain some of my own thinking

*were told to wait on the lawn until they invited us in and so we are all just kinda standing around not knowing what to do because no one is coming out to greet us. So all of a sudden we hear this banging on the windows and on the door and we were like screaming and I was like, "Oh my gosh, what is going on?" and they open their door and we go in and they were dressed in their sorority colors, I guess so we can remember who is who when we vote, and they were banging and clapping and cheering and then they stopped and started singing little songs and it was pretty cheesy, but fun at the same time. They sang things for about five minutes and it was pretty entertaining. Then they came and talked to us for a while, but as much as I like talking to people I sometimes wonder why I am doing this. I guess I kinda feel like do I really want these girls looking at what I wear and judging if I should be their friend, but I guess they are considering more than just what I look like. Sometimes I feel like the whole thing is a bit superficial, like of course everyone is going to be nice to you, but so far I really feel like the girls in Kappa Psi are pretty down to earth and real. We'll see what happens tomorrow.*

behind the whole process of creating the diary. It's been really great for me both personally and professionally to construct this diary because it has forced me to really grapple with some of my own issues. Although our interview was only a short four hours, the amount of time I have taken reading and re-reading your story has really connected me to both you and your experiences. This connection has helped me to position myself within your stories and therefore within my own struggles of who I might be and how I might see myself as a woman. I have been able to take time to explore not only my own understanding of being a woman, but also the theories that I have spent so much time reading. This project has given me the space to try and connect some of those theories to our lived experiences of being and becoming women. I am excited to share my experiences with you. I am sure this will be the first e-mail of many that try to take you on my journey, just as you have taken me on yours.

Don't feel like you need to respond to any of these. I'll just send them to you and you can decide if you even want to read through them all. I just figured that if I shared my thoughts with you then you might see how you have influenced my story as much as I have influenced yours through its re-creation.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Mon 23 Jan 11:25:58 EST 2008

From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

Subject: I had a feeling....

To: jules242@lab.edu

August 21, 2006  
12:35am

*Jess, the girl from my dorm that I met at rush, and I did self-tanner together today. We just wore our bras and underwear and did each other's backs. It was so silly. I hope we don't end up looking orange! Oh and some drama today. I guess one of the girls trying to rush had hooked up with one of the sorority girl's boyfriends and word got around. The girl was devastated and I heard she might not get to pledge now. The best part was that the girl had a promise ring from her parents. I guess that didn't work too well! I'm sooo tired. Good night.*

August 22, 2006  
9:14pm

*Last night I ended staying up and watching a movie with Jenny and some girls from the floor and so this morning I woke up late! I was so worried so I just wet my hair under the sink and threw on a dress and ran down in like 10 minutes and I think it is so funny because I know all those girls thought I took all this time to get ready and I didn't. Next time maybe I shouldn't stay up so late. Well today was interesting. I heard a couple of stories about sororities at other universities.*

Julie,

You know, I had a feeling that because you were so interested in our interview and the diary that you would be interested in hearing more about it all. At first I didn't know if you would think it was weird that I wanted to tell you more about everything, but I figured I'd see what you thought. My grandma always said "Just ask, the worst they can say is no!" So I'm really glad you are willing to read my e-mails—and yes, I would love any feedback—lay it on me!

So since you have shared so much with me, I feel like it is only fair to reveal a little about the journey you took me on by telling me your story. I know you said I could be straightforward so here I go... I'm sad to say I may not have started this journey on the same page as you. I should tell you a bit about my first impressions of you so that you can see how far I have come. I shouldn't say that they were necessarily impressions of you as much as they were my impressions of Southern sorority women. From my first experiences at our Southern university, I was embarrassed for sorority women. I considered them sad examples of women, catering to current fashion, men, and trends. I saw them as ditsy girls, with fake tans, bleached teeth, highlighted hair, and sequined purses (oh, that was so last year!). Looking back, I think that I focused so much on these behaviors because I was struggling with decisions about my own appearance—wishing my teeth were white, my skin were clear, and that I could fit into current trendy clothes. Unlike many people who made their

distaste for sorority women known to me, even in my contempt there was curiosity and almost a whimsical longing to be like them. Unlike many people who wanted to assume they understood sorority women, label them as trivial, and laugh at their foolishness, I wondered what it was like to a woman in a sorority.



*First I heard that this one sorority house had to get new piping or drainage or whatever because all of the acidic build-up from bulimia had rotted the pipes - that's not right! Then we heard that at some school the girls make you strip down to your bra and underwear and then they circle your fat. How ridiculous is that! No one has the right to tell you that you shouldn't be the size you are! I would hope that I am picked because of my character rather than how I look. So other than these horror stories things are going well at rush. All the fraternity guys were out yesterday on their porches and driving around in their trucks. They all look cute in their shaggy hair, polo shirts, Croakies, and boating shoes. I am always looking for cute boys. It's funny because it seems like there's an overwhelming number of good looking girls at this school. I was looking around and was like God, there are so many good looking girls here, but there's not that many good looking guys from what I've seen. I better keep my eyes open for any good looking boys. Since Mom was a sorority girl and Dad was a fraternity boy I guess I always think I'll marry a fraternity guy just because that's how they are - not that I'm looking for a husband, I mean I'll meet him when I meet him, but I think college should be fun and now is the time to date around and meet people. I think you need to take*

This got me thinking and I started to ask myself questions: What ideals, pressures, or expectations existed for Southern sorority women? How do Southern sorority women understand themselves and grapple with all the expectations surrounding them? Is there more behind the behaviors, dress, and actions of these sorority women than meets the eye?

These are the questions that started us on our journey together the day we first met to do our interview. They are the questions I am still struggling with. I hope that through our e-mails you will get to see my initial and current struggles with these questions. I want you to see the path I took to move from assuming sorority girls are ditsy blondes to better understanding them as complex women navigating complicated terrain. That path began when I interviewed you.

Well, my parents are visiting this weekend. I need to go food shopping—I'm making them a Lebanese dinner. Wish me luck!

P.S. Sorry things didn't work out with that guy. It sounds like you can do much better!

Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Wed 26 Feb 12:27:29 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: Hey  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Hey Julie- I was on Facebook today and saw that it was your birthday. Happy Birthday! Have a good one! My friends threw me a surprise party

*this time to find out what you like and don't like about people. I learned so much from dating Joey in high school that I wouldn't have learned otherwise. Like telling each other what the other person's thinking or asking them. I mean if I get to the point where I'm 23 and all my friends are getting married I'll start to flip out a little bit but whatever. For rush we are down to picking our last six sororities. It is getting pretty emotional for some of the girls. At first it's not that bad if you pick a sorority that doesn't pick you because you don't really get attached or know the girls and maybe you've only talked to one or two, but now it is getting to be that you start feeling like your whole life depends on it. Not that it does, but after four days you meet these girls and you really like them and you'd like to be a part of that and so if you get cut you almost feel like it was personal. I saw one girl crying because she got cut from the sorority that she and her best friend from high school were both hoping to pledge. Now they will be separated and she was just devastated. I mean we're girls anyways and emotional period and then adding this on top, lots of girls are going to get their feelings hurt. I really think I'd like to go Kappa Psi, not because Mom or Meg and Katie did, but just because I like the girls there. I hope they pick me so I don't feel real upset. I was thinking of*

for my 23rd—what a blast!

So back to this journey I keep talking about... You had always asked me why I was so particularly interested in *Southern* sororities. Well, I figured now is a good time to write my reasons to you. It has taken me a while to answer that question for myself... I think I have it figured out. I guess the real reason I am so interested in sororities in the South is because I have found Southern sorority culture to be of a different vein than the sororities I was used to in upstate New York. A few of my friends were in sororities at their schools and I got a pretty good picture of sorority life just from hanging out with them. I wonder if you have ever noticed a difference... have you ever stayed at sororities up North?

Well, to me Southern sororities have an even more defined expectation of femininity because they are created within Southern culture. (You remember that we talked about how by expectations of femininity I mean how someone participates or "should" participate in culture as a woman.) Perhaps reminiscent of the Christian traditions, college football cultures, and notions of Southern belles, the Southern culture I've been introduced to seems to produce more strongly defined notions of what "women" and "men" should be like than the Northern culture in which I was raised. What these more defined expectations of femininity mean to me is that individuals within these cultures become extremely pressured to become certain types of women and men in order to fit very stringent expectations of being. You sometimes talked about these pressures when you asked questions about why presidents of sororities always felt like they had to be thin or when you talked about how girls feel like they have to get so done up to go out.

I should probably clarify that when I say "Southern" (or "Northern" for that matter) I'm not meaning for it to seem that I think that all "Southern"

*going suicide and only choosing Kappa Psi as my final vote, but if they don't pick me, then I won't get into any sorority so maybe I'll keep my options open and actually vote on three. It's funny how the whole family might end up being Kappa Psi girls. Let's keep our fingers crossed!*

August 23, 2006

10:47pm

*It's getting harder and harder to keep up with writing in this journal. Things are just so hectic! A few things happened today that I at least should write about. First, I heard that you can tell whether or not a sorority is going to vote you in depending on which side of the lawn you are brought to when you leave. I don't know if I really believe it or not because they don't always bring you to one side or the other, but I've started looking to see who has been standing around me at the end of our time at a sorority house and it seems like all the cute girls, not only cute, but the ones that are the most talkative, like the nice girls, have been standing with me so maybe that means I'll be voted in! I still like Kappa Psi the best, actually at this other sorority one of the girls came up to me and was like hi and all cheery and then she didn't talk to me for the rest of the time. I*

women are the same. In fact to assume so would be terribly incorrect—a poor White woman from Alabama may have a very different understanding of “Southern” than a rich Black woman from North Carolina. I don't want you to think that I believe that Southern culture is homogenous or easily defined—I know Southern culture is complex and multifaceted. However, there are cultural distinctions between different parts of our country based on our history, and while women from different Southern states may have very different understandings of Southern culture, they still live in a part of the country with a shared history. In a book by Anne Scott called *The Southern Lady* she talked about what it means to be a Southern lady and concluded that the role for women in the South is often more confined than in other parts of the country (like I mentioned above). A professor of mine, Elizabeth St. Pierre, also wrote about Southern woman and recognized that “Southern” women were shaped by particular shared historic influences such as specific notions of race and patriarchy, and memories of lynching, slavery, and war. I guess what I'm trying to say is that when I talk about Southern women I know there are millions of ways to understand what it means to be “Southern.” However, because different parts of our country have such different cultures, values, and historical influences, I felt that to contextualize my study it was important to use the label of “Southern” both as a location and as a cultural identifier—even if the label has multiple understandings.

I have a lot more to say about the expectations I was talking about, but I actually just remembered that I am supposed to be at the hairdresser in 10 min. —luckily it is close to my house. I'll write soon.

Lisbeth A. Barbary

Leisure Studies

“Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent.”

*mean I'm a nice girl, I'm easy to talk to, if you don't want me in your sorority you still can at least have a conversation with me. I put that sorority last on my voting list today and I feel bad because it turns out that is a really good sorority. I guess Kappa Psi and that sorority are the really good ones grade-wise and their pick of girls, the fact that the girls are all, not the prettiest girls, but kind of pretty, and the ones that are most involved in campus, like the ones the guys want to hang out with. So I felt kinda silly that I rated them last, but I really just didn't like that girl. Anyway, I actually enjoyed most of rush. Oh I almost forgot...this one girl was being really hateful today and was like, "I don't like the looks of this sorority," and so when we went in she turned her name tag upside-down so they wouldn't know who she was and then she started talking about how she went to space camp and she learned about rocks and she loved it. I think she thought the whole thing was a joke and maybe her parents made her do it or maybe she was just testing the system to see what people would be like but I thought it was rude to do that and think you are too good for something. I don't think that is fair or nice. I hope she doesn't get into Kappa Psi. I mean, I try to get along with everybody, but she just doesn't seem like a nice girl. I should find out*

**Date:** Fri 8 Mar 13:31:46 EST 2008  
**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** Back to expectations....  
**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Julie,

I totally forgot that after our interview I told you about when I shaved my head—but no I didn't shave it this time. I opted for just a trim. Remember I'm trying to fit in with sorority women—I'm not sure a shaved head would be very helpful right now.

Anyway, I wanted to get back to talking about these expectations of femininity. I mentioned that these kinds of expectations can make us feel pressured to be certain ways—like for instance to not shave our heads as women ☺ but sometimes this can be even more complicated. Rather than being expectations of norms that you and I may become aware of by reading societal and cultural messages—like for instance the expectation I am aware of that makes me feel that women should be married by a certain age or, like you talked about a lot, the expectation that college kids drink, expectations can also be so ingrained into our understanding of the world that we can't even see them as expectations and we just take them for granted as fact. What I mean by us "taking them for granted" is that you and I might fulfill these expectations thinking they are "innate" or "natural" behaviors when they potentially are simply just another set of expectations of norms created or enforced. One good example of this that I can think of is when Heather told you that "it takes girls to drink to do anything, but guys can kiss anytime, it doesn't matter." She said this to you as though there is some biological, natural Truth to the idea that all girls need to drink to want to kiss, but that all boys will just kiss anytime. She makes it seem like this is "just how it is" when really most of it is just how society has positioned men vs. women...

*in the next couple of days if I can pledge Kappa Psi!*

*September 17, 2006*

*10:36pm*

*Even though my whole pledge class was fine that I don't drink, I decided tonight why not try it and see what happens. I went out with Christina who doesn't drink either and we were talking and she was like why don't we just go grab a drink and see if we like it. I have been thinking about trying it for a while and so we went to the bar and I ordered a sex on the beach because everyone tells me it's good and I didn't really know any other drinks. It was a dollar a drink at McMonkey's for Power Hour. As soon as I started to sip it I could feel my body reacting and I could feel my hands go tingling and I was like, "What in the world?" I felt my legs go numb and I realized it does have an effect. I feel pretty good right now, I mean, we only had one drink so I figure from this point on I feel okay about drinking socially. I don't ever want to drink so much that I become that drunk girl downtown or I've heard people talk about not remembering or being sick and that's just scary so I'm just going to keep it to a minimum.*

This is getting into some pretty heavy theory. I think I'll take a break and come back to it. I've read tons of this stuff but I still get tired out thinking about it all. Let me take a break and I'll continue this later. In the meantime if you are interested in this stuff, some of the people I've been most influenced by are Judith Butler with her ideas of performativity and some other post-structural thinkers like Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, Helen Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. A lot of people find their work pretty inaccessible so don't be surprised if their writing is even more confusing than mine. I kind of like the challenge, but if you don't have the time (or patience) to wrestle through the language, I think our e-mails will provide you with some of their main ideas. Let me know if you want me to recommend some readings.

P.S. I often fall into my teaching mode when I am talking about theory with people. Please excuse me when I do. I really can't always help it because I'm just so used to teaching this kind of thing. My boyfriend yells at me all the time for "teaching" to him!

Lisbeth A. Barbary

Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

**Date:** Tues 13 Mar 20:14:59 EST 2008

**From:** Lisbeth A. Barbary <lbarbary@lab.edu>

**Subject:** Truths vs. constructed expectations

**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Julie-

I totally understand. I wouldn't have had time to read outside of my classes either as an undergrad. I'll be talking about a lot of their theories

September 21, 2006  
12:15am

*I'm just getting home from a pledge event that was at The Elmwood downtown. It was supposed to be for just fraternity guys and sorority girls, but it wasn't really crowded so they were letting other people in, which was fine because there weren't many people there. Well, this one guy comes over to hit on Natalie and was talking to her and she was like "Oh he is so cute," and I was like "Ohh nooo!" because I realized she had had a few too many drinks and that he really wasn't as cute as she thought. Then the guy leaves us and starts walking around and hitting on all these different girls and I was like, "Natalie, that is not appropriate" and she's like, "Yeah, not at all," and then she gives him her number! Can you believe it? I'm like who does that? I don't know, he is just so sketchy. I hope he doesn't call her. I don't think he is the kind of guy you could actually settle down with, and why would you just date someone you can't see being with forever? I don't think I'll ever just date a guy. I don't see the point in it. Why would you waste your time when you could be meeting somebody great or be happier by yourself or with somebody else. I think it is a personal thing. I think she could do so much better, but I think it*

in our e-mails so I don't think you'll really feel the need for further reading.

Anyway, the only reason I am writing all of this theoretical stuff to you is so that you can see what I see when I keep saying how there were so many exciting negotiations and navigations of expectations in your interview and now our diary. I'm glad all of this is interesting to you. I figured it might be. Like we talked about after our interview, theory can be pretty interesting when you see how it all fits together with life.

I'm going home to Buffalo so I won't write until next week. Take care!

Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

**Date:** Thurs 19 Mar 21:27:33 EST 2008

**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

**Subject:** Truth/fact vs. constructed expectations/norms

**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Julie-

Hope you had a good week. I thought we could get back to talking about expectations. I wanted to give you an example of what I meant when I started questioning notions of "innate" or "natural" behaviors, behaviors that are so ingrained that we don't even question them, that we accept them as fact. Let me try to give you an example: Look at the idea that all women make good mothers—how many times have you heard that women are "natural born nurturers" and that all women, no matter what they say, deep down want to have babies. These ideas are often naturalized—seen as the natural Truth of things—in culture as they are

*plays into her self-esteem because I don't think Natalie feels like she is good enough for nice guys.*

September 22, 2006

2:30pm

*I am getting the impression that a lot of the fraternity guys here are really arrogant and that's not really attractive. I mean, everybody can have whatever pride, like a little bit is good, but it's not good when your head is big. It's like they know the girls have competition to meet boys and they enjoy it. Maybe I don't want to be with a fraternity boy after all.*

September 25, 2006

9:32pm

*Went for a run today with Jenny but I didn't feel very comfortable. Ever since I saw that program on TV about rape it scarred me for life and I'm just too afraid going to a college town with lots of people everywhere for the possibility of rape, and so I don't think I'll go running at night again even if it's with somebody else. I mean, I feel safe for the most part because there are lots of police around, but I'd rather not run at night again. Oh, I almost forgot to mention that I have another*

repeated, stereotyped, and played upon. They are continuously taken up by institutions, media, and individuals and reinforced as "reality." I mean, just think back to some favorite childhood books and movies—how many of them reinforced the idea that women's gift is giving birth, that women are good at being mothers, and women want nothing more than to be mothers. It is no wonder you and I might believe as a fact that all women=nurturers. Because of these processes of naturalization, you and I might take this idea of women being good mothers for granted as Truth. However, when we can take or make the space to step back and take a broader look at this equation, there are in actuality multiple opinions on the subject, some of which indicate that many women do not want to have babies, that many women are not natural nurturers, that many women biologically cannot have babies, and that men can be just as successful as nurturing parental figures as women. So then what becomes of this declaration that all women should be and want to be mothers? Should it still be seen as an innate fact of women?

Well, I have to go to the dog park. Remind me to tell you about my friend Sara!

Lisbeth A. Barbary

Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Fri 20 Mar 10:57:43 EST 2008

From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

Subject: Sara's Story

To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie- Her name is Sasha. She is half lab and half poodle. Some call her a labradoodle but I joke around and call her a poodador. My boyfriend

*crush of the week. I devote crushes and then lose them left and right. Jenny and Christina make fun of me, but it is just so much fun! Someday I'll actually make a move on my crush, but I guess I have my own personal view of what I think a relationship will feel like and I think there is going to be fireworks and butterflies and I'll just know.*

October 21, 2006

11:25pm

*There is a boy snoring in my room! The guy that I introduced myself to in the elevator a while back actually came to my room tonight to watch a movie. I saw him in the hall earlier and invited him over because Jenny is gone home for the weekend. We started to watch *The Sandlot* on the futon and then he leaned over and kissed me! We kissed a little and then we both fell asleep. I woke up a few minutes ago and was like I can't cuddle with a boy all night so I just climbed up to my bed to sleep. He is snoring right now and I don't know what to do!*

hates when I call her that. Oh well.

I thought you had some really good observations and questions. Why don't I tell you the story of my friend Sara and see if it helps clarify things. I'll never forget the day Sara came home enraged about how yet another person reacted when she told them she didn't want to have kids. "You'll change your mind when you're ready," people would all respond. She was so angry—why couldn't they understand that just because she was a woman it didn't mean that she automatically wanted to give birth and be a mother? She was infuriated that even while she could break away from her own expectations of giving birth, recognize it was not an "innate" Truth for all women, and even choose not to give birth, there was still like what seemed to her a systematic attempt by others to coax her into fulfilling this role they felt she was born to fill, a role they expected women to fill because it was the most natural, innate behavior for all women.

And it is this belief in some innateness or natural state of a woman, this belief in expectations of "fact" in general, that is questioned by the theories I read. The theories make me question this innateness and ask why such expectations are considered Truth, where they come from, and how we come to understand them, maybe choose to reproduce them, maybe resist them, or maybe make new expectations of our own. In the end, what her story made clear to me was that while you and I as individuals have some choice about what expectations we fulfill, there are other processes always already at work that pressure us in certain directions. They pressure us in multiple directions, creating consequences for our participation in, lack of participation in, or re-creation of expectations of norms. In particular, they push us toward those expectations of "fact" which to me are just expectations of norms disguised as fact or Truth.



October 22, 2006  
1:55pm

*Well oddly enough Keith just left my room. He stayed sleeping and snoring on the futon all night and all day. It is almost 2 in the afternoon! I didn't know what to do because obviously nothing like this has ever happened to me before. Boys weren't even allowed upstairs at our house at home, so I ran over to the other girls' room and asked if I should wake him up or what cuz I really didn't know "know" the kid, I just thought he was cute. So finally he just woke up like 10 minutes ago and he is just kinda like, "Alright, I'll see you later," and then he left. Is that what is supposed to happen? I am so confused!*

October 26, 2006  
7:13pm

*Some girls here get so done up to go out. They wear shoes that absolutely kill them, and like I wore some heels last night but I knew I was just going to wear them from the car there and then I was going to take them off to swing dance and then put them back on to walk to the car... I wasn't going to be out for like three hours and dying, but a lot of girls here go through pain to look good. I*

It is these expectations masquerading as Truth that I have the most interest in—I think it is because they are the most elusive. For instance, I'd venture to note that there are Truth-disguised expectations that you and I are both fulfilling at this moment and we probably don't even begin to recognize them. Maybe we are sitting in some fashion, dressed in a particular style, or feeling a certain way based on notions of how women should be. But we can't even see it...not unless we step back and look more broadly.

I guess the point I'm trying to make is that both these expectations of norms and expectations of "fact" play with each other and with you and me so that we sometimes feel the pressure to conform to certain ways of being. In particular I see these expectations weaving in and out of the beliefs, actions, organization, and practices of individuals, groups, and institutions creating templates for how I should exist as a woman, because I am a woman, because I was born with certain anatomy. And my feeling is to be skeptical of those individuals, or groups, or institutions that try to make me feel like I have to be, like, want, or love certain things, or live in certain ways just because I am a woman. Just because they have decided that there is some "Truth" to being a woman or a man that should shape how I dress, act, talk, walk, and exist.

If "Truth" or "fact" is so difficult to differentiate from socially created or produced norms, if "Truth" maybe is always already only cultural norm, how crazy does it then seem to pressure me to act in certain ways based on this "Truth"? This "Truth" is simply the way that a culture or society at a specific historical moment creates a specific atmosphere for a specific way of being. If we are released from these "Truths" can you imagine the possibilities that might surface, develop, or shift shape?

*mean going out you always try to actually take time to look presentable or feel more confident in what you are wearing, not necessarily to impress a guy, but it is always fun to meet people or see people downtown, but some girls I see just are like above and beyond glitzy. They wear really short dresses and lots of makeup, I mean, I think some people can pull off a decent amount of makeup, but then some people it is just too much! It's like they think they are movie stars or something.*

November 23, 2006  
11:23am

*James, the guy I met at the bar last week stayed at my room last night and I am just so confused. I mean we just kissed and then he slept on the futon so I figured he would just get up and say, "Okay, I'll see you later," like Keith did, but instead he kissed me this morning for a while before he left. I didn't understand... I was like why did he kiss me today too? So I went and asked Heather and she was like, "Julie, girls have to drink to do anything, but guys can kiss anytime, it doesn't matter." I still don't understand, but I guess it makes sense sort of.*

Yikes! I'm exhausted! I'll probably come back and explain these concepts a bit more in-depth later. For now, I'll end by saying that while I feel that expectations of both femininity and masculinity are interesting and at times useful aspects of our culture, I believe, like my friend Sara felt, that when they are narrowly defined and strongly enforced they become oppressive.

I hope I have answered some of your questions. Let me know what you think.

Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Sat 26 Mar 06:47:52 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: Pop goes your head  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie,  
I felt the same way when I first started to get into these ideas. It is hard to look at something that we have been taught to see as a fact and then consider that it might just be an expectation developed within societies and cultures throughout the years. I think it at first blows your mind. Looking at life in this way doesn't always ring true for everyone—but for some reason I like thinking about my life in these terms. It makes me think of the possibilities in who I could be rather than who I should be.

Getting back to our discussion, there are a few last points I wanted to raise. One of the things we've been talking about is how you and I are

December 5, 2006  
2:55pm

*Well I learned a very good lesson last night. We went out for Molly's birthday because I guess that is what you are supposed to do and unfortunately I had a little too much to drink. We decided to celebrate and drink a little in the dorms before we went out and so I had a strawberry daiquiri and we all were a little tipsy and decided to color Molly's dorm room floor with markers, not the smartest idea. Well I guess my strawberry daiquiri was stronger than I knew because I was taking shots while drinking it and got sick before we even went downtown. I actually don't remember going downtown and I guess I was there like five minutes and then all I remember is waking up down the hall from my room today with no shoes, fully clothed with bruises on my chest. I have been told what happened is that I left my girlfriends when we got downtown and when they finally came to find me I had been smooching with some sketchy boy so they took me away and gave me to a guy friend of theirs to take me back to the dorm. I guess I was puking so hard over the toilet that I got bruises on my chest. I am really a little scared because I don't remember any of this, but it's something I can look back at and laugh because*

constantly fulfilling expectations. I tried to make a distinction between those expectations you and I may be able to see as norms and therefore potentially resist, and those you and I may see as facts, and potentially not consider possible to resist. While I am arguing that both kinds of expectations are simply constructions of societies and cultures, the norms are much easier for us to recognize ourselves participating in than those disguised as facts. I think now we should talk for a moment about how I see you and me participating in the fulfillment of both kinds of expectations.

You have heard me talk a lot about how we fulfill, participate in, or perform femininity based on these expectations. I actually like the term "perform" femininity because I think it has numerous meanings. I'll let you in on how I see it. One way I see the idea of performing femininity is just as we might think of an actor performing. An actor receives messages about how to act, dress, speak, sing, walk, etc., and then "performs" in those ways. On one level I see you and me "performing" our femininity in this way. We have been taught the norms of how to act, dress, speak, sing, walk, love, and live in ways that are appropriately feminine based on societal and cultural expectation. We accept those messages, as an actor accepts hers, and we then perform them in the ways that gain us acceptance in our lives. For example, you often talk about things you are supposed to do as a college student—you mention going out for birthdays, drinking, dressing cute, and smooching guys after a certain number of dates.

Because we are actors in this form of performance we can make choices by choosing from the possible norms presented to us. It is almost as though we can stand in front of a closet and pick and choose among the dresses that are hanging there. We can't choose a dress that is not there, but within those dress options, we as the actor can make our own

*only in college would that happen and only drinking. I learned though how important it is to keep up with people when you go out and make sure they're okay and don't drink too much or go home with boys who are sketchy or boys in general. I'm really lucky it didn't happen at a sorority event because if you get caught drinking under 21 there you can get the whole sorority in trouble with the fraternity council. Particularly because us girls enforce it a lot more than the guys do. They just don't seem to care as much. Thank goodness that I was just out with my friends last night and not at a formal or date night.*

December 6, 2006

1:47pm

*I just talked to mom about my drinking because I was so hung over yesterday and probably could have had alcohol poisoning. She thinks maybe I need to evaluate how much I drink or how much alcohol I am pouring into my drinks or how many shots I am taking. Like if I just like to drink, maybe make my drinks less strong or don't drink shots... just drink beer or something. I think it's easy to sit back and say I won't drink too much again, but when you get to it there are some nights it is just hard. I guess you figure it is just*

choice. We may even choose to resist wearing the dresses the way they are and make a stand by shortening them, lengthening them, rearranging them, or making something else completely out of their material. But even when we do that, we still only have those dresses to start from—we can't create something that doesn't already begin with the material of the dresses. This is a good description of the way we might resist or re-create those expectations I always talk about. We might resist or re-create ourselves, but we are still limited by what choices are already "hanging in our closet."

You and I are both "performing" femininity in this sense when we look at individual women and comment on what they are wearing, who they have or haven't slept with, or how their hair is. We are looking at them as individual actors choosing to perform themselves to others in specific ways—ways that may reinforce, resist, or re-create the expectations pressuring them. However, this is somewhat superficial and begs deeper questions of how does she become an actor, how does she make her choices, and what influences her to perform in these ways. This leads us to a discussion of another way I see the idea of "performing" femininity. This next performing of femininity is for me more closely connected to the ways we often blindly fulfill those elusive expectations considered fact.

My boyfriend just got home with dinner. Let's continue this soon.

Lisbeth A. Barbary

Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

*more fun if you drink and you don't think or realize how much you're drinking. I think you feel more comfortable with a little alcohol in your system and taking shots together, it's kind of a bonding experience. I guess it just kind of helps get your nerves out. I mean, I don't always get wasted when I go out, but we do go out like 4 or 5 times a week, because that is just what you do in college.*

December 7, 2006

1:45am

*I just went to my first crush party. It is kinda a silly idea because you pick two boys you want to invite and you give their e-mail or phone number to the social chair and then she calls them and invites them to the crush party, but they don't know which girl invited them, they only know the sorority. So there is this guy I've had a crush on all semester in one of my classes and he's not Greek, but I invited him and I think he knew it was me because there is only one other Kappa Psi in my class. So I invited him and this other guy just because I was afraid the one I really liked, Trent, the guy from class, wouldn't come. Well today in class Trent said, "I'll see you later," and gave me a little wink so I got really excited. Well, I just got back from the party and Trent did come! He is soo cute! At first I was*

Date: Sun 3 Apr 09:47:52 EST 2008  
 From: Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
 Subject: Pop goes my head  
 To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie-

I have to warn you that this next discussion was really hard for me to try to convey. I considered leaving it out. In fact I had asked my fellow doctoral student if she thought I should send it or not and she said that I shouldn't. I found myself in a dilemma because I didn't want to deprive you of the chance to wrestle with these ideas yourself, but I also didn't want to frustrate you by presenting to you in one e-mail the theories that have taken me three years to get my head around. I finally decided that you could make the decision for yourself. Here is what I wrote—feel free to take it or leave it.

Last e-mail I talked about performing femininity as if we are actors choosing among those possibilities offered by our societies and cultures. I left you questioning this idea of how we become these actors, how these actors make choices, and what influences them. This brings me to Judith Butler's theory of performativity. To tell you the Truth many people mistake her idea of "performativity" as the type I explained last e-mail where an actors acts. However, this is a misconception of Butler's theory. You see, for her there is no actor—and this is where it gets complicated.

In this second way of "performing," there is not an actor choosing to act out certain norms of societies or cultures. Instead, there is no actor behind the action, but rather the actor only exists through the action it performs. I try to break this down for myself by thinking of this scenario. You are sitting in a dark room. Someone enters but cannot see you. Until

*really nervous because we were all singing karaoke and I didn't see either one of the guys I invited. I went to the bathroom and when I came out I saw Trent and he was like, "Where have you been?" and I just know my face turned red. I ran over to him and he said he hadn't been there long, but I felt bad I had been in the bathroom. I mean it must be kinda nerve-wracking to walk into one of these parties not even knowing who invited you or what to expect. We had a really nice time, but looking back I am a little uncomfortable because he had told me before he doesn't really drink much and I was like okay that's fine so I just had a beer while I was there and he had gotten to the bar and gotten a mixed drink and I was like, "I thought you didn't drink," and he was like, "I don't really." So in the meantime I had a mixed drink too and I had drank maybe half of it and I look over and he had had like the equivalent of what two sips would be. I asked Nat, Heather, and Danielle what they thought and they think that he just did it to be social and have a drink in his hand. I think it is kinda funny that there is that comfort level of just fitting in by having a drink in your hand. I don't know if he thinks I am a crazy drinker or anything because after we left he text messaged me "Don't get too crazy tonight." I hope he doesn't perceive me to be a crazy lush. Well I*

you act by saying hello or making some noise, you do not exist. It is only after the action can be attributed to you that you exist.

For me these actions that create you and me as actors through performativity are not the same kind of actions as picking a dress from a closet. When I talk about picking that dress there is a clear sense that the actor knows what she wants and makes a choice to act on it. Instead the actions of performativity are more closely connected to those elusive expected acts we take part in because they are considered the Truth or fact of how we should be. I see performativity caught up in those expectations I often blindly consider Truth only because they have been repeated over and over until I can no longer see them otherwise. It is by looking for this type of performance of gender, the performativity of gender, that I will be able to start an exploration that gets below the purses, dresses, makeup, and hairstyle of sorority women and begins to make connections among culture, society, groups, and individuals, and all the expectations caught up in between.

Do you remember me telling you that it can be hard for you and me to even recognize when we are fulfilling Truth-disguised expectations? Well I think that looking at the performative practices of women is one way to begin exposing both those expectations and the fulfillment of them.

Maybe you love reading this stuff, but either way I promise my next e-mail won't be as complicated. I just don't think I can handle it!

Talk to you soon,  
Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

*had fun and Trent seems like the kind of guy I would date. I mean he seems respectful of people. Not only of his friends, but of people in classes, people everywhere. Like if we went to a football game together I bet he'd be respectful to the people at vending or to the guy you give the ticket to. I heard you always compare whomever you date to your dad and Trent is into sports and things, so maybe this will work out. I am debating if we could be together.*

December 10, 2006  
3:46pm

*Danielle asked me today why sorority presidents always feel like they have to be skinny. We just had elections and our new president just started working out and we just don't get it. We don't really work out that much but we are trying to, but I just laugh because I wish I felt more pressure to work out. I think a lot of girls feel pressured, especially around spring break, but maybe it is just more an encouragement thing, like "I'm going to work out, want to come?" than pressure.*

Date: Tues 5 Apr 10:22:22 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: Phew  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie,  
I'm glad you gave it a couple reads and that you'll keep it around to "save it for a rainy day." I was happy to hear you thought that it made sense at all. I'm never quite sure about myself when I try to write other people's theories in my own words.

I wanted to stop talking theory like I promised so I thought I'd take the time to tell you more about the journey you have taken me on personally simply by becoming a part of this study. I have to say that just as I began my exploration of sororities with a bad taste in my mouth, meeting you for the first time began a battle within myself. You know Julie, to tell you the Truth I wasn't sure what I had gotten myself into when I ended up sitting across the table from you. I had thought I had prepared everything for our interview—I bought you a water bottle, put out a tissue box, checked and re-checked my tapes, emptied my bladder, and even made sure to bring along extra AA batteries for my tape recorder. However, when you showed up, a gorgeous blonde, blue-eyed Southern sorority girl, I realized that I wasn't prepared—at least not for how I felt. My first instincts were to despise you, you that were everything that I was not in this new Southern culture of mine. You didn't have any way of knowing this, but you were the embodiment of everything I had been comparing myself to since moving South.

I hate to admit this because it goes against everything I am fighting for women to be able to move beyond, but a lot of my sense of self is caught up in being the "pretty girl." Growing up in Western New York I was often

January 14, 2007  
8:24pm

*Things are going pretty well with Trent, but Nat scared me yesterday because before I went to hang out and drink at Trent's room she was like, "Well he'll probably try to have sex with you," and I am like so oblivious when it comes to boys because I don't realize all they think about is sex and I hadn't even thought about having sex with Trent. I was like, "Nat, why would you say that?" and she's like, "Cuz first of all he's a boy and second of all he'll be wasted and since nothing happened the last couple of times he'll probably think something's gonna happen." I think it's kind of not an insult if guys try anything but at the same time yeah it is. So anyways, I went to Trent's last night and it was fine. I am kinda upset that Nat made me worry when I know Trent won't pressure me to do anything. He is a gentleman.*

January 23, 2007  
2:15am

*Oral sex came up today and Christina, Kate, and Liz were all like, "We'll show you," and I was just like no, yuck. I don't know why but I just don't feel comfortable with it at all. Like with Trent, at first*

considered beautiful, attractive, and popular. There was probably more to it than outer beauty, but as much as I want to think it had to do with my personality, smarts, or humor, a big part of me still believes it was only because I was considered physically beautiful. This set me up to value my physical appearance over my other attributes and to this day, even though I recognize myself as an intelligent, funny, caring person, there is a part of me that still feels "less worthy" if I'm not noticed as being outwardly attractive.

This brings me back to you, Julie. I suppose that you were the prettiest girl in the room that day you sat across the table from me for our interview. And my instinct to despise you was caught up in my jealousy, a feeling for me that had more often entered my emotional repertoire since moving down South. It's not that I have never been jealous before, but I really had never been jealous of another woman's looks. You see, I've never looked like other girls, but where I grew up that just made me all the more attractive. My Lebanese/Sicilian background has always given me an "original" look, an interesting ethnic, even beautiful appearance with my striking features, curvy figure, and dark hair and eyes. I loved looking different compared to the girls around me, and, as I wanted, I was rewarded for these physical "accomplishments" with come hither stares, phone number exchanges, and free drinks. I was also rewarded with power—power over men, over women, and over situations. With all eyes on me it was possible to control a room—but that's a whole other discussion for a different time.

But something changed when I moved South. Maybe it is more a culture of conformity, a culture that values sameness, a culture that doesn't like to be stirred up or challenged about what is or is not beautiful. Or maybe it is just a more homogenous culture in general, less immigrant, less ethnic, and less diverse (there also could just be different rules about



*he didn't pressure me, but then he realized I was going to really stick with what I feel is right and so he and I are pretty much done. I mean I'm just not going to put up with stuff like that because that is not fair. I'm not going to sell myself short, especially not to just impress a guy or anything. I wouldn't do that because I'd feel too guilty. Anytime I've let myself slip to where I feel uncomfortable with something, I definitely feel guilty about it. When Joey and I were together for seven months all we did was kiss. We tried to go farther once but it was just weird and I felt kinda guilty. I have to just listen to myself and if I'm not comfortable doing something I won't. I know friends who have had sex many times and never used a condom, which I think is stupid. I don't want to ever feel pressure to do things like that. I mean Trent and I wouldn't have worked out anyway because I realized that with him I just haven't been myself especially around the whole drinking thing. Not that I can't date somebody who doesn't drink, but if I do I think I have to be myself period and not try to hide anything I do or enjoy. Also I had really debated dating him over Christmas break because he is Jewish and I found out he can't marry non-Jewish and so knowing that it's not going to go anywhere is tough and I kept thinking what is the point of getting attached*

"looking" at the other sex—where I'm from men stare hard at women). Whatever the cause, for the first time, my accomplishment of standing out made me feel all of a sudden as though I had to stand outside the realm of beauty. I no longer felt striking but instead became aware of the size of my nose. I no longer felt curvy but instead just too big. I no longer felt beautifully dark, but simply just not blonde. So Julie, I hope that now you have a better understanding of why when you walked into the room, thin, blonde, blue-eyed, perfect skin and teeth, my first reaction was distaste. I immediately began to compare myself to you in a culture I felt valued your beauty over mine and I just didn't measure up. I'm only telling you all of this so that you can see how far I have come. This journey didn't just help me to better understand you, but it also helped me to better understand me.

Thanks,

Lisbeth A. Berbary

Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Fri 8 Apr 16:47:13 EST 2008

From: Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

Subject: What's the point?

To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie-

I worried I left you feeling not so good after my last letter. I didn't mean to make you feel as though there was something about you that upset me. It was simply that I wasn't sure about myself anymore. I was confused and feeling very vulnerable. What I want you to understand is that because I felt that way in your presence, and because you stuck through

*knowing its not going to go anywhere? So even if we did keep dating it would just get us more attached and it's not fair to either of us knowing it's going to be a dead end. I mean, we could stay together because events would keep us together like his formal and Valentine's Day and so on, but that's not fair either. I guess I just hope we'll still be good friends.*

*January 24, 2007  
8:32pm*

*Well that was odd. I just got asked out by Tommy, my good friend from down the hall. I feel a little caught off-guard because I kind of have a crush on Jon, his roommate. I guess I'll go on a date with him because I don't want to bash it until I actually go on a date. He is a sweetheart but I don't know if it's going to work out.*

*January 29, 2007  
9:47pm*

*Well I just got back from my date with Tommy. We went out to eat and just talked and it wasn't too awkward, but I think he knew I wasn't interested in him that way. I didn't actually tell him that, but I really just hope we can still be friends. It was*

our interview process, you have opened me up to new ways of thinking, both about myself and women in general.

As you can imagine, my initial reaction to you sparked my interest in not only my own battles through femininity, but again in how all women understand, manage, and wrestle with their own femininity. How do we weave our way through the various, often contradictory layers of what it means to be a woman, of what it means to be appropriately feminine within our culture? And Julie, our interview seemed to provide me with a place to begin an exploration of how both you and I, and potentially how many women, have woven our ways among our own contradictory messages of who we should be, how we should act, and ultimately who we are in these worlds created around us, both for us and by us.

Lucky for me in our four-hour life history interview you provided multiple examples of the contradictions you weaved your way through as you entered sorority life and became a sorority woman. In listening to you, I felt your experiences were similar to my experiences of becoming a woman. Like I mentioned in an earlier letter, some people talk about women and men as though there is some Truth to how we are supposed to feel, behave, act, love, and look based on our anatomy. Some act as though the moment someone exclaims "It's a girl" or "It's a boy" we all of a sudden are defined in totality. That somehow the act of being born biologically with certain sexual parts all of a sudden determines our fate—whether we'll like sports or cooking, whether we'll like blue or pink, whether we'll date women or men, whether we'll be logical or emotional.

Because ways of being women and men have been naturalized in society, some people can't see the violence in the expectation that when I'm called a woman I immediately must exist in certain ways. Just like Sara talked about being expected to want to be a mother, when I'm

*nice to be on a date. My friends were all so surprised because guys in college typically don't go on dates unless they are serious. It is kinda scary meeting people here because guys don't just date...they have expectations from what else they have experienced in that meeting people is a lot about sex and there can be a lot of pressure. And it is funny because even when people shack or hook up you can't expect anything unless you go on a date, unless it is established that there is interest. People can have nights of shacking or hooking up and then end up dating, but that's not as common. I thought that was just kinda the normal thing to do, ask someone out, get to know them, but I know people, and not just guys, that will sleep around. I'm sorry I'm so old-fashioned, but I want to wait until I'm ready. I definitely haven't met the right person yet and I definitely don't think it's something to throw around.*

*February 10, 2007  
3:35am*

*I just woke up to a phone call from Jared. He is Steven's, the guy I know from middle school, cute roommate. It is kind of funny seeing as how all that romantic stuff didn't work out between me and Steven, but I guess boys don't care about*

called a woman it is often assumed that I "should" cook, be a mother, clean, take care of others, cry at sad movies, and wear clothing that shows off my body. And too, if I were called a man then it is often assumed that I'd like sports, eat meat, head the household, enjoy driving fast cars, and be good at the grill. Some people think these likes and activities stem from some "innate" qualities of our anatomy—those same people ignore the fact that societies already provide us with boundaries within which we are expected to live—they provide us with the dresses in our closets, with the certain ways we can think, act, express ourselves, and understand others.

When I feel forced, without question, to live out certain expectations based on my inclusion in the category of "woman," I feel outrage. I feel panic. I feel trapped. But with great power always comes great possibility for resistance and re-creation. And so I seek ways to break through, create new, and reverse these expectations. Ways to take little steps within my own experiences to challenge myself and others to see differently, expect less, and try more. To see that anatomy does not need to define me, to stop expecting that I always act in "appropriate" ways, to play around with and try out new ways of being. Looking back, maybe my first attempt to see differently and to persuade others to think differently was that moment I shaved my head. I troubled what made people feel comfortable and uncomfortable. I challenged what made me female, feminine, a woman.

And to me this is the point—to mix things up, open them up, and lighten them up—to make room for multiple possibilities of being. Not to re-define women in some other terms, but to leave the term "women" open for anything. To be able to see a shaved head as being as much of an indicator of femininity as long highlighted hair, to open up the potential for a shaved head Southern sorority sister to be just as possible.

*things like that as much as girls do. So anyway Jared, the really cute twin, just called and wants to stop by. He is coming in from Atlanta just to pick up his brother's hockey stick and then he has to drive right back. I wonder why he wants to stop to see ME! I want to be casual and cute so I think I'll just wear my cute Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs sleepy pajama pants and a t-shirt. This is so silly, what are we going to talk about?*

February 26, 2007  
4:05pm

*Dad just called me again to see what next Kappa Psi event I would be going to. It is so funny because every time he calls me before he gets off the phone he asks me about what party I am going to that night. I guess he loved college cuz he talks about how being in the fraternity were some of the best days of his life and I'm like, "Is that all you thought about in college, what party to go to next?" Sometimes he is so silly! Right now I am getting ready for a band party at Beta Phi. Supposedly these boys are supposed to be gentlemen because they are made to take a cotillion class their freshman year. I sure hope they are better than the jerks we mixed with last week. The guys there were all kinda sketchy. They were being rude*

These cracks and openings create competing expectations for women. I think you know a lot about what I mean by competing expectations—you talked about them all the time in your interview. You talk about how you have to balance expectations to be to a good girl, but not too good, how to drink, but not too much, how to dress so you look attractive but not too sexy. These are the kind of contradictions that are everywhere, especially in our current culture. This is where your artful navigation comes in. This is where your interview and our diary can provide the room to explore these contradictions, negotiations, and navigations and expose our daily experiences for their complicated realities.

Phew, time to relax. It's almost time for my favorite TV show. I've been obsessed with watching "America's Next Top Model." Have you seen it? I know it goes against everything I'm talking about, but I just love it! I can't help it! I'll write soon.

Take Care,  
Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies  
"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Wed 19 Apr 19:17:24 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lbarbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: Why Southern Sororities?  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie,  
I'm sad to say my favorite model got voted off last episode. I'm just devastated and I'm not sure if I can continue watching it. Maybe I'll boycott it!

*in person and also really drunk and hooking up with girls. Its funny cuz guys here think that it is macho. I guess they've gotten the impression as college kids or in Rochester that they can do whatever they want. I just think that's silly because no matter how attractive you are, if you are drunk and hooking up with lots of girls, that's just not attractive. I guess we keep mixing with them because there is some kind of tradition to which fraternities we mix with and which ones we don't, but I would rather mix with some new fraternities who might be more gentlemanly than the guys I've met so far. I mean, it is already so hard at these formals or band parties because I feel like I'm one of many because there are only so many guys in the fraternity, but then all these girls flock to free beer and music and drink and so you feel like you have to really try for attention to meet boys and I don't like to do that. So not only are you competing to meet the boys, but the boys to meet are sometimes really sketchy. I did have fun a few months ago at the Jewish fraternity because I know the guys from the dorms and their party was a lot more chill and laid back and I thought they were just real guys, not just ones being petted by girls everywhere. It was funny too because I was one of like 7 non-Jewish girls there and that was*

Anyway, I realize that awhile back I had started tell you why I was interested in Southern sororities. I got so excited about everything else I was writing about that I never got back to my point of why Southern sororities! I'll get back to it now—this may take a few e-mails because it is a long explanation.

I had mentioned that I felt Southern culture had some pretty narrow definitions of what it means to be an appropriate woman or man. Well these defined expectations seem to me to be even more magnified within the Southern Greek systems. I think this is because the whole Greek system is organized to differentiate between men and women. I also think a lot of the Greek system's perspectives on men and women are trapped in those very "innate Truths" about men and women that I have been talking about—those "Truths" I worry are often narrowly defined, strongly enforced, and oppressive.

The fact of the matter is that I've been reading a lot about fraternity culture, since there is much more written on frat boys than sorority girls, and it shows that fraternity culture revolves around and is often defined by some pretty narrow notions of masculine camaraderie, loyalty, sexuality, and power. Although these qualities aren't necessarily negative, there has been research by Martin, Hummer, & Henslin that talks about how these qualities in frats have led to some problems—particularly in relation to drinking and women. For example, I have read a few different things that discuss that when women are raped or sexually abused at fraternity parties, the loyalty instilled in the frat keeps individual men from stepping up to hold their brothers accountable for such inexcusable behavior. Also, very masculine notions of heterosexual sexuality have increased homophobic and sexist attitudes, and have set up beliefs that men are somehow entitled to female bodies. There is a whole book on this if you ever want to check it out. It is called *Fraternity*

*kind of different because I was the blonde girl among all the Jewish girls.*

February 28, 2007

6:58pm

*I felt so silly today because I went up to a guy I had met at a band party and started talking to him and I guess he was just so drunk that night that he didn't remember me at all. I guess he is the one who should feel silly, but I'll think twice before I ever expect someone to remember me from a dance where they were drinking! Sometimes I wish people wouldn't drink as much. I guess people drink to feel more comfortable and I think it plays a huge part in people hooking up or going home with each other. I really don't think it would happen as much if people weren't drunk all the time.*

March 2, 2007

11:43pm

*Last night Nat got drunk and told me that she doesn't understand why I don't do anything with boys and kinda was like, "What? Do you think you're too good?" She was like, "You probably think I'm terrible because I have had sex with boys,*

*Gang Rape.* Also, I remember too that you and I talked about some of this kind of behavior when you mentioned you were reading *Pledged* by Robbins. I don't remember what you thought about it—if you have seen this type of thing go on or not. Do you think this happens at our university?

And then even on top of all this we have drinking. Drinking adds even another layer to these issues. With drinking, there comes the notion that the more you drink, the more of a man you are. However, as we have often seen in the media this can lead to negative behaviors, sexual coercion, poor grades, destruction of property, and even death. You even mentioned how you feel pressure to drink and how sometimes it gets you into trouble. Remember when you drank so much you got bruises on your chest from throwing up in the toilet? You said how scary that was!

Listen, I have to run but I'll write soon. Take care,

Lisbeth A. Barbary

Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Sun 23 Apr 18:34:52 EST 2008

From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lbarbary@lab.edu>

Subject: Southern Sororities, continued

To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie,

Yeah, now that you mention it I do remember a lot of sorority women I talked to not liking that book. I guess a lot of them thought it really

*right?” She was just really drunk, but I think it shows that it does matter to her that she has had sex with 2 or 3 different guys and like more than once. I think it does eat at her and also that I haven’t done that eats at her too. I think on the outside she just plays it off and is just like “Oh yeah, we just had sex,” and I think some of her friends make it seem like that is okay whereas she knows that I don’t stand for that. I think that girls devalue themselves by going out and acting like it’s not a big deal when it really is to them. I don’t know if they do it because culture makes them think that’s okay or what, but I mean, I would never tell her that she is wrong because I really try to get along with everyone, even if I don’t agree with how they act all the time. I hope this doesn’t get in the way of our friendship.*

March 5, 2007

10:55am

*Sometimes I wonder if I am doing the right thing joining Kappa Psi. I mean Tommy keeps trying to tell me that I am just buying my friends and I’m like “no I’m not,” but then I’m like “God, yeah I am,” because we have to pay so much for our dues, but then I think that the money is really just toward events and trips so I’m not really buying*

portrayed a negative picture of sorority life. That is one of the things I am trying to fight against with my research. Why would I want to simplify your complex experiences as sorority women down to instances of eating disorders, alcohol abuse, rape, and academics? Hopefully, my work will continue to offer a more complex view of sorority experiences. I think your diary was a good place to begin exposing that more positive, complicated view.

Anyway, back to why sororities? Last e-mail I was talking about fraternities and their connections to notions of loyalty and camaraderie. Sometimes these notions of loyalty and camaraderie set up a binary—that is a two part system where one part is considered better than the other—where those you are loyal to, in this case other men, tend to be considered better than those outside of your group, in this case men not like “us” and women. This type of exclusionary camaraderie and loyalty can be dangerous because rather than supporting the inclusion of group members, it instead serves to further define boundaries of difference, reinforcing an “us vs. them” mentality.

This mentality gives the in-group power that might not exist outside of this relationship to each other. This power can create situations in which individuals of the in-group lack empathy for those outside the group and mistreat or misuse those excluded. I was able to witness this power and differential treatment of those outside of the in-group first hand because one of my best friends during college was in a frat. Even then I recognized that something just wasn’t fair about the way his frat brothers could so easily disrespect sorority women in ways they would never think to disrespect a fellow brother. We all chalked it up to guys being guys—a phrase that now makes me cringe as it passes off the potential to act as individuals, to decide for oneself not to be disrespectful, onto the innate and indisputable Truths of a group, in this case all males who can’t help

*friends. And I know that there are some girls in Kappa Psi that I'm not proud to say are in my same sorority, but they are still good girls when you take them separately. It is just that when you put them together they play off each other. But I guess I really do love it and it means so much to Katie, Meg, and Mom that we are all in the same sorority. I guess it is really nice and it would be nice if one day my daughter were a Kappa Psi. I mean, sure if she doesn't want to be I'll sort of be crushed, but not completely. I guess it just does mean a lot to me.*

March 6, 2007  
4:58pm

*Some of the girls who really care more about what they look like have all the top designers like Prada and they have shoes that cost like in the hundreds and I just don't get it. Why would you do that? Or like have dresses for \$200 dollars. I didn't even know the brands before I met these girls. I think that starts in high school if you are going to be brand worried or not. I mean, Meg is into fashion, but I never paid much attention. But these girls don't even take care of their stuff. I mean if these shoes cost so much why wouldn't you take care of*

but be disrespectful as though it's in their blood—something as you know I just don't believe in.

Have you witnessed the frat culture I'm talking about? The disrespect to women, the drinking, or are these just textbook descriptions and isolated events? I remember you talking about arrogant fraternity boys and frat culture and I wonder what you think now that you have read where I am coming from.

Take care,  
Lisbeth A. Barbary  
Leisure Studies  
"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Date: Mon 24 Apr 09:12:44 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Barbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: Still sororities  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie,  
I wanted to write to you today because I realize that I have to be careful because I don't want you to think that I am claiming that all this stuff I have been talking about happens in all frats or that qualities of loyalty, camaraderie, and power are irrefutably dangerous. However, sometimes the combination of these qualities upheld in a very narrowly defined hyper-masculine setting can blind individuals to alternative ways of thinking, being, acting, loving, and living. This to me is just as oppressive to the fraternity men as it may be to those they in turn expect to fulfill that which they are not or "the other"—in this case I am talking about sorority women.



*them? I guess a lot of the girls are just trying to keep up with the trends.*

*March 7, 2007*

*8:47pm*

*You can tell spring break is on the way. Everyone is getting itchy bitsy to fit into their swimsuits. You can see them running all around the strip, working out, dying their hair, doing their nails, making sure they don't have tan lines, going to the tanning bed, and I think that's just stupid. I mean some of them do spray tan and makeup and clothes and it's not JUST for spring break, but it's like all year round. I think the trend is to constantly look cute. I heard one girl say that she was coming here to meet her husband so she had to look her best everyday and that is just kinda silly. I just wear soffes and t-shirts to class or even my pajamas, I don't care, I'll just roll out of bed. You know, sometimes I'll wear a little mascara to make me feel like I actually have eyes, but I don't wear foundation and all that stuff. I highlight my hair but I have since high school and it's just because Mom was always like, "Why don't you get a highlight?" She suggested it, not anybody else. I think some girls get highlights because they make them feel better or make them fit in more, or*

So finally we find ourselves back to Southern sororities. Since sororities often understand themselves in relation to fraternities, do you think that sometimes sorority women are supposed to be extremely feminine in reaction to fraternity men's extreme masculinity? In other words, does the forced masculinity found within fraternities in turn enable, or perhaps at times even demand, an equivalent defined femininity within sororities? At this point I think it might.

Here is how I figure it. A large part of the very heterosexual masculinity in fraternities expects female counterparts. Therefore, sororities, because they are set up in a system that juxtaposes frat men against sorority women, by default fill that expectation. This then creates a very strong and often narrowly defined expectation of appropriate femininity within sorority culture. So the way I see this entire process is simply that the already narrowly defined expectations of gender in Southern culture are taken up, reinforced, and magnified in relation to extreme expectations of masculinity in fraternities—then taken up, reinforced, and magnified in sororities as they create relationships with fraternities within the Greek system. What do you think? Remember when you were telling me those stories about sorority houses having to get new pipes because so many women were puking that the acid corroded them? And the one you heard where the sorority members were circling fat with a magic marker on pledges? Well, whether these are true or not, the messages they send out indicate to me some pretty heavy expectations of thinness linked to feminine beauty. Maybe even more magnified than outside of the Greek system. Do you see where I am coming from?

Why this is all so interesting to me is not because all sorority women fulfill these magnified expectations, but because you all figure out how to navigate your ways through them. I'm immediately impressed because growing up in a small upstate New York college town I was presented

*because it makes them feel prettier. I think a lot of girls go by fads in magazines or TV and I have my own style of dress because I don't have enough money to just buy the new stuff every year. I'll go to Old Navy and buy one or two things that are trendy, but I don't really care. I don't think I'm a typical sorority girl. I don't think I'm sororitastic. I don't wear the pearls with the t-shirt, polo shirts with earrings, reef flip flops, bangs, and short skirts - well, maybe the short skirts were last year, the Uggs boots were last year. I'm not to up to date with this stuff. Jenny and I always say our motto is wear whatever you feel like wearing and if it doesn't really match wear it anyways.*

March 31, 2007

6:34pm

*I got a letter today from one of the older sisters today just saying that she hopes I have a good week. I thought that was so sweet. It means a lot to me that I am in Kappa Psi because it is just so nice to be able to come back and see everybody having lunch together or dinner together. I love that the cooking is done for us. It is so nice to not have to worry about that.*

with multiple views or a spectrum of how women could be. I knew women who never shaved, who dated women, who dated men, who became men, who were midwives, who were car mechanics, who were fashionable, who wore overalls, and who had breast implants. In a sense, I was provided with multiple views of femininity, providing me with a broader understanding of ways to express my own femininity. And still, I am so confused, so influenced by media and by traditional expectations of femininity that even with all my experiences and understandings of femininity I still find myself struggling to weave my way among those ways of being I am attracted to versus those I feel the pressure to uphold to "fit into" society. If I am struggling to understand my own femininity even within these broadly defined possibilities of femininity, how might a Southern sorority woman, caught within such magnified and narrowly defined expectations of femininity navigate? My personal experiences and the questions this all raised for me made me feel that those people who choose to laugh at sorority women and their behaviors were missing the violence that can come when expectations of femininity are so narrowly defined that women's navigation around and through them often can leave them washed up on shore. Even though we can all choose to act in certain ways, the power that cultural expectations have over us sometimes can be extreme and difficult to challenge.

Talk to you soon,  
Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

April 1, 2007  
11:12pm

*Even though I love college I sometimes feel like there's a lot of stuff I try to cram in for my classes, for extracurriculars, for my resume, and work, and some days I really enjoy it, but some days it just seems like so much to do. I am a little worried about my grades because they aren't the best. I keep going out...I guess because that is what you do in college, but my grades are suffering I think. I mean I came in thinking I didn't have to study but two days before a test, but I don't think that works very well. I mean I go to the student learning center to study, but I take a study break and it becomes instead of 5 minutes like a 20 minute break because it's a pretty social place and of course I end up saying hi to like ten thousand people. I really need to get better habits for studying. I feel guilty my grades aren't that good.*

April 3, 2007  
7:12pm

*We are going out on the town tonight. Jenny just asked me to do her makeup cuz she never does it and we are trying to look cute for guys or whatever, plus other people are going to be cute*

Date: Wed 3 May 13:23:40 EST 2008  
From: Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
Subject: I've been thinking  
To: jules242@lab.edu

Julie-You know I was thinking about when I wrote to you that I was caught up in being the "pretty girl." I was thinking about how embarrassed I was to admit it. But then I was watching MTV the other day and they were talking about the latest fashion trends and I started to think I need to give myself a break. I think a lot of women get caught up basing some of their self-worth on their "attractiveness factor" because our society often rewards outward beauty, especially female beauty as an accomplishment. I mean just look at my own story. When I grew up being complimented on and valued for my looks, it set me up to think I should want to develop those superficial aspects of myself over all others I have to offer. I think this process of understanding myself as an object of physical beauty began the moment I left my mother's womb, was called out as a girl, dressed in pink, and told I was beautiful. But when do I get to stop worrying about beauty? When am I released from wanting to be beautiful in order to develop my other attributes?

And perhaps it is not so much that I can't develop my other attributes, but rather that I am just never released from my tie to beauty. Sometimes I feel like this tie forces me to always continue on trying to accomplish some prescribed form of physical attractiveness. While I can argue that I have the choice to stop taking part in this "beauty project," it is only with an understanding that there are consequences to not being beautiful. I can choose to let my body hair grow, shave my head, and stop wearing makeup. I can choose to not make beauty a priority, but at all times I am aware that this has social consequences.

*dressed up too. I think tonight I am going to wear my new dress because I'll see more people than if I just wore it to classes. I mean I don't care about impressing people in class, most of the students are girls so I don't really have anyone to dress up for or impress...I mean, this year my classes aren't necessarily the classes I would ideally look for a boyfriend in so I'm not going to try and wear my cute stuff unless I'm going out. I love dressing up when Jenny and I go downtown because people are a lot more complementative.*

*April 17, 2007  
2:56am*

*I just got home from Bronze River and while I was hanging out with the girls this guy came up to the bar and we started talking and he was like "oh you look really nice" and I was like "nice to meet you," but to make a long story short I have a date tomorrow night!!! He was like, "Can I take you out to eat?" and I said sure because he looked really, really cute. We are meeting tomorrow at Yamato Grill because I didn't want to have him pick me up in case he is sketchy. I mean he seemed really nice, but I don't want him to know where I live just yet. I am so excited!*

I decided that with all of these pressures and complicated consequences I needed to give myself a break. I think I've navigated these issues pretty well. And from what you told me, I think you have too. You seem confident with yourself, sometimes participating in expectations of beauty, but also willing to accept yourself as you are.

Sounds good to me! Talk to you soon,

Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

**Date:** Fri 13 May 13:13:00 EST 2008  
**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** Finally why sororities?!  
**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Julie- And I still have not answered why all of these discussions make me interested in Southern sorority women! And I think my answer may be what sets me apart from other researchers looking at sororities or sorority women. The Truth is, I'm not really that interested in those things that make them sororities—their ceremonies, their flower, their colors, or how long they've been accredited. I will be interested to hear about these things if they come up, but I am not trying to learn the rules for how a sorority is run, identified, or joined.

What I am more interested in is the space sororities create for women. I have told you what interested me in your interview are the ways you weaved through and negotiated all these competing and confusing messages about how to be a woman. It is my interest in these negotiations that led me to my interest in sororities. You see, most

April 18, 2007  
4:55pm

*I am on my way to meet Chris for our date. I told Jenny where I am going just in case. I mean I don't really know this guy. I have decided I want to look cute, but not too dressed up so I am wearing my small tan heels, my tan khaki skirt with the slit, not too much, and my light blue top with the low neck and middle bow with my pearl earrings and my hair down. I am nervous! Wish me luck!*

8:35pm

*Oh my goodness! I am sooo embarrassed! It turns out that Chris is a lot older than I remember. I guess it was kind of hard to see in the bar. He definitely has gray hairs and is a car mechanic and it was horrifying and I didn't know what to do because I wanted to leave. What do you do when you have a situation like that? I mean I'm not even of age to drink and he was talking about his life and I was like "Oh God, how long have you been around?" I never asked his age, but he is definitely too old for me. I mean he looked really cute in the bar, I mean he is attractive, but I don't think I could tell he had gray hair because of the lighting and it was so embarrassing!! I left and I*

women have to negotiate through expectations; in fact I believe all individuals need to negotiate in order to establish themselves as a subject, a self, a position, an identity, or an "I." However, I think sorority women might have unique negotiations of expectations because of sorority culture.

I began my research with college women, not specifically sorority women, because at this age I knew they were not only negotiating Southern culture, but also university culture. They presented me with narratives filled with stories about negotiations and expectations, like the story that Erin told me about how she learned to feel okay about her body even though every time she went home her Dad told her she needed to lose weight. He had just remarried a very thin woman with large fake breasts, and all of a sudden Erin was, as she put it, "just too big to fit in anymore." She told me about her struggles to lose weight, how she approached her father, her final acceptance of her weight, and her continuing realization that is just not that easy to let go of what others expect of you. Her story was like a rollercoaster taking her in and out of happiness, relationships, self-doubt, self-worth, and self-understanding within Southern culture. I was just fascinated by its complexity.

As I continued my research with college women, I accidentally ended up interviewing a sorority woman. Actually she was a woman from a sorority you know well. To my surprise she not only told stories about her navigations through Southern culture and university culture, but also this added dimension of sorority culture. I was fascinated.

This woman who I had viewed as a silly, frivolous sorority girl was navigating her way not through one culture, not two, but through three cultures with three very strong expectations of women. It was at this moment I knew that if I wanted to help expose the complicated

*was just kinda like well, nice to meet you. Remind me to never never say yes to a date from someone at the bar. Where were my girlfriends when I needed them?*

*April 24, 2007  
5:23pm*

*Oh my goodness. You know those little short skirts that were in, the flowing ones, actually I guess those were last year and still are, but today I saw a girl walking on campus and her skirt flew up and she was wearing a thong or something and I was like why would you wear a thong with a skirt like that? but anyway, the wind blew her skirt up and everyone saw her butt and I was like, "Oh my goodness," but she didn't think it was a big deal! Can you believe it?*

*April 25, 2007  
12:24pm*

*I got woken up this morning at like 4am because Sam needed a shoulder to cry on. I guess she found out that Laura likes the same guy that she has been trying to get the attention of - some kid named Chad. Sam thinks that Laura is so much prettier so of course Chad is going to want Laura*

negotiations women make daily just in order to have some say, a voice, an opinion, a stance, a view, and a moment on two feet, this was the culture I needed to explore. And so finally the answer to the question I posed months ago: Why did I want to study Southern sorority women?

I am wondering what you think of all of this. I am wondering if you see yourself navigating these expectations, if you feel like sometimes you are caught up in them, if perhaps your friends are? And I wonder how you see yourself within all of this, how you make your choices, how you decide what to wear, where to go, how to act? Even those expectations we don't always know we are living, do you even catch glimpses of them in yourself, in others?

P.S. You were that sorority woman I accidentally interviewed. Thanks!

Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies  
"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

**Date:** Sat 25 May 08:10:18 EST 2008  
**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** One little thing...  
**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Hey Julie,

I was reading over the e-mails I have been sending to you and I just wanted to clarify one thing. I choose to first talk about fraternities only because that is where most research on the Greek system begins. I wanted to tell you that what tends to happen in research on the Greek system is that fraternities are the focus, the privileged side of the binary,

*and not her. There is always so much drama around guys. I mean, of course there is going to be some overlap about who likes who because there are only so many guys in one fraternity and then there are even less cute ones to pick from. I mean it is bound to happen. I guess Laura should have noticed that Sam was hanging out with Chad at the past couple of events, but maybe she wasn't paying as much attention as she should be. That is why I don't compete for guys, there is too much drama. And anyways, it could just be a rumor because Sam heard it from Christine who heard it from some guy friend of Chad's. I told Sam not to worry because it probably isn't even true and if it is she is much prettier than Laura could ever be. My goodness! After she left I was like why am I up at 4 in the morning? but I guess it is for a reason and because she would do the same for me. It's so nice to have that proximity of being together. I'm so glad we are all going to move into the sorority house next year. I bet we'll get even closer.*

*April 28, 2007*

*10:35pm*

*Recently I've started to try and take a little bit more time to look decent for class, like showering in the morning or putting on a little makeup or*

while sororities are often the afterthought, the add-on, the other half of the binary. This sets up research in which fraternities are seen as the norm, the first, the original, creating a situation in which sororities are most often only discussed in relation to fraternities.

I am writing this to you so that you don't read all that I wrote about fraternities and sororities and think that I believe it is only fraternities that influence sororities and never the other way around. I think that both sororities and fraternities are in a constant process of feeding off of each other—the institutions themselves navigating through relations of power, sometimes equally contributing, other times taking the lead or the backseat.

You even spoke about this in your own interview where you discuss the different privileges of fraternities and sororities. You mentioned frats could have parties at their house, but that sororities were not able to. You mentioned that even if a frat wants to mix with your sorority, as a house you have the right to kindly decline. Do you think that all of these kinds of interactions between sororities and fraternities set them up with different positions of power at different times? I definitely do, but I was worried that because I compared sororities as secondary to fraternities that it would appear to you like I was falling into the trap of only defining sororities as the afterthought of fraternities. You can see that to do this was not and is not my intention. I realize that there are ever-changing positions of power held by and held over sororities and fraternities depending on the situation, time, place, and tradition. I know that while sometimes you work against each other you also share supportive relationships.

*straightening my hair. Not necessarily to impress anyone, but I think you feel better when you look decent or look nice or presentable. I mean, I can't stay up to whatever is cute and fashionable because I don't have the budget nor do I think it is necessary, but sometimes I see people wearing things and it works and so I'm like oh okay I can wear that too. The silly thing is that our motto to wear what we want whether it matches or not has caught on because now the trend is to wear things that don't match...like t-shirts with skirts and pearls. I guess it just picks up and becomes a trend. Jenny and I kinda laugh to ourselves about it.*

You already mentioned some of these different relationships that you see between sororities and fraternities. Do you have any other examples you could tell me so I better understand how these two groups interact?

Take care,  
Lisbeth A. Berbary  
Leisure Studies

"Qui tacet consentire videtur: she who keeps silent is assumed to consent."

Continued →



**Date:** Fri 6 June 13:13:00 EST 2008  
**From:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** So what?  
**To:** jules242@lab.edu

Julie- Thanks for reading and responding to so many of these e-mails. I've really appreciated all the questions you raised, comments you gave for clarification, and tidbits you passed on. This will be my last e-mail concerning our diary. I just can't think of another thing to tell you! I think you know it all. I just wanted to end our conversation by summing up why I put so much time into this, into our interview, our diary, and our discussions. I wanted to give you a better understanding of what drives me toward this type of research...

What it comes down to is that research with sororities and sorority women provided me with a way to challenge the often simplistic representations of women's lives. Here were these women, seen as frivolous, made fun of on TV, known for their looks, parties, and frat boys—women who some might consider (as I have to admit I once did) to be anti-feminist, unintelligent, cookie-cutter women—here they were navigating some seriously treacherous waters in terms of cultures with expectations of women in middle-class White America.

If we could somehow expose these women's complicated negotiations of femininity, if we could get those people who see you all as frivolous girls to understand how complicated and drenched in expectation some of your ways of being are, then perhaps those same people could begin to see both their own complicated lived experiences and those of others. When people begin to see how complicated most people's experiences are, they might be less quick to write off, clamp up, ignore, and dismiss. They might be more understanding, take more time to learn, take more time to teach, and make the time to change—both themselves and others.

So Julie, you can now see how important this diary might be. I say might because just as people think sorority girls are frivolous, they also think that research on sororities is trivial. And this, Julie, is why we had to capture them, why we had to make that diary, make your stories vulnerable, easily identified with, and intimate. I know that if they begin a page of our diary they won't put it down, they'll question, remember, laugh, turn red, judge, reconsider, and become involved—involved with both you and me, but more importantly with themselves.

If just one person reads this diary and begins to question herself, her culture, her society, and makes sure that the choices she makes are ones she wants to make, rather than ones she feels she has to make—then I feel we have made our work important.

Thanks again for everything and I'll be looking forward to hearing about your new job!  
Lisbeth  
"Haud diutius silent: No longer silent"

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE GENDERED SELF

In my experience, post-structural theory is one of the more misunderstood theories or philosophies because it lacks clear boundaries, is often inaccessible, and is less thoroughly read than many other theories. A friend of mine joked that she never took the time to really read post-structural theory because it always came as the last chapter in her books on theory. Perhaps that is why it is so misunderstood and why many people do not take the time to read it, sometimes even those who vehemently criticize it.

What does “post” mean, anyway? Most people assume that the inclusion of “post” in the title is based on its chronological development “after” other theories. However, this is not the case. Instead, it refers to a theoretical position that calls for a critique or deconstruction, an after thought, or a revisiting of that which already “exists” or will exist. It is a position that exists “after” in order to critique that which is “before.” In order to understand post-structural viewpoints, one must also understand the viewpoints or theories that already exist for it to critique or trouble.

According to a structure put forth by Lather and St. Pierre (2005), “post” theories, such as post-structuralism and post-colonialism, are all connected by their general critique or troubling of humanist theoretical positions. Humanist positions such as positivism, feminism, and critical theory are typically critiqued by post theories for their use of binary structures, belief in “progress,” desire for mass movements, defined Truths, meta-narratives, and positions of objectivity or constructionism.

What does it mean to take a post-structural/modern viewpoint? Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) defined the core of post-structural thinking as

the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles. But conventional methods of knowing and telling are not automatically rejected as false or archaic. Rather, those standard methods are opened to inquiry, new methods are introduced, and then they also are subject to critique. The postmodernist concept of doubt distrusts all methods equally. No method has a privileged status. But a postmodernist position does allow us to know “something” without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowing. (p. 961)

The post-structuralist concepts most important to this research and the purpose of understanding women’s negotiations of discourses are subjectivity, performativity, and discipline. While all of these concepts are considered within post-structural theory, there will also be discussion related more directly to post-structural feminist theory, a strain of feminist theory influenced by post-structural thinking.

#### Theories of Subjectivity

Butler (1992) encapsulated the type of theorizing that creates challenging post-structural questions of subjectivity, or how a body becomes a subject, a self, a position, and an identity, or an “I” when she stated<sup>1</sup>:

My position is mine to the extent that “I”—and I do not shirk from the pronoun—replay and resignify the theoretical positions that have constituted me, working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude. But it is clearly not the case that “I” preside over the positions that have constituted me, shuffling through them instrumentally, casting some aside, incorporating others, although some of my activity may take that form. The “I” who would select between them is always already constituted by them. (p. 3)

In our postmodern time, subjectivity has become the focus of the theorization of our lived experiences as we are constantly forced to ask ourselves who we are in relation to advertisements, material possessions, famous personalities, and everyday individuals made stars on reality TV. With this focus on self, theorizing that arises from such

questions as “Who am I?” “What identity do I claim?” and “What is meant by the term ‘I’?” have come to define our current culture. While some may find these questions easy to answer, post-structural theory complicates the answers to these questions because it challenges modern notions of self, deconstructs the use of “I,” and re-theorizes the subject.

### Enlightenment: The Humanist Subject

When speaking of challenging, deconstructing, or re-theorizing the subject, what subject are we speaking of? Most often the point of departure for current re-conceptualization of the subject is grounded in humanist ideas of subjectivity developed during the Enlightenment by such theorists as Descartes (1596-1650), Rousseau (1712-1728), and Kant (1724-1804). During the Enlightenment the subject was theorized in multiple ways. However, it is the humanist notion of a coherent and consistent subject that is “constituted by a set of static characteristics such as sex, class, race, sexual orientation” (Lather, 1991, p. 5) and fully capable of knowing itself and the world (Chanter, 1998; Mansfield, 2000) that is the most critiqued theorization of the subject to come from the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was most strongly influenced by humanism and since humanism theorizes that rational consciousness produces all value and meaning for human history and culture, it is no surprise that the subject of the Enlightenment would be theorized as one that both knows and manipulates the meaning of the world (Grosz, 1990).

The legacy of the humanist rational self for which the Enlightenment is best known continues to be a point of departure for most critiques of contemporary critical thought because ideals of reason and “the rational” still provide the foundational basis for

the social institutions, political systems, and modes of operation that organize modern Western society (Mansfield, 2000). The best example of Enlightenment influence in the modern world can be seen in relation to Descartes and his most famous utterance, “*Cogito ergo sum*” (“I think, therefore I am”). Descartes’ logical reasoning continues to lead Western traditions since objectivity and rationality are privileged as the keys to unlocking our “Truths,” especially those Truths found in scientific fields. Although Descartes was somewhat radical in his belief that *every* person (instead of only those “chosen” by Christianity) could uncover the “Truth” to life through reason and principle, his arguments for the possibility of a unified theory of knowledge and his reinforcement of Plato’s binary structures, such as self/other, subject/object, mind/body, Truth/falsity, and rationality/irrationality have caused contemporary critics to “call for different epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies that are less devastating to people and ideas that are ‘different’ and more adequate in responding to the problems of our own age” (St. Pierre, 2005, p. 1).

The Enlightenment is often criticized for the theorization of a rational subject, the belief in “Truth” through reason, and the reinforcement of binary thinking which follows the logic of A/not-A, privileging the A and “othering” the not-A as in men/women, White/Black, rich/poor. However, if it were not for Enlightenment attempts to define subjectivity and the controversy connected with such attempts, contemporary critics might not have enjoyed the space opened up by these theorizations and might not have focused on the critique or re-theorization of the subject. Therefore, although our common social institutions and representative democracy have continued to promote Enlightenment beliefs of autonomous selves, “Truth,” freedom, and rationality, a critical

space was opened up by the critiques of the Enlightenment that has continued to focus modern/postmodern thought on re-theorizing subjectivity.

### The Humanist Subject and Feminism

The continuous re-theorization of subjectivity, specifically the reconsideration of the humanist subject, has been of great importance in feminist efforts toward emancipation as it has helped women deconstruct our social positions as subordinates to men. Although most understanding of the humanist subject ignores gender/sex difference<sup>2</sup> by subsuming “women” under “men” or “mankind,” the legacy of Enlightenment thought has produced specific consequences for women (Chanter, 1998). If the humanist subject and Cartesian assumptions of rationality over irrationality and mind over body remain unquestioned, feminist understanding of self would continue to be grounded in a patriarchal structure of Platonic binaries in which women and all we are claimed to represent are continuously categorized into the less privileged half of a binary. While the mere idea that all women can be “represented” is an essentialist claim in need of questioning, there is also the general critique of the traditional concept that women represent the lesser half of the binary, which constructs us as irrational, emotional, body-oriented, and subordinate. Alcoff (1988) further explained the problems with being essentialized in general and with being essentialized as lesser than men in particular:

Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured—understood, explained, and diagnosed—to a level of determination never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as a rational animal with free will. Where man’s behavior is undetermined, free to construct its own future along the course of its rational choice, woman’s nature has overdetermined her behavior, the limits of her intellectual endeavors, and the inevitabilities of her emotional journey through life. Whether she is construed as essentially immoral and irrational or essentially kind and benevolent, she is always construed as an essential something inevitably assessable to direct intuited apprehension by males. (p. 426)

These essentialist positions assigned to women have not only categorized women as having “natural” roles such as caretakers, nurturers, and, in modern/postmodern societies, nurses, housewives, and teachers, but have also set up patriarchal structures<sup>3</sup> in which these positions are less privileged than men’s roles such as hunter, protector, or in modern/postmodern times, priest, president, and breadwinner.

A disruption of Cartesian (Platonic) binaries and the “essentialist” social structures they reinforce opens up space for re-conceptualized dualities in which either each position has equal worth, or as post-structural feminism calls for, binary positions that are opened into multiplicities offering categories with more than two options. Therefore, while the legacy of Enlightenment thought, including the humanist subject and Cartesian binaries, still defines much of contemporary opinion, it is the feminist and post-structural feminist questioning and deconstruction of such theories that have allowed women to re-theorize for themselves a more valued social position.

Feminist thinkers have gone about this re-theorization of “women” in many ways. Some feminists, such as cultural feminists, have attempted to disrupt enlightenment definitions of women by redefining “women” through a feminist-created description. For example, a “housewife” is re-defined as “supermom,” helping to give devalued positions a more positive connotation. Black feminism has attempted to re-define the category of “women” by opening it up to multiple circumstances, races, cultures, beliefs, values, and histories. Although many feminists view such feminist re-theorizations as appropriate responses to humanist notions of “women,” post-structural feminism considers these redefinitions of “women” as another attempt to tie women’s identities to yet another essentialist definition (Alcoff, 1988).

Post-structural feminism therefore calls for a very different response to humanist, essentialist definitions of “woman.” Rather than re-defining women in positive terms or in multiplicity, post-structural feminism instead rejects the possibility of defining the term “woman” altogether since any definition of women will always lead to the reinforcement of phallogentric, essentialist notions of gender. As Alcoff (1988) further explained:

Feminists who take this tactic go about the business of deconstructing all concepts of woman and argue that both feminist and misogynist attempts to define woman are politically reactionary and ontologically mistaken. Replacing woman-as-housewife with woman-as-supermom (or earth mother or super professional) is no advance. Using French post-structuralist theory these feminists argue that such errors occur because we are in fundamental ways duplicating misogynist strategies when we try to define woman, characterize woman, or speak for women, even though allowing for a range of difference within the gender. The politics of gender or sexual difference must be replaced with a plurality of difference where gender loses its position of significance. (p. 427)

Therefore, post-structural feminism rejects attempts to define “women” in any specific terms since the definition will always remain essentialized and caught within patriarchal political structures. Instead, post-structural feminism deconstructs such a category by problematizing notions of what it means to be “woman” and ultimately notions of gendered subjectivity.

#### Interpellation, Discourse, Self-Discipline, and Performativity

A great deal of the post-structural feminist deconstruction of subjectivity has been influenced by the work of Althusser (1918-1990), Foucault (1920-1984), and Butler (b.1956), and their notions of subjectivity as informed by the concepts of interpellation, discourse, discipline, and performativity. These notions are discussed in detail in order to show connections between these theories and women’s negotiations of subjectivity.



*Althusser, RSAs/ISAs, and Interpellation*

Louis Althusser (1918-1990), although not considered a post-structuralist, contributed important concepts to the discussion of subjectivity. While he was strongly influenced by social constructionist understanding of Marxist theory rather than strict economist or humanist interpretations of Marxism, Althusser was specifically interested in the connections between economic class and psychoanalytic theory (Grosz, 1990). He reworked psychoanalytic notions of the subject by concentrating and elaborating on the processes that construct subjects specifically within late capitalism (Hall, 2004; Kavanagh, 1995). His ideas of subjectivity will be briefly discussed here because he is an important theorist of modern subjectivity, an important influence on post-structuralism in general, and specifically an important referent for Butler's consideration of gendered subjectivity as discussed below.

For Althusser, the subject had to be reworked from the humanist notions of "I think, therefore I am" in order to present a more complex process of subjection interrelated to power and politics. This more complex picture considered how a subject was produced and reproduced by power relations of the state in late capitalism. He was particularly interested in how subjects came to conform to state-enforced social definitions of normalcy and to internalize specific attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Hall, 2004).

In his theorization of subjectivity Althusser (1971) posited that two specific mechanisms, one direct and one indirect, are imposed in order to socially produce specific subjectivities and promote the reproduction of those subjectivities from one generation to another. The most direct mechanism used violence and force to control and

included the military, police, legal, and punitive systems. He categorized this type of social control as “Repressive State Apparatuses,” or RSAs (Althusser, 1971). This mechanism was obvious, had rules and expectations aligned with it, and was apparent to all individuals living within the capitalistic system.

Although these RSAs were direct forces of social control, Althusser (1971) theorized that it was the more indirect Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that usually had a greater part in the production and reproduction of social subjectivity. For Althusser, ISAs indirectly produced subjects by promoting ideologies, beliefs, and behaviors of the dominant class while simultaneously marginalizing those outside of such ideology. The promotion of this dominant ideology took place not through force, but rather through the suggestive social institutions that Althusser listed as:

The religious ISA (the system of different Churches), the educational ISA (the system of different public and private “Schools”), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio, and television, etc.), the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.). (p. 143)

The ideologies of these social institutions are not forced onto the subject like the rules and expectations of the RSAs, but instead are considered to be fundamental beliefs of society, both natural and incontestable. Although these “natural” ideologies can be considered as violent, if not more violent, than those of the RSAs, the social acceptance of the institutions which enforced them often made their violence less visible and more easily (and ignorantly) tolerated (Grosz, 1990). Therefore, individual subjects internalized the values, beliefs, and expectations of the dominant ideology, acted appropriately, and reinforced dominance often without awareness of the power behind such state apparatus. According to Althusser (1971), it is the combination of the direct

control of the RSAs and the indirect control of the ISAs that produces a cooperative system that produces and reproduces both the socio-economic system and the subjects needed for it to function.

Althusser is also referred to for the metaphor he offered concerning how a subject is produced by mechanisms of law and ideology, a process he called “interpellation.” The process of interpellation begins when a subject is “hailed” by ideology. For example, if a policeman called out “Hey, you!” on the street, by turning to answer him one becomes the subject to whom he calls out. As Althusser (1971) wrote, “the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject” (p. 163). Therefore, a subject becomes that which it is “hailed as” by law and ideology. In other words, the subject only becomes a subject through its subjection to law and ideology.

For our purpose of better understanding women’s subjectivity and their negotiation of such a position, it is important to recognize four general conclusions that Althusser (1971) made in his overall discussions of subjectivity:

- (a) Ideology is not a conspiracy by those in power, but rather is the necessary condition for the production and reproduction of dominant culture. Dominant ideologies are not always directly forced upon subjects but instead are often threaded into the cultural fabric and are considered natural, normal, and uncontestable.
- (b) While ideology forms a constructed social order, Althusser believed that science would help to provide insight into the “true” nature of social order – the order that lies beneath that which is constructed by society (Mansfield, 2000). We will see

that this is how ideology differs from Foucault's notions of discourse, since discourse has no "true" nature.

- (c) The subject is the product of institutions. We do not produce institutions, but rather they produce us by instilling certain beliefs, values, and behaviors. We become that which the system needs us to be. We do not just behave in certain ways but we become certain types of people (Mansfield, 2000).
- (d) In our hope to be valued by the dominant culture, we monitor our beliefs, values, and behaviors so that they fall within that which is considered normal. In this sense, Althusser considered subjectivity similar to a form of self-incarceration as individuals become their own judges and guards.
- (e) A body "hailed" by law and ideology becomes the subject expected by the law and ideology which "hailed" it.

*Foucault, Discourse, Power, and Self-Discipline*

Michel Foucault is considered by some to be the most recent influential and controversial theorist of subjectivity. Like Althusser, he focused on the creation of subjectivities within discourses of power. Although he is often included in discussions of Althusser, his work on subjectivity was different since he was not interested in contrasting constructed social ideologies (dominant ideologies) to the scientific Truth of social order. Instead, in his theories of subjectivity Foucault was interested in discourses and exposing that there is no "Truth" to subjectivity or to social order. For Foucault, in a typical post-structural way, claims of so-called Truth should be met with doubt and suspicion.

With the intent to challenge posited “Truths” of subjectivity, Foucault challenged notions of innateness, normalcy, and scientifically based social orders and attempted to open up new forms of thinking, acting, and performing subjectivity (Falzon, 1998). In order to begin this process, Foucault first rejected the humanist subject as a free and autonomous self and discarded the notion of a “true” self hidden under the one projected by society. Rather than assume the Truth of the individual self, he viewed any subjectivity, even the notion or need for subjectivity or an identity of self, as the product of social power/knowledge relations and discourse (Foucault, 1977). As Foucault (1980) explained:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constitutes as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (p. 98)

Therefore, to Foucault, even the notion of an individual was always already created for us through discourses of power that constructed boundaries for what was and what was not acceptable, thinkable, and speakable. We are not struggling to find a “Truth” to ourselves, for, to Foucault, the notion of a “Truth of self” is simply a fiction of a specific discourse of power. The “selves” we become are not representations of “who we are inside” because power controls more than our exterior body; indeed, our interior “Truths” are just as much a fiction of discursive power as our exterior. This meant that instead of the Christian concept of the soul being trapped by the body, the body was trapped by the soul--a soul created and overpowered by historically specific discursive power (Foucault,

1977). In other words, we are not individual souls trapped in bodies, but instead we are bodies trapped by souls collectively created through discursive power. As Foucault explained, “the soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (p. 30).

Butler (1997) built on Foucault’s discussion of subjectivity and soul when she explained this paradoxical situation:

As a form of power, subjection is paradoxical. To be dominated by a power external to oneself is a familiar and agonizing form power takes. To find, however, that what “one” is, one’s very formation as a subject, is in some sense dependent upon that very power is quite another. We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a lower order. This is surely a fair description of part of what power does. But if, following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. (pp. 1-2)

This understanding of subjectivity, a subjectivity that is created “for us” by power, seems to permit individuals little agency. In fact, Foucault has been critiqued for this viewpoint as it seems to take Althusser’s notions of the self-incarcerated individual to the extreme, potentially proposing an individual who lacks any agency from state power. However, this critique fails to recognize Foucault’s understanding of power.

Unlike the repressive and limiting power that is posited in humanist theories such as Marxism, critical theory, and psychoanalysis, power for Foucault, as Butler hints in the above quote, instead “circulates, is appropriated and deployed” (Hall, 2004, p. 93); it is contingent and has a specific history that when understood can be subverted. As Foucault explained: “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes,’ it ‘represses,’ it ‘censors,’ it ‘abstracts,’ it ‘masks,’ it ‘conceals’ . In

fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of Truth” (1977, p. 194). Therefore, critiques that accuse Foucault of a pessimistic theory of subjectivity in which the subject lacks agency simply refuse to take into account Foucault’s notion of power--power that can produce, that sometimes controls, but that can also be subverted. Although Foucault recognized that everything is held within relations of power, he reminded us that there need not be uncontested acceptance of those particular dominant forms of power. Therefore, with power as a contestable construct that both censors and produces, Foucault’s positing of a subject formed within power relations is not a repressed, non-agentic subject, but instead a subject whose subjectivity can remain undefined and open to possibility as it maintains the potential to challenge or subvert dominant power.

However, while Foucault’s subject is agentic in its ability to subvert power, he still recognized the difficulty of such subversion. Foucault (1977) discussed the intensity of discursive power as a mechanism of discipline on the process of subjection and the potential to subvert power. While the individual is able to subvert power, discipline in the form of discursive organization, examination, normalizing judgment, and self-surveillance works against such subversion and instead acts to transform individuals into “appropriate” subjects with little recognition of any potential to subvert that which they become. As Foucault reiterated, “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (1977, p. 70). For Foucault, this discipline that “makes” individuals is permanent and continuous, always supervising, always keeping subjects under self-surveillance, creating fields that subtly yet forcefully gaze, watch, and examine subjects

to produce appropriateness and leave no space without “punishable, punishing universality” (Foucault, 1977, p. 178).

Discipline then creates an integrated system that functions as an automatic, anonymous power perpetually creating a space of self-supervision:

This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely “discreet,” for it functions permanently and largely in silence. (Foucault, 1977, p. 177)

It is this indiscreetly discreet discipline that subtly coerces subjects not only to become subjects, but to become “appropriate” subjects that participate in a cloaked, almost undetectable, perceivably natural self-supervision that organizes them to remain within the culturally and historically prescribed norms of subjectivity. This mechanism of self-surveillance or supervision of the body by the “soul” reiterates Foucault’s notion that the soul entraps the body and highlights the complexity surrounding subjects’ agency and subversion of dominant power.

Foucault (1977) further commented on the effects of such discipline when he wrote:

It brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum toward which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the “nature” of individuals. It introduces, through this “value-giving” measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal (the “shameful” class of the Ecole Militaire). The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*. (p. 182)



This discipline, steered by discursive power and driven by mechanisms of self-surveillance, limits the occurrence of subjective subversion, and reinforces, maintains, or normalizes culturally and historically acceptable subjectivities.

Foucault, therefore, recognized that while discursive practices of discipline and self-surveillance worked against a subject's agency, the inherent ability to subvert dominant power, to use power to produce rather than repress, and to redefine, recreate, or reinvent subjectivity left the processes of becoming a subject open to possibility. By leaving subjectivity open to possibility, Foucault purposely failed to provide a description of a Truth of subjection and instead left subjection up for discussion, highlighting the interaction of culture, history, power, Truth, knowledge, and discursive practices on the processes of subjectivity as they interact within culturally and historically specific discourses.

For our purpose of connecting Foucault's theories to women's negotiations of subjectivity, it is important to recognize five basic points that Foucault made in his theory of subjectivity:

- (a) Subjectivity is created through discourses of power; subjects are just as much an effect of discourse as they are a cause. Within discourse, power relations are inevitable, but not uncontestable.
  - (b) Power is not possessed but rather is always in an ever-changing relation. It can repress, produce, create, flow, and change. Power can be subverted by recognizing its history and changing its path.
  - (c) Power has a specific history that produces specific knowledge and discourse.
- Therefore, notions of Truth and knowledge as objective and stable cannot

exist since Truth/knowledge is always only Truth/knowledge within a specific discourse. One should look historically at knowledge and power in order to problematize and open up claims of “Truth.”

- (d) “The soul is the prison of the body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 30) because subjectivity lacks any innate “Truth” trapped by an exterior body and is instead always an interior position created by discursive power and enacted on an exterior body.
- (e) Although there is the possibility of subverting dominant power, mechanisms of discipline, particularly the gaze, examination, and self-surveillance, work against a subject’s agency in order to reinforce historical and cultural norms of subjectivity.

#### *Judith Butler and Performativity*

Although it is easy to recognize that many post-structural feminist deconstructions of subjectivity are particularly dependent on Foucault’s attempt to discursively challenge what is considered Truth, power, and knowledge, there has also been post-structural feminist theorization that has developed new theory directly in relation to Foucault’s notions of subjectivity. This is particularly apparent in Butler’s theorization of gender as a performative act.

Like Foucault, Butler (1990) insisted that any claim to a natural or real state of the subject that pre-exists discourse is itself a creation of that discourse. In other words, she asserted that any category that is assumed to exist prior to the cultural inscription of that category is simply a fictional category produced within power relations of that *specific* historical moment in that *specific* culture. Therefore, like Foucault, Butler was interested

in the relationships between “Truth,” power, discourse, and subjectivity. However, unlike Foucault, Butler was most interested in how a subject became gendered within these discursive systems of power, culture, and history.

Returning to Althusser’s assertion of the process of interpellation, Butler showed that subjects are gendered from the moment they are called out as either “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!” at the time of their birth. This medical interpellation of the subject “shifts an infant from an ‘it’ to a ‘she’ or a ‘he,’ and in that naming the girl is ‘girded,’ brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender” (Butler, 1993, p. 8). Butler did believe that the child is born with a penis or vagina that exists “naturally.” However, because she viewed sex and gender as constructions, the presence of the vagina or penis was not relevant until the child, based on this phenotypic presentation, was called into language and culture (“It’s a girl!”) as that which must perform the female or male gender. She therefore viewed this interpellation as girl or boy as the calling out of a body, a body that from then on was to be constituted into a gender-specific position with performative gender-specific social, historical, and cultural expectations (Butler, 1993).

Butler drew on the themes found in Foucault’s work to further explain this idea of the performatively constituted gendered subject. However, before exploring Butler’s theory of performativity, it is of interest to discuss Riviere’s (1883-1962) psychoanalytic argument of gendered costumes, as it is often confused with Butler’s theory of performativity.

In contrasting Freudian notions of consistent and stable gendered subjects, Riviere proposed that, “for women at least, gender is a costume worn as part of the sequence of

micro-dramas that constitute daily life” (Mansfield, 2000, p. 75). Since these costumes could be exchanged by the actor based on the situation, the gendered subject was better understood as inconsistent and unstable, alterable at any moment. Riviere (1929) saw this costuming of “womanliness” as a direct effect of the drama of the phallus (Lacan’s linguistic re-theorization of Freud’s biological penis). For Riviere, this drama proceeded as follows: Women who take on more masculine positions, such as scientific or business professions seem to momentarily “have” the phallus. These women then recognize their “inappropriate ownership” of the phallus and begin to try and compensate for this “inappropriate ownership” by “putting on an act” of being ultra-feminine. This ultra-feminine act was an attempt to denounce the phallus, return it and its power back to the “rightful” male owner, and curtail the social consequences of being a woman having the phallus. As Riviere (1929) explained:

Womanliness, therefore, could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the “masquerade.” My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. (p. 147)

Gender for Riviere was like a costume, mask, or performance that women “actors” put on in order to stay within the appropriate female parameters of subjectivity. Although both Riviere and Butler play on the word “performance” in their discussions of gender, there is a great difference between Riviere’s actor performing gender and Butler’s theory of performativity. As will be discussed, Butler’s theory of performativity lacks the agentic actor of Riviere’s womanliness.

Butler moves in a different direction from Riviere's "womanliness as a costume" in her theorization of gender performativity. In order to theorize performativity, Butler built on the Foucauldian notions of subjectivity, specifically the notion that the soul was always-already constituted by the power/knowledge relations of specific discourses. Since there is no internal "Truth" to the subject, the subject instead is always only the construction of the laws, beliefs, and behaviors appropriate to a specific discourse. In other words, how a subject behaved, and even what was thinkable or speakable in relation to that behavior, was always already constituted by the power and discipline of the dominant discourse.

This was also how Butler perceived gender: as a construction within specific discourse. For Butler, there is no "innate" masculinity or femininity, but rather only that which is deemed a normative masculine or feminine act by discursive power. A subject is gendered not by its own innate or natural "disposition" (to refer to Freud), but rather is gendered as it is first "hailed" as male or female and then as it "performatively acts out" the specific discursive expectations or norms of gendered behaviors. While Riviere's actor appears to have multiple choices in costumes and masks of gender that can be taken on and off at any moment, Butler reminds us that there is more to gender performance since those gender options that one may be perceived to choose from have always already been constituted for us within discourse. These gender performances have been repetitively practiced by us as "Truth" since our moment of interpellation, and, from a Foucauldian perspective, are always regulated for us and by us through covert discursive discipline and subtle self-surveillance. As Butler (2004) explained:

Taking on a gender is not possible at a moment's notice, but is a subtle and strategic project, laborious and for the most part covert. Becoming a gender is an

impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions. The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one's body in a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew a cultural history in one's own corporeal terms. This is not a prescriptive task we must endeavor to do, but one we have been endeavoring all along. (p. 26)

This deeper exploration of gender performance and the contention that gender is more complex than a costume or mask that one chooses to "wear" is relevant as it separates Butler's understanding of performativity from Riviere's performance of womanliness. Performativity differs greatly because it is not simply a performance chosen or created anew within the moment by an actor.

Butler troubles this idea of an actor choosing a gendered performance. To say that one chooses to act out gendered norms implies that a soul makes a rational decision for a body to enact. In other words, when speaking about a performance we assume that there is an actor behind the performance, a doer behind the deed who pre-exists the performance. However, unlike Riviere, Butler was influenced by Foucault's discussions of Nietzsche and believed that the doer is a production or fiction of the performance, rather than the producer of it. In her book *Gender Trouble* she quoted Nietzsche, writing that "there is no 'being' behind the doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything" (as cited in Butler, 1990, p. 33). In other words, the doer only becomes a soul through the repetitive actions of the body which are informed by discursive practice. Therefore, for Butler, gender performativity is not the process of an actor choosing to put on a performance of gender; rather, it is the repetition of the performance of discursively sanctioned normative acts of gender that constitute the subject. As Butler (1995) further explained:

A performative act is one which brings into being or enacts that which it names, and so marks the constitutive or productive power of discourse. To the extent that a performative appears to “express” a prior intention, a doer behind the deed, that prior agency is only legible as the effect of that utterance. . . . In other words, when words engage actions or constitute themselves a kind of action, they do this not because they reflect the power of an individual’s will or intention, but because they draw upon and reengage conventions which have gained their power precisely through a sedimented iterability. The category of “intention,” indeed, the notion of “the doer” will have its place, but this place will no longer be “behind” the deed as its enabling source. (p. 134)

A critique of Butler’s gendered subject, similar to the critique of Foucault’s “self-incarcerated” subject, is that it lacks agency because it seems always already constituted by discursive power. However, like Foucault, Butler theorizes space for the subversion of gendered norms. If, as Butler contends, gender is produced through a system of performances and it is the repetition of such acts that constitute the gendered subject, there is the possibility for one to inevitably, even if by accident, repeat an act “incorrectly” (Mansfield, 2000). Therefore, although both Foucault and Butler contend that subjects are constituted by discursive power, they also both remain optimistic about the subject’s ability to use that same power to subvert, produce, open up, and re-deploy new subject positions. As Butler (1991) wrote:

If sexuality is compelled to *repeat itself* in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity, then this is an identity permanently as risk, for what if it fails to repeat, or if the very exercise of repetition is redeployed for a very different performative purpose? If there is, as it were, always a compulsion to repeat, repetition never fully accomplishes identity. That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming *de-instituted* at every interval. (p. 24)

Butler, therefore, recognized that while the repetition of normative discursive practice constitutes the gendered subject, the potential of a mis-repeat or a failure to repeat provides the space for a subversion or redeployment of power and discursive

norm. By recognizing the complexity of gendered subjectivity, Butler challenged dominant expectations of gender, complicated the idea of gender as an act put on or chosen by an actor, highlighted the interactions of discursive practice, power relations, and interpellation, and opened a space for gendered subjects to de-institute discursive norms.

For our purpose of connecting Butler's theory of performativity to women's negotiations of subjectivity, it is important to recognize six basic points in her theory of gendered subjectivity:

- (a) Gendered subjectivity does not pre-exist its cultural inscription within power relations within a specific historical moment;
- (b) Based on Althusser, Butler theorized that a subject is first gendered through medical interpellation as it is called out as a girl or a boy. From that moment on, the body is brought into discourse and becomes gendered through the repetition of discursive practices;
- (c) Gender, rather than having an innate biological basis, is instead a construction of a specific discourse which sets up norms for masculine and feminine behavior;
- (d) Gendered options are always already constituted for us through discursive power;
- (e) There is no actor behind the performance, but instead it is the repetition of the performance itself that creates the fiction of an actor;
- (f) There is potential for subversion or redeployment of gendered norms through the mis-repetition or failure to repeat of a gendered performance.



## Conclusion

Enlightenment discussions of the subject have opened up a space within modern/postmodern time for both critique and theorization about subjectivity. Although many theories of subjectivity have been developed, those of Althusser, Foucault, and Butler are most relevant to my discussion of sorority women's negotiations of subjectivity, specifically gendered subjectivity. Using the theories of these three philosophers allows me to construct a post-structural feminist understanding of the ways in which sorority women negotiate competing discourses of femininity within their specific culture and historical moment.

Rather than making an attempt to define the subjectivities of sorority women, my work is, as Butler (1995) wrote, an attempt toward "the development of forms of differentiation which lead to fundamentally more capacious, generous, and 'unthreatened' bearings of the self" (p. 140). Therefore, the aim of this work is not to describe a stable subject that is "sorority woman," but rather to understand the messy negotiations and possibilities that produce these women as gendered selves. Rather than "define" the women's subjectivities, this research will leave the ends untied and the foundations contingent, and open up space for a new set of possibilities and understandings of the gendered self. As Scott (1988) concluded:

We need theory that can analyze the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations. . . . We need theory that will let us think in terms of pluralities and diversities rather than of unities and universals. We need theory that will break the conceptual hold, at least, of those long traditions of (Western) philosophy. . . . We need theory that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender. (p. 446)

The theories of subjectivity discussed above have given feminists these new ways of understanding themselves and how they have been ignored, refused the phallus, been

“hailed” through interpellation, been constructed by discursive power, and might redeploy, re-create, and resist the dominant expectations of gendered subjectivity. It is these theories that have presented women with a new space, a new position, and a new sense of self. As Cixous (1975) comments, where once we were ashamed to be the Medusa, a subject who in one glance turned the men to stone, we can now realize in our ability to re-theorize gendered subjectivity, that perhaps the Medusa might not be a self to be ashamed of, but rather “she’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (p. 260).

Notes:

1. As Butler (1992, p. 15) writes, “I place them in quotation marks to show that they are under contest, up for grabs, to initiate the contest, to question their traditional deployment, and call for some other....The effect of the quotation marks is to denaturalize the terms, to designate these signs as sites of political debate.”
2. The idea of gender/sex difference is a hot topic in feminist theory. To read more, see Scott, J. “Deconstruction Equality-versus-Difference; or, The Uses of Post-structuralist Theory for Feminism” in W. K. Kolmar & F. Bartowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 446-455). Boston: McGraw Hill and Fuss, D. (1989). “The ‘risk’ of essence” from *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*, In Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartowski (Eds.), *Feminist theory: A reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 455-464). Boston: McGraw Hill.
3. Whenever I mention “structures” in this paper it should be noted that I believe only in their contingency. See Butler, J. (1992). *Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of “postmodernism.”* In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 3-21). New York: Routledge.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

There are various ways in which sororities and sorority women are understood and represented in American popular culture. Whether based on personal experience, media concoction, or popular rumor, these multiple understandings of sororities range from positive women-centered societies to sites of conformity and compromised morals (McLean, 2003; Robbins, 2004). While multiple and competing understandings of sororities exist in popular culture, academic research on sororities tends to homogenize the experience of sorority women, simplifying their existence to a quantitative understanding of specific behaviors such as those associated with binge drinking, eating disorders, and sexuality (Allison & Park, 2004; Becker, Smith, & Ciao, 2005; Danielson, Taylor, & Hartford, 2001; Hoover & Creamer, 1997; Plucker & Teed, 2004; Read, Wood, Davidoff, McLacken, & Campbell, 2002; Sawyer & Schulken, 1997 ).

Although such research provides insight into the relationships between sorority membership and specific behaviors, it does little to explain the complicated negotiations that women must make around the multiple and often competing discourses of femininity that they encounter. Research that fails to explore these intricate negotiations of sorority women's gendered subjectivity reduces women's experiences to behaviors outside of historical and cultural discourse, leaving sorority women and their performances of femininity vulnerable to non-contextualized, ill-informed critique. Therefore, in order to provide a more complex understanding of sorority women's gendered subjectivity and to produce research cognizant of historical and cultural discourse, it is important to explore sorority women's experiences through a qualitative lens informed by post-structural

feminist theory. Such contextualization can provide insight into the negotiated gendered subjectivity of sorority women and also into societal relationships of power and gender as they produce, reproduce, and contest specific historical and cultural regimes. In order to explore how sorority women understand and negotiate the meaning of femininity among competing and complex societal messages, I undertook an ethnographic study using the following research questions:

- 1) What discourses of femininity are enabled within Zeta Chi sorority culture?
- 2) How are such discourses of femininity disseminated and disciplined within Zeta Chi culture?
- 3) How do women in Zeta Chi negotiate the gendered expectations disciplined within such discourse?

In order to conduct a study with the aim of understanding sorority women's negotiation of their own gendered subjectivities within the larger cultural and historical discourses of gender, it was appropriate to choose a method of exploration that allowed me to become intimate with the participants within their everyday lives. I was most interested in methods of inquiry that provided the opportunity to collect data concerning the women's everyday understanding of gendered subjectivity and performance as it was enabled and disciplined within the overarching culture of a Southern university's Greek system.

With these goals in mind, I entered this study using ethnographic methods of informal interviews, formal interviews, participant observation, and archival/artifact collection. This multi-method approach elicited data that produced a well-rounded view

of sorority culture and the negotiations of femininity and gendered subjectivity of members within that culture.

This chapter provides an explanation of the methods of data collection<sup>1</sup> as they were carried out over nine months with members of the Zeta Chi sorority (a pseudonym). I will provide a rationale for how and why I selected Zeta Chi, a Southern university sorority, as the focus of my investigation and how I gained access to study this potentially inaccessible organization. I will use the final section of this chapter to provide an explanation of how I transformed the data to represent discourses of femininity within sorority culture and the gendered performances that have produced sorority women's subjectivities.

### The Sorority Setting

USouthern (a pseudonym) is a large Southern university situated in a popular college town known for having a large number of bars in a small, four-block area. Both the university and the town are rallied around the Centaurs (a pseudonym), a well-known and popular college football team. USouthern has over 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students, 80% of whom come from in-state. Around 20% of the USouthern population is Greek, a surprisingly small percent in relation to the high visibility of Greeks on campus and in the community. Nonetheless, USouthern is home to 59 national women's and men's Greek letter groups that are self-governed and have an established tradition dating back over 150 years. Of the 59 groups, 24 of them are sororities, governed by a Panhellenic council. Each sorority has from 115 to 220 members and each has a unique and established nickname, founding date, chapter name, symbol, flower, color, and mascot.

With the purpose of this study being to understand the ways sorority women negotiate discourses of femininity, I had to gain permission to do in-depth research within a USouthern sorority. My selection was focused on “traditional” sororities, which I defined as those that were not specialized based on race, religion, or interest, were visible on campus, were involved in social and philanthropic events, had at least 100 members ranging from freshmen to seniors, and had Southern/Christian traditions in place. When considering the sorority setting it was important for the selected sorority to have interesting examples of discourses of femininity and be open to letting a researcher participate in everyday life and sorority events. Since all of the traditional sororities on campus fit the first six criteria, the major determining factor for site selection became my ability to gain access into an often private and inaccessible organization.

Before exploring my experiences of gaining access to a traditional sorority, I want to note that when I speak of “Southern” sororities or sorority women I do not mean to essentialize Southern culture as monolithic. I recognize that there are multiple understandings of what it means to be Southern and that the label of Southern is always-already too simplistic. However, as I stated in Chapter One, the history of our country based on settlement, slavery, politics, and war set up distinct cultural differences often defined by geographical areas (i.e., South, North, West, and Midwest). Although the South has multiple subcultures depending on such factors as religion, class, gender, race, and specific location, the overall geographic region known as “The South” has a shared history. This shared history shapes specific cultural discourses that influence Southern culture differently than other geographic areas. In this sense, my use of the label “Southern” is not an attempt to essentialize Southern and Southern sorority women, but

rather is simply a reference point from which to contextualize my study within those historic discourses that underlie, set apart, and help define US regional cultures.

### *Gaining Access*

Due to the private nature of sororities and the pervasive skepticism of outsiders that seems to permeate the Greek system, it was difficult to gain permission to conduct interviews and participant observation with sorority members within sorority spaces. Unfortunately, my first attempt to secure a site was denied by the sorority advisors, alumnae who held positions of supervision. There was never a thorough explanation as to why I was denied permission to work with their members, only an e-mail from the student whom I had worked with to gain access that simply read, “After explaining the study again, they are still not comfortable with allowing the sorority to participate. They do not want to risk the chance of Greek life being portrayed in any way but positive.” Wanting to respect their decision, my only interaction with this sorority after this failed attempt was to ask the student if she would at least participate in an interview with me. To my surprise she responded “no,” writing that “it is the interaction with members that the advisors are worried about” and that she “can’t permit anything that the advisors will not allow.” Now aware of the sorority advisors’ concerns about representation and the power they held over my interactions with their members, it became clear that my site selection might be heavily determined simply by which of the traditional sororities would grant me permission to conduct my research.

Luckily, two weeks after being denied entry to my first sorority, I ran into another past student of mine named Nicole (pseudonym) who was a Zeta Chi. Zeta Chi was one of my first choices for sorority selection because I had worked with Zeta Chi members in

the past. In addition, Zeta Chi was highly visible on campus, well-known locally and nationally, socially active, and seemed like a typically Southern sorority. I was hopeful that this chance run-in with Nicole would become my way to secure entry into Zeta Chi. To my excitement, once Nicole understood my predicament she was eager to help and immediately helped me secure a meeting with the Zeta Chi advisor.

In order to prepare for my first contact with the Zeta Chi advisor, I organized a copy of my research statement, a short list of my intentions, a permission letter to be signed, and a letter of recommendation for my research which I had secured from one of my best friends, an alum of Zeta Chi at a Northern university. With these papers in hand, I attended a meeting with Jill (a pseudonym), the Zeta Chi advisor for the past seven years. To my relief, Jill was excited about my research and was willing to grant me access to conduct it. She offered to give me signed permission once she spoke to Nationals, the national ruling body of Zeta Chi. A week later, I received a call from Jill saying that Nationals was willing to grant me permission as long as the sorority members voted to participate. In her next sentence she noted that the sorority had in fact voted on my research that Monday and, with the encouragement of Nicole, they had voted to grant me access to any Zeta Chi space other than private Chapter meetings (meetings where the local chapter discussed private sorority business).

Where I was once concerned that I would not gain entry, I now was accepted by the group, free to roam the house when I pleased, could attend almost any events of my choice, and was often told insider secrets about the sorority. While I was never made privy to Chapter, secret handshakes, or private ceremonies, in all other ways I felt that I was considered Zeta Chi by the members. I recognized that I was never a true insider, but



my age, my appearance, and the nature of the sorority allowed me a unique insider/outsider perspective that was much closer to insider knowledge than I may have been able to attain with other groups or might be able to gain at any other time in my career. I came to better understand the need for a highly selective process of entry because in my experience, once that first bridge was crossed, everything else became easily accessible.

*Presentation as “Method” of Access*

After I was voted on and my participation in the sorority was accepted, I made my first attempts to build relationships with my participants. In a culture that I had assumed was caught up in first impressions and self-presentations, I had trouble determining the best way to present myself in order to build these relationships. I wanted to be seen as credible and scholarly while at the same time approachable and “cool” enough to “hang out with.” What appearance would best aid in my development of rapport with sorority members?

As I asked this question, I began to judge myself and wonder if I was or could be cool enough to ever really “get in” with the Zeta Chi women. I spoke about my concern around these questions of self-presentation often in my personal journals, especially in the following excerpt, written as I prepared to attend my introductory dinner:

It is funny how I all of a sudden lose confidence in myself. It is not so much that I think I will be ugly or not fit in, but more of an inability to see myself as they will see me. Should I dress like myself? Should I try to look more professional? Should I try to look more their age? It is complicated to decide the look for a first impression, especially in a cultural climate that I assume pays a great deal of attention to appearance. I want to look cool—but I worry my jeans are too tight, too casual, or even too stretched out. Or maybe they aren’t cool enough because they are from Express instead of those \$125 dollar pairs I see all the college girls wearing, brands like Seven, Citizen, and those other ones I can’t name. The worst

part is that even if I want to fit in I don't really know enough about Zeta Chi to know what's in or out. (September 10, 2007)

Questions about self-presentations have often been discussed in research conducted within sub-cultures where appearance is considered a sign of inclusion. Kvale (1996) discussed issues of self-presentation and closeness, noting that feminist research often revealed the advantages of appearing similar or revealing similarity between a researcher and her participants. In her work with women in punk culture, Leblanc (2000) reiterated the importance of developing a sense of similarity with participants as she acknowledged that her "dyed hair, punk clothes, and tattoos . . . eased my establishment of rapport with punks" (p. 20). Making the assumption that my appearance was also important in my acceptance by participants in sorority culture, I made the choice to appear as similar to my participants as possible, leaving my age and my "researcher" position to be recognizable only through my scribbling in my familiar brown journal and verbal introduction to others by myself or my participants. Since I was introduced to the entire sorority as a researcher (soon to become "our researcher"), this choice to "fit in" was not an attempt to conceal my identity, but rather an attempt to remove distance between myself and the women.

I found that fitting into Zeta Chi was less about specific styles of dressing, such as those often stereotyped by outsiders, and more about looking "cute," young, and ladylike. My attention to fitting my appearance into these categories became an important method for gaining attention, being accepted, and making connections. In particular, I found that my appearance and self-presentation provided me with the opportunity to bond with women over our shared style of clothing. Discussion of dress often became grounds for similarity and relationship as compliments over each others' outfits or style, particularly

their compliments on my appearance, were often used as a method to put me at ease upon entry, include me into a group conversation, and begin an informal one-on-one conversation. While building a real rapport with members took over two months, my attention to self-presentation, including appearance and word use, absolutely aided in my access to private spaces and intimate conversations.

I was pleased with the ways I had used my self-presentation to gain acceptance in the lives of my participants. However, there were times I was concerned I had done too good of a job fitting into their circles. More than once I was met with comments such as, “Oh, I always forget you’re doing research,” or “This is my friend Lisbeth.” Often the women seemed to forget I was an outsider studying them and would react with a bit of surprise when I would refuse offers of alcohol or pull out my journal and scribble notes in the middle of a friendly conversation at the bar. While I took their ability to forget my observational eye as a research achievement, I did not want them to forget I would eventually be creating an analysis/interpretation of their lives. In order to reinforce my position as researcher, I began taking more notes in the open and talked more openly about the research process and my role as researcher. Although my reminders about my position had little effect on their behaviors toward me, I felt more comfortable about my participation knowing that, while I had developed real relationships with my participants, I had always been up front with my purposes around those relationships.

### Data Collection

Data collection for this study began in 2007 as an in-class project in which I conducted an interview and a photo-elicited interview with two different sorority women. Building on this preliminary data collection, I expanded my data collection methods to

include formal interviews, informal interviews, participant observation, and artifact collection. These ethnographic methods were carried out from August 10, 2007, until I left the field in April 2008, a period of nine months. While I was not as active in my fieldwork after April 2008, both formal and informal interviews continued until May 2008 as a method of member checking to ensure that my representation of data aligned closely with participant perspective.

### *Collection Considerations*

While most people view a sorority as the physical structure of a sorority house, I found that a sorority has little to do with the actual house and much more to do with the organization of individuals around common expectations and events. My participants admitted that the house had little importance to the identity of sorority members because most members only lived in the house for their sophomore year and after that only went to the house for Chapter meetings and specific events. In fact, I found that some women never actually lived in the house due to space limitations, while others who did live there were known to be commonly absent due to frustration with the rules of no boys or alcohol in the house.

Most of the women I worked with identified more strongly with their immediate Zeta Chi friends, their attendance of sorority events in the community, and the reputation of Zeta Chi than they did with the physical location of a house. Therefore, Zeta Chi sorority was not a location, but a fluidity of relationships and connections. In this sense, studying Zeta Chi culture was not focused on one setting. Instead, in order to understand Zeta Chi I had to piece together the discursive similarities threaded throughout multiple settings and experiences.

While the house was not the focus of my research, I did spend time there attending dinners, recording descriptions of the space and the women's interactions within that space, and conducting interviews. However, based on the women's own fluid understanding of sorority, most of my research was conducted around events organized by the sorority at alternative settings, as well as those gatherings organized by individual members in connection to the sorority events (such as group dinners before date nights). Some ethnographers have the option of easing into the field, plotting and controlling the frequency and duration of their participation in the culture. However, the fluid nature of the sorority left me with little control over my data collection schedule as I was at the mercy of events constantly planned around me. Therefore, the plan for data collection was more a plan of possibility and opportunity than of organization and calculation, especially in relation to participant observation. I did have some control over interviews, often using them to keep me connected to members between organized events. Nevertheless, the inherent lack of control I had over participation in sorority events, the recognition that they were limited in number (not often repeated), and the realization that the meaning of "sorority" was often defined around participation in these social activities drove me to attend all major social gatherings of which I was made aware throughout my nine months of research. Fortunately, the natural frequency of these organized sorority events remained fairly steady throughout my research, allowing me to collect participant observation and interview data consistently throughout my time with Zeta Chi except for over winter break.

To document my observation and interview data, I used an Excel spreadsheet to chart my collection according to date, time, duration, type of data, content, and location

(see Appendix A). Not only did this help keep my data collection organized, it provided a visual representation of my data that allowed me to easily identify the content of previous interviews, gaps in the data, and my contact with participants. Looking back at this chart of my data collection, I am surprised that I had the opportunity to collect such vast amounts of data in such an array of settings within what I had originally thought was an impenetrable organization.

### *Securing My “Big Sister”*

Much of my success in penetrating Zeta Chi was the result of the help of my key informant, Nicole. I recognized early in my research that Nicole was an invaluable participant and that without her this would have been a very different project. Although I did not gain full access to Zeta Chi sorority until August 31, 2008, my data collection began August 10, 2008, when I conducted a very informal interview with Nicole, my past student turned key informant. Nicole was an extremely active senior member who was always attending or at least aware of the social happenings in Zeta Chi. She kept me updated and helped guide me to and through most of the events. I often felt the need to meet with her in order to develop a better sense of the culture I would be entering.

As I began my data collection and immersion into Zeta Chi culture I went through a process of “resocialization,” learning what it meant to be a member in this culture, their systems of shared meaning making, their codes of regulation, their expectations of behavior, and the multiple and potentially competing truths different women saw as reality. While much of this resocialization would occur through participant observation and social interactions arranged around interviews, my own self-consciousness about self-presentation led me to seek out Nicole’s guidance, especially in the early phases of

the research. However, even after I felt fully acclimated to Zeta Chi culture, I still turned to Nicole for counsel on my dress, my behaviors, my interpretations, and my continued inclusion in Zeta Chi culture.

Like all new members of the Zeta Chi sorority who are assigned big sisters to help guide their transition into sorority life, Nicole became my big sister in the sorority, always remaining open to inviting me to sorority events or dinner parties at her house and always filling me in and teaching me the ways of Zeta Chi. She was someone that I would call, e-mail, or text message if I had any question about my research, and I often set up formal interviews with her when I felt the need to check back in after participant observations. While she was highly involved in my research upfront, like a good big sister, once she helped connect me to people and set up participant observations, she let me wander on my own and I began to make my own place in Zeta Chi through my participation in events and interviews.

#### *Issues of Positionality*

As Nicole helped to socialize me into Zeta Chi culture, I began to recognize my unique insider/outsider positionality and my need to employ some very critical self-reflection. The resocialization that occurred throughout my data collection was very complex as there was never a defined line for my position as insider or outsider. I was an insider to American culture, but mostly an outsider to Southern American culture. I was an insider to USouthern because I was a student there, but I was an outsider to the sorority system at USouthern. I was an insider because I was female, but an outsider to what it meant to be female in a Southern sorority at a large university. I was an insider because I was once a college student, but an outsider as I was now graduated and 28

years old. The oddness I felt because of my confused position as a simultaneous insider and outsider was then exacerbated by my own recognition of stereotypes. Although I identified as an outsider to both Southern culture and sorority culture, the highly stereotyped nature of both of these cultures in the dominant society can easily be mistaken for insider knowledge.

My confused position as insider/outsider and the problem of mistaking stereotyped views for insider knowledge made me recognize that my resocialization into Zeta Chi would demand a great deal of personal reflection. As an insider familiar with certain aspects of Zeta Chi, an outsider unaware of social expectations and meanings, and a researcher aware of her own highly stereotyped beliefs about both Southern culture and sorority culture, I had to reflect on every note I took and every interpretation I made. Was I missing anything because I was too familiar—what was my position as insider causing me to overlook? Was I focusing too much on something, giving something too much attention only because it was new to me—what was my position as outsider leading me to scrutinize? Finally, because of all of the prior assumptions about the South and sororities that I had collected over the years from media, jokes, and others' opinions, was I assigning outsider stereotyped meanings to observed behaviors or interview responses—how were stereotypes seeping into my own observations of Zeta Chi culture?

By asking these questions of myself I was not trying to force my observations into some “objectivist” state in which my subjectivities could be removed so that my work was revealing a “Truth.” In fact, my post-structural grounding led me to deny any type of “deep Truth” to be revealed in research. I was instead using these questions of self-reflection to guide me toward a more responsible and conscious notion of a researcher.



Throughout my participant observations, informal and formal interviews, I needed to be a conscious researcher aware of how I was always already a co-creator of the data. My own subjectivities and positionalities were just as much a part of the data as the behaviors and words of my participants. With this in mind, I entered every participant observation and interview with questions on the tip of my tongue: What was I missing? What was I paying attention to? How were my own stereotypes guiding my collection and interpretations? Was I seeing what was going on or what I *thought* was going on?

I found that answering questions like these was much easier at the beginning of my research when I had not yet been socialized into Zeta Chi culture. The unfamiliarity allowed me to easily see the places where something was new or different from what I had known or stereotyped. I was able to see the big picture and the social aspects that were specific to Zeta Chi. I remember being often surprised by how different this culture was from the one I had grown up in. However, after spending time in the culture with the women, questions about what I was seeing and my ability to see became more difficult as I found myself “going sorority.” Things that once stood out to me now felt like second nature. I had been socialized so well that I often reached a point where I told my advisors I “couldn’t see” anymore. I stopped being able to distinguish myself from my participants, stopped being able to recognize the boundaries around Zeta Chi culture, and even lost sight of what “femininity” entailed.

These moments were very frustrating because they made me doubt my research and question if there was even anything to be researched. Was I studying a sub-culture or were sororities just like any other group of people? I came to recognize that these moments of frustration were not about the lack of things to be researched or my lacking

as a researcher. Instead these were moments of “going sorority” when I became so caught up in discursive power and expectations that I was left unable to see the unique expectations, the boundaries of appropriateness, and the other distinctive aspects of the culture that existed within Zeta Chi. I was no longer a researcher but a participant adopting Zeta Chi beliefs, meaning making, attitudes, and behaviors. I needed to step away from the strength of these discourses and re-gain perspective. Feeling “normal/natural” during my research became an indicator that I needed to briefly leave the field and re-connect with my own perspectives before continuing with data collection or interpretation. This process of entering the field, “going sorority,” and leaving the field became cyclical throughout my data collection and was both a cause and an effect of my shifting insider/outsider positionality.

#### Methods

Using multiple methods of data collection, I spent over 8 months in the field taking part in 20 participant observations, 17 two-hour formal interviews, 8 artifact collections, and countless informal interviews. The following describes my use of these methods in relation to the purpose and proposed research questions of this study.

##### *Participant Observation*

In general, my first experiences in the field with participant observations were unfocused as I was both attempting to establish rapport and record the day-to-day behaviors of women within Zeta Chi culture. The purpose of these first few participant observation was to collect data concerning the overarching culture of the Zeta Chi sorority, a “grand tour” picture of Zeta Chi sorority culture. Without clear focus and with the task of understanding the overarching culture, everything and anything could be of

importance, so I attempted to record everything I could in my notebook. Eventually, as I spent more time in the field, I began to move my focus away from the macro observations of Zeta Chi culture which addressed my first research question and began to focus more on observations that addressed my second question concerning discipline and my third question concerning negotiation of femininity. These later observations also were focused on both the *a priori* themes that substantiated these questions and themes that surfaced from my on-going data collection such as issues around reputation, dress, mixing with boys, heterosexuality, and Southern family values.

Throughout the research process, my participant observations ranged from 20 minutes to 8.5 hours in duration and took place in a number of settings including flag football games, date night, formal, bars, restaurants, members' apartments, philanthropic events, parents' weekend, casino night, Halloween, and dinners at the house. Participant observations also took place before, during, and after interviews at the Zeta Chi house and were often written up in my field journals after each interview. I also wrote personal journals after each participant observation in which I discussed my personal feelings, concerns I had, potential topics for interviewing derived from my observations, observations that substantiated or contradicted interview data, potential leads for interview participants, and behaviors that I would adopt in order to be more appropriate in Zeta Chi culture (e.g., considering using the phrase "Ma'am?" when asking for clarification rather than my usual "What?").

The data collected through participant observation was invaluable to my research because it helped me develop relationships, provide detailed descriptions, observe behavior in multiple settings, and become personally aware of participation in Zeta Chi.

The importance of participant observation was immediately evident in my research, however, and because these observations often fail to collect in-depth insider knowledge and opinion, they could not be my only method of data collection. Therefore, scattered throughout my time conducting participant observation I also conducted informal and formal interviews.

Interviews are an important part of any ethnographic study because they allow the researcher to collect data from the viewpoint of the participants. I found that I was particularly drawn to interviews because they gave me time to learn intimate details about participants that I was unable to access through simple observation. The informal and formal interviews I conducted also provided important insight into the ways that the women spoke about themselves, others, and Zeta Chi in general (e.g., they rarely call each other sorority sisters, instead saying “my friend, she’s Zeta Chi”).

I began interviewing participants August 2008 and continued until I had completed member checks in May 2008. I conducted 17 two-hour formal interviews with ten different Zeta Chi women. In most cases the interviews were with a single participant, but on one occasion I conducted a focus group with four women after being invited to dinner at their apartment. I cannot provide quantitative information in this same way for my informal interviews because they occurred spontaneously and sporadically throughout my participant observations. I did not record them on my Excel spreadsheet, though their content can be found in my participant observation field notes and my personal journals.

#### *Informal Interviews*

Informal interviews occurred constantly throughout my participant observations, as well as in those moments before and after an interview when the recorder had not yet

started or had stopped taping. Most of these “interviews” were simply conversations I had with the women in which I tried to get their perspective on what was occurring. I never used a pre-planned agenda to “conduct” these interviews, but would instead allow the conversations to be driven by where I was, who I was with, and what topics or behaviors came up. Most questions I asked were meant to clarify a situation (“Why did she run off crying?”), get their interpretation (“I noticed that girls often have straight hair, is there any reason for this?”), understand a process (“How do you end up with a big sister?”), gain an opinion (“What do you think of her boyfriend?”), confirm my understanding (“And you said you just blamed it on him being drunk?”), map out relationships (“How do these people know each other?”), or gather factual information (“How many officers are there in Zeta Chi?”). These questions created brief conversations that allowed me to gain participant perspective in the field, verify my observations, and spur interaction with participants.

### *Formal Interviews*

In addition to conducting numerous informal interviews, I conducted seventeen formal interviews with ten different participants. All of my interviews were very loosely guided by a semi-structured research guide that listed topics that I would probe once raised by my participant. These topics were based on my research questions and post-structural feminist theoretical framework (see Appendix B). Since I did not have specific questions to ask, but rather topics to probe, I began interviews with a “Tell me about” question such as “Tell me about your experiences with rush.” I would then allow the participant to lead the interview until she hit a topic that was on my interview guide, at which point I would probe her with questions around that topic. Once I saturated that

topic I would direct her back to the place she had left off before my probing questions. My purpose for using this method was to allow participants to guide me toward which of my pre-determined topics held the most importance for them.

Although my plan was to not force topics on my participants, allowing the importance of certain topics to emerge from the participants, there were times when I stepped away from this method to ask specific questions or discuss specific topics I determined to be important (especially in my first and third rounds of interviews). For example, I knew from other members that one woman I interviewed was having some controversy over sex in her relationship. While she made no mention of this in our first interview, I knew it would be an important piece of my data and so I scheduled an interview with her specifically to talk about issues of dating. Therefore, my interviews were guided by my pre-determined topics, topics that were generated by participants, and topics that I deemed of importance during my data collection/analysis process.

At the beginning of each interview I explained the purposes of my study, asked the participant to choose a pseudonym to be used during the interview, and had her read and sign the consent form (see Appendix C). Once she signed the form, I asked for her permission to digitally audio record our interview, explaining that she could ask me at any time to turn it off. It was also made clear that she could ask me not to use parts or the whole of their testimony before I transcribed it. Each interview was digitally audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

*Rounds of formal interviews.* Although I had not set out to do this in the beginning of my data collection, the nature of my dissertation questions and my own socialization into Zeta Chi led me into three different rounds of interviews. The first round of

interviews focused on descriptive data, the second round focused on life stories, and the third round focused on meanings and interpretation. These rounds followed the same method of funneling as my participant observation moved from the “grand tour” picture to more focused topics as my understanding of the sorority increased and my relationships with the participants became more intimate.

My first round of interviews, which took place between August and October, was guided by my first and second research questions that were concerned with understanding the big picture of Zeta Chi culture including overarching expectations of existence, processes of governing and discipline, and typical day to day activities. With this purpose, my early interviews were geared toward more “factual,” specific and descriptive data with little discussion about the individual’s opinions or personal stories.

The second round of interviews took place between October and November and was geared more toward the personal stories and experiences of participants. As my knowledge of the sorority grew and my relationships with participants became more intimate, I began asking different types of questions than just descriptive ones concerned with the processes of Zeta Chi. These questions were more private and personal in nature and were meant to elicit personal meanings, emotions, beliefs, and experiences.

The third round took place from November to April and was geared toward participant meaning making and interpretation. I used this round almost as a member checking round in that I revisited some of the themes that were continuously mentioned by my participants and invited opinions as to why these themes might be so often discussed. I also conducted interviews in which I asked participants to discuss with me the inconsistencies I was seeing in my data. This final round of interviews made me more

confident about my analysis and interpretation because I was able to elicit participant perspective in relation to the connections I was making, inconsistencies I was finding, and conclusions that I would be drawing.

After all three rounds of interviews were complete, I was satisfied that I had obtained data that were well-rounded, answered my research questions, and complemented my participant observations. I also felt my data provided an in-depth view of Zeta Chi, its gendered expectations, the dissemination and discipline of those expectations, and the ways in which Zeta Chi members negotiated those expectations. I was confident that I was at a point of completing my collection because I was no longer hearing anything new. Many of the stories were becoming oddly reminiscent, the women admitted they had nothing more to talk about, my data were repeating and merging into themes, and I was able to answer all of my research questions. Although member checks continued until May, I left the field in April confident that it was time to end data collection.

*Selection of the sample.* Similar to the ways in which convenience and chance led to my work with Zeta Chi, I used two different methods to secure a convenience sample of participants within the sorority. My only criteria in the beginning stages of my research were that participants were between 18-24, active members of Zeta Chi, and willing to be interviewed. My first method of convenience sampling was snowball sampling, a method in which one participant identifies other possible research participants. I began with this method because I was already interviewing and building a relationship with Nicole and knew she would be able to suggest and connect me to other participants. I had great success with this method as Nicole connected me to four other



interview participants and to her larger group of friends who would become my “clique” at sorority events.

Although this method was very successful, it was limiting because Nicole was best acquainted with senior Zeta Chi. Therefore, in order to open up my sample to other age groups and cliques within Zeta Chi I employed the second method of sampling which Leblanc (2005) termed “ambush sampling.” This method consisted of “pouncing” on participants while I was at sorority events, introducing myself, and asking if they would care to sit for an interview. This pouncing was not completely random as I often gravitated toward women who seemed to either embody “stereotypical” sorority women or contradict it. My first use of this method was at a flag football game where I collected the names and e-mail addresses of five different women, all of whom eventually ended up sitting for interviews. Unfortunately, this ambush method of getting interview participants, which I attempted to use at other social gathering such as formal, date night, and philanthropic events, was fairly unsuccessful after this first attempt. Though I often was able to obtain e-mails from potential participants, I was never able to connect with them for an interview after the fact. I believe that many of these potential participants were overwhelmed with school work (particularly new freshman members) and that my early success and later failure was related to the changing expectations for school work from the beginning to the end of the college semester.

Although I had not planned on including non-active members of Zeta Chi in my sample, I recognized the need to re-consider their exclusion as their counter opinion was important to a well-rounded understanding of women’s experiences in the sorority. Two of the women I ended up interviewing were non-active members, one of whom was in the

process of de-sistering during my data collection. Their contribution was monumental to my research as they represented a critical insider perspective that would have been missed if they had remained excluded.

*Positionality in interviews.* Similar to the uncertainty I felt around my positionality as a researcher, I also questioned my positionality as an interviewer. Feminist researchers often talk about the power inequities that are inherent in interviews—a researcher asking personal questions of a participant without reciprocity. In an attempt to offer some reciprocity, I made it clear to them that they had access to my own stories and to the opportunity to ask me questions about myself and my research. However, I found that my participants were much more excited to talk about themselves than they were to hear about my experiences or worry about asking questions of me. While I was concerned about a lack of reciprocity disempowering the women, I believe that in actuality it was more important to my participants that someone, without interruption, was showing such interest in their opinions, experiences, and understanding of the world. My connection to my participants, attention to their stories, and our openness with each other helped create some reciprocity within our researcher/researched power relation.

#### *Artifact Collection*

Over the course of my field work I collected a variety of sorority artifacts that were meant to supplement my primary data sources. The artifacts I was able to collect included a Miss Southern Sorority brochure, three Zeta Chi event t-shirts, a Zeta Chi event cup, two thank you letters I received from sorority members, and a hand cloth from the bathroom at Zeta Chi which showed their crest. Though I never found these items

particularly useful as a primary data source, they did provide some evidence to the material nature of the culture and the desire to “represent” Zeta Chi publicly.

Perhaps due to the fluid nature of the sorority, there was a strong desire to obtain and be associated with material possessions such as wallets, shirts, necklaces, car stickers, cups, key chains, and bags with Zeta Chi letters. The women often had their letters visible and there was discussion over male desire to secure Zeta Chi event t-shirts (shirts the women are expected to buy their dates) in order to publicly represent ties to Zeta Chi women. I was always filled with a sense of inclusion when I was presented with my event t-shirts, recognizing that wearing letters of Zeta Chi meant that one was representing the group. In a group that was very much about public reputation, receiving a t-shirt made me feel like I had “made it.”

#### Analysis and Representation

Throughout data collection I had already begun the process of data analysis and interpretation as I constructed themes and synthesized my data in order to make sense of the knowledge around understanding women’s negotiations of competing discourses of femininity within Zeta Chi. Although data collection, analysis, and interpretation are often discussed as separate pieces in written papers, these three processes often occur simultaneously, each driving the other in a cyclical relationship. For the sake of organization, the following sections will disclose my processes of data analysis, construction of representation, and interpretation separately, although these three processes and data collection occurred simultaneously and were in constant dialogue in my head.

### *Data Management*

Since my research produced a large amount of data, I recognized that I would need to find a way of organizing it that would help me to “see” what I had been collecting and where I needed to go next. I also needed a way of organizing the different types of data (participant observations, journals, interviews) and the different forms of data (digital, paper, artifact). I eventually devised a system using both my computer and plastic files that allowed me to organize and easily locate my data. On my computer was a file labeled *Dissertation* that was made up of six folders including expanded field notes, personal journals, digital recordings, interview transcripts, interpretive notes, and Excel spreadsheets that contained my record of data collection and a record of participant pseudonyms. Except for the digital recordings, I made a hard copy of each one of these folders which I then kept in a plastic eight-slot folder along with my field journals and three of my artifacts (two thank you letters and a hand cloth). I also organized each separate piece of data with a descriptor and a number such as Jen DS00033 or Casino Night/Personal Journal DS00055 which could be matched to my Excel spreadsheet. Each data piece was line numbered as a way to easily find the location of specific quotes.

### *Working with the Data*

I began analysis during data collection as I made connections between participant observations and interviews, developed themes, and began to ask specific questions in interviews and focus on specific behaviors in participant observations. Winter break of December 2007 created a natural and much-needed release from the field that allowed me time to finish transcriptions and begin coding my data. My analysis ended up falling into four different rounds. My first round of analysis coded for the overarching purpose of my

research, the second coded specifically to answer my research questions, the third deconstructed the categories I had made in round two, and the fourth re-coded the original data in order to check for overlooked data that may have been pertinent to my research.

To begin round one, I converted all of my transcriptions into plain text and entered them into N6, a qualitative research program that worked as a management tool, allowing me to easily copy, move, and organize chunks of data and place them into thematic files I had created. Based on my research purpose I already knew I was concerned with discourses of femininity and how those discourses interacted, overlapped, changed shape, and took on different meanings in different situations. I was also interested in the short history of the discourses, how they were disseminated and disciplined, what values and expectations they instilled, and how those discursive expectations were enacted or negotiated. With this in mind I wanted to do a general sweep of my data to code for anything that might be related to issues of femininity or gender.

To create this base for further analysis, I made a file labeled “Ladylike“ and used the copy/paste coding function of N6 to code all of my interviews and participant observations around femininity and gender. I choose the label “Ladylike” because it was the term my participants’ used in place of “femininity.” I was told that to be ladylike meant to be feminine, well-mannered, and appropriate for or becoming to a lady: refined, polite, well-spoken, and well mannered with high standards of proper behavior. When I further probed a participant to define the term ladylike, she brought me a hand written list of etiquette for ladies that she had composed from an internet search. It included such expectations as greeting friends with warmth and respect, wearing clothing suited to the

occasion, demonstrating political correctness, contributing to conversations without dominating them, and following the established rules of an organization upon becoming a member. Her definitions provided me with an emic perspective of femininity that proved useful in my research. Rather than ask participants about femininity, an abstract theoretical term, I instead would ask about ladylike or ladylikeness, terms my participants seemed to understand in a more concrete way.

After coding for ladylike (femininity), I copied and pasted my “base coding” from N6 into Microsoft Word and line numbered it. I then printed out the 125 pages of coded data and color coded each section to match with its original interview location (see Appendix D). Looking at these 125 pages, I realized that almost everything in my data set had coded for femininity. This was because femininity was the overarching theme of my entire dissertation. In coding for femininity, I had unknowingly coded my entire dissertation! However, this process did cut out small bits of data that were superfluous to my research questions and helped to create a purposeful base of data from which my second round of analysis could begin. I now had all the data related to femininity and could begin my second round of coding.

My second round took place over two weeks and was strongly led by my three research questions which were concerned with issues of expectations for femininity, discipline of those expectations, and performance/negotiation of those expectations. With these questions in mind, I cut out my interview-coded quotes and placed them by hand into piles called discipline dissemination of norms, gender references, and performance. Along with these *a priori* themes grounded in my research questions, I also identified other themes that were often repeatedly spoken about by my participants. These

“repetitive themes” came to include reputation, mixing with boys, safety, family reference/Southern values, diverse/not typical, frats, and recognition of negatives (see Appendix E). For this process of coding, each quote was color coded with interview color and category color. Any quotes that needed to be placed in more than one category were hand copied and color coded to show interview code, line number in original, original location, and any alternative locations. After my first attempt at this coding, I re-visited the piles I had in front of me, grouped some together as themes inside themes, re-created titles, and finalized the groupings based on the amount of “supporting” evidence in data quotes. I had now completed “purposeful” coding based on my research questions. However, since my data collection continued after this process, I repeated the steps in round one and round two until all the data I collected had been coded.

My third round of analysis took place simultaneously with the construction of my data representation and was more about re-reading and becoming intimate with my data than it was about cutting it up and segregating it into themes. In fact, by this point I had started to question what my themes and categories from round two really meant. I realized that they were helpful for me to see what kinds of experiences I needed to explore in my representation or at least what topics I needed to touch on. However, this method of coding was beginning to feel contradictory to my post-structural recognition that categories cannot be static, complete, or discrete. This hit me halfway through round two, when I found myself holding a colored quote and thinking, what am I doing? Where am I going to put this? It seems to fit everywhere and nowhere at once! I was literally dizzy.

My problem with the type of categorization I did during round two was that I was taking moments that were overlapping, contradictory, in motion, and experienced simultaneously and attempting to categorize them by conventional practice into concrete, stationary, segregated groups. I realized that this method, though valuable in helping me to “see” my data, had moved me farther way from the contextualized multiplicity of post-structural data understanding, and closer to more traditional, almost positivistic notions of “the real.” I needed to step away and remind myself of my purpose to show complexity, rather than reduce my data to some notion of “real” or “Truth.”

With all of this in mind, round three became about de-constructing the categories I had created in an attempt to contextualize them and explore how they were related and interacted with one another. I still used the categories from round two as guideposts for what I needed to discuss in my representation; however, I now wanted to represent those categories as overlapping and interrelated, rather than sectioning them out as though they occurred in a vacuum. Therefore, during round three I took the discrete categories I had created during round two and deconstructed them by pulling various data quotes and re-organizing them to show the ways that ideas, experiences, and expectations within multiple categories were interlinked, contradictory, and related. Much of this “deconstructive” analysis took place as I began to construct my data representation and contextualize my participants’ “messy” experiences by showing how one experience may simultaneously relate to multiple categories such as discipline, performance, and mixing with boys (see Appendix F).

Like round three, round four of analysis took place simultaneous to writing up my representation. As I wrote up my representation, I became even more familiar with the



interviews and I often read and re-read them in their entirety. Because my representation was written from the viewpoint of my participants, it was important that the language I used matched with their use of language, that the topics they discussed were grounded specifically in my data, and that the actions I represented were part of the experiences they relayed to me. In this sense, their interviews had to become part of my story as I was becoming the storyteller of theirs. Therefore, this round was really used as a round to check my own “trustworthiness” as I re-visited the interviews, making sure my representation aligned with my data, and re-visited my coding categories to make sure my representation explored those themes even though they were now de-constructed and contextualized within larger frameworks.

### *Representation*

Before I discuss my representation, I feel it is important to revisit connections to post-structuralism and how my connection to this theory influenced my research processes. One of the more important aspects of post-structuralism that guided my representation is the idea that we can no longer have a desire to capture a “real” account of a participant’s experience. This belief is based on post-structural understanding of language within discourse.

Language does not name a pre-discursive Truth, but rather through repetition constructs the fiction of Truth within specific discourse. This fictitious Truth is not representative of the “real,” but rather is a construction based on power relations within the specific discourse. As such, language and the Truths it constructs within various discourses are “never fixed, always open to question, always contestable, and always temporary” (Burr, 1995, p. 39). This ignites a crisis of representation because it creates an

impossibility of capturing and relaying the Truth of experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Rather than have this inability to represent “Truth” or “the real” hinder research, post-structural ethnographers have reconsidered age-old notions of Truth, authority, validity, and reliability, opening up new possibilities for representation. With Truth no longer being the goal of representation, new ethnographies can balance the line of fact and fiction, creating representations that up front recognize the writer’s power and subjective choice to tell the story that they feel needs to be told. As Williams (1995) recalls from his work with aboriginal cultures,

Whether the story gets the “facts” right is really not all that important. An Indian storyteller is much more interested in the “Truth” contained in a story. And a great storyteller always makes that “Truth” in the story fit the needs of the moment. (pp. xi-xv)

With clear understanding that there is no way to represent a “real” account, traditional representations have become less useful. This has opened the space for new models of representation. These new models no longer focus on “Truth.” Instead, they contextualize experiences, move people to action, connect research to non-academic readers, and tell the story the needs to be told (Glover, 2007; Parry & Johnson, 2007). Most importantly, these new models explore the possibility of representation through the use of creative practices such as fiction, poetry, and narrative, recognizing that these alternative data representations often are more effective at relaying the story that needs to be told (Richardson, 2000).

Recognizing the possibilities of these new models of representation, I immediately wanted to explore alternative data representations that would help to contextualize my participants’ experiences, recognize multiplicity, and explore the

complexity of sorority culture. I knew that many post-structural researchers had turned to more dialogic, polyvocal, creative literary genres such as a fiction, poems, and performance pieces to represent their data (Richardson, 2000). Having used these alternative data representations in the past, I recognized that they would best meet my intent of showing the complexity of overlapping discourse; however, I struggled to find a creative genre that allowed me to show my data in ways that made room for movement from setting to setting and allowed for the seamless integration of multiple voices.

I decided to play around with a pseudo screenplay format, thinking that it might provide the space I needed to move around, use quotes, and integrate my own voice. I found that the screenplay format fit my purposes well. I spent the next four months constructing the screenplay that I will describe in detail below. My intent was not to create a screenplay for production, but rather use the “epistemologically diverse, unanchored, free flowing, floating, and authorless” possibilities of a screenplay to represent my data (Kohn, 2000, p. 489).

#### Screenplay as Post-structural Exemplar

Without realizing it, I had chosen to represent my data through a form of writing that Kohn (2000) has termed “a postmodern literary exemplar” because of the screenplay’s ability to “make meaning through polyphony, juxtaposition, and dialogical interaction” (Kohn, 2000, p. 489). Screenplays fit post-structural expectations for representation as they remain contingent and do well in representing complexity through polyvocal juxtaposition. As Kohn (2000) commented:

Such ways of writing can create spaces for many and varied voices to rub up against each other in interaction and juxtaposition as they whiz around, by and through each other. These texts then become living and moving,

not musealized as the novel, the poem, and the play are, but changeable, experimental creatures. (p. 505)

While the screenplay's potential for creating juxtaposition and dialogic interaction are an important part of this genre's strength in representation, I was also drawn to the screenplay position as a "writerly text." According to Barthes (1974), "screenplays are model 'writerly texts'—open to being rewritten—as opposed to closed 'readerly texts' which can be read but not written" (p. 4). Since the discourses I was trying to represent are also "open to being rewritten," the open-endedness of a screenplay reinforced my post-structural position that recognized that writing will never be "the Truth" as it will always represent something that has always already been re-written, re-created, and newly experienced. Just as the experiences of my participants are unfinished, open-ended, and ever-moving, the nature of a screenplay is always in process, always inviting new interpretations and never closed or finished. Kohn (2000) reiterated the open-endedness of screenplays when he noted that

even when reading a screenplay for a movie already produced and distributed (the finished film in some ways very much a readerly text), one still feels the urge to add a word, change a character, construct a subplot to fill the welcoming open spaces—the obligatory "white space"—on the page. (Kohn, 2000, p.495)

Therefore, screenplays are exemplars of post-structural notions of Truth and representation, as they recognize that with each reading, something new is interpreted, leaving the work as a work in process, never finished, and never closed to new possibility. I was excited to have stumbled into a genre that left my representation "in process," allowed me to work with multiple settings and characters, and helped to contextualize my data. I immediately began to work on my screenplay, beginning with my construction of characters.

*Subject to Sorority: Constructing the Characters*

I decided to have four main characters in my screenplay because I wanted to show a character from each year of schooling, freshman to senior year. I felt that this was important because through my data collection I had observed and been told that the experience of each year was unique. I also wanted more than one or two characters because I wanted the main characters to expose the “diversity” of those women with whom I had worked. While my participants recognized that the stereotype sorority woman was a thin, beautiful, blonde, rich, White, Christian daddy’s girl, they resisted this stereotype by explaining that the members of Zeta Chi were not “all the same,” but rather came from various backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, and schools. They also noted that members were diverse in terms of size, hair color, style, and interest. I wanted to represent this diversity and not reinforce the stereotype that all sorority women had similar backgrounds, the same reasons for joining, and identical ways of looking, thinking, and being. I especially wanted to show this diversity in my characters as I felt a responsibility to my participants who prided Zeta Chi on its diversity compared to other sororities.

Diversity did exist within the sorority in terms of hometown, size, religion, and ethnicity (there are eight women who are Jewish and three who are “non-White”). However, looking more closely it was impossible to ignore the strength and influence of the founding Christian, White, heterosexual, upper middle class discourse. Even girls who called themselves or were called by others “ethnic” often still embraced a Southern, Christian, heterosexual, upper middle class value system. This diversity conundrum made it difficult to represent the diversity that was present, but at the same time made apparent

the strong discursive pull for “White, Christian, upper middle class, heterosexual” values. In the end, I decided to show diversity in my characters, but made sure through the experiences I would construct around them that I could highlight the ways in which that “valued diversity” was at the same time often disciplined, made token, commented on, and connected to social consequences.

The four characters I finally composed show diversity in ethnicity, size, background, major, year in school, appearance, interest, religion, awareness of self/others, upbringing, and generation in sorority, among other differences and similarities, all composite parts of my original ten participants. However, I have remained true to the often subtle racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism that underlies this particular culture by highlighting ignorant comments or word use, inappropriate focus on difference as tokenism, or complete dismissal of possibilities for difference such as “color-blindness” (ignoring consequences of racial memberships) and compulsory heterosexuality (ignoring the viability of “the gay sorority woman”), all of which I observed in the field.

*Introduction to composite characters.* The four main characters finally I constructed were Margaret (freshman), Yarah (sophomore), Summer (junior), and Christine (senior). Each character was constructed by pulling multiple characteristics exhibited by my ten key participants and combining them into a composite character. Although the characters are fictional in the sense that they do not represent a single individual with whom I conducted research, their personalities, appearances, interests, and experiences are grounded in my data and are representative of my ten key

participants (see Appendix G). Each character was carefully constructed to provide the opportunity to explore different aspects of Zeta Chi culture.

Margaret is a freshman pledge who was composed mainly from the characteristics of three different participants, all of whom provided me with details about their experiences as pledges during rush. Based on these participants, she was composed to provide room to explore issues surrounding family influences, freshman experience of recruitment, dissemination into sorority norms (new member meetings), and the negotiation of some of the contradictions freshmen faced regarding acceptable behavior within Zeta Chi. Her character shows the process of “becoming sorority” in relation to family, rush, big sisters, induction into the culture, and expectations of femininity. As a pledge, her story opens the door to better understand the processes by which freshmen begin to understand themselves within college sorority culture and negotiate their positions during the transition to college and its new experiences with boys, alcohol, sex, and expectations.

Yarah is a sophomore composed of characteristics from eight different participants, although she was most strongly based on two women of color that I became close to through my key informant. She was composed to provide a character through whom I could explore issues of body image, discipline of “otherness,” and public vs. private school issues. She represents those participants who were first generation sorority, who had vigorous educational goals that challenge the idea of the “dumb sorority girl,” and who were beginning their journey as an “insider” sophomore living in the sorority house. She represents the picture of ethnic diversity in the sorority, while simultaneously

showing the ways in which such diversity is tokenized and disciplined to comfortably fit into the sorority discourse.

Summer is a junior composed from seven different participants in my study. Her character allows me to explore the “outsider” opinion of a Southern sorority as she comes from a dairy farm up North, a background represented in my data and considered by the woman to be “alternative” to the typical backgrounds of Zeta Chi members. Summer’s character allowed me to explore “insider/outsider” viewpoints, highlight Southern values/expectations as she learned or learns them anew, and provide an example of a character who is aware of, yet accepting of many of sorority culture’s expectations. While the stereotype often relayed to me assumed that sorority women were not aware of their participation in a highly gendered, highly criticized culture, it was my experience that many of them were very aware many of the negatives and enforced expectations, and had found a way to negotiate a space within it all. Summer represents these women as her character is aware of restrictive expectations, yet still chooses to proudly embrace the identity of a Zeta Chi.

The final composite character, Christine, is a senior composed of eight different participants. Her experiences strongly represent those of three of the participants with whom I worked who were aware of the restrictive expectations in Zeta Chi and felt that they would like to de-sister or would not re-join if they had to do it over. This character allowed me to explore issues of loyalty, respect, and resentment that come from distancing oneself from sorority life and friends. She also allowed me to set up the voice of critique that I heard from members about Zeta Chi and the pettiness among the members. Christine often enters scenes as the counter-voice that helps to show the



tensions and contradictions I observed among members with different levels of awareness and acceptance of Zeta Chi expectations.

Keeping true to my data, these four women have complicated relationships with one another. Yarah has taken to supporting Margaret during recruitment, Summer and Christine live together and are little sister and big sister respectively, Yarah and Summer know each other but are not good friends, while Christine and Yarah know each other only by name. I have purposefully made these connections based on the relationships in my data. I found that many new girls and sophomores did not really know senior girls and vice versa. However, at the same time I saw many seniors who were close with their little sisters and their grand sisters who were juniors and sophomores. These relationships play out within my script to show the ways in which expectations are disseminated throughout the sorority from year to year. In the end, I recognize that my difficulty in creating these characters was a consequence of the true complexity and troublesome negotiation of expectations that occurred in my participants' experiences.

In addition to these four main characters, I have also included other characters within the script, although they remain nameless. All roommates are named "Roommate" followed by the first letter of the main character's name with whom they room. Therefore, Margaret's roommate is "Roommate M," Yarah's roommate is "Roommate Y," and so on. All other extra characters are identified by random letters or numbers simply assigned to help the reader distinguish among various individuals. Although these characters' personalities and quotes are all grounded in the data, I have chosen to keep them nameless in order to direct the reader's attention to those main characters I have fully described and around whom the script has been constructed.

*Subject to Sorority: Constructing the Script*

After I created my composite characters I needed to construct scenes that presented a complex picture of Zeta Chi and explored my research questions. I created three groupings of four scenes, with each grouping focused on the overarching theme of one research question. Thus, the first group of scenes focused on discourses of femininity, the second group focused on the discipline and dissemination of those discourses, and the third group focused on the negotiation of those disciplined discourses.

The first set of four scenes is presented in Chapter Four: Discourses of Femininity, and is focused on introducing the reader to the discourses enabled within sorority culture and those discursive expectations found specifically within Zeta Chi. Recognizing the need to ground the reader in sorority culture, the content of these first four scenes also gives an overview of Zeta Chi culture by introducing issues related to rush, Southern values, family connection, typical behaviors, relationships, appearance, and discipline.

The second set of four scenes is presented in Chapter Five: Discipline of Ladylikeness, and focuses on the processes of dissemination and discipline of expectations of femininity within Zeta Chi. Each scene in this group focuses on one of the four main themes of dissemination and discipline that arose in my analysis. These four themes included overt discipline by Standards/Nationals, new member meetings, subtle/covert discipline through girl talk, and safety as discipline.

The final set of four scripts is presented in Chapter Six: Negotiations of Ladylike Subjectivity, and focuses on performance and negotiation of expectations of femininity. These four scenes showed some of the ways that Zeta Chi women simultaneously

reproduced, resisted, and re-created expectations for femininity through their gendered performances, use of language, discussion of difference, resistance of “ladylikeness,” and recognition of inconsistency.

While each grouping had an overarching theme (discourse, discipline, and negotiation), the scenes constructed around these main themes also explored the complex relationships found among the other categories of analysis. Therefore, each scene not only represents the overarching theme of the chapter, but also contextualizes this main theme within the other categories constructed based on *a priori* theories and those repetitive topics I found within my data (see Appendix H).

*Constructing settings.* Each scene begins with the description of a setting that is meant to draw the reader into the context where the behaviors and content of the scene will take place. I chose the settings carefully in order to show the diversity of where Zeta Chi events took place and where the women “hung out.” I also based the amount of times I used a setting in the script in relation to how often the women I studied frequented that locale. For example, Sharer’s downtown bar and the unofficial off-campus Zeta Chi apartment were used twice since the women often ended up at both locations on a weekly or at least monthly basis.

Based on my data, I ended up describing eight different settings in detail: the Zeta Chi house, Margaret’s family living room, the unofficial Zeta Chi apartment, Sharer’s Downtown Bar, the freshman dorm, Metzger’s downtown bar, USouthern intramural fields, and Yarah’s room in Zeta Chi. While not fully described, readers also got a clear picture of the USouthern campus and the downtown area from bird’s-eye view descriptions. All but one of these eight sites were grounded in my observational field

notes and remain accurate to the original settings except that names and telling characteristics were altered to retain confidentiality.

Margaret's living room was the only site I did not personally observe and because of this I struggled with including it in the scenes. However, I felt that it was important to have a scene take place within a family setting because it showed from a personal viewpoint the story so many participants relayed to me of preparing for rush and of the part their families played in that preparation. I decided to work around this missing observational data by collecting a description of a participant's living room during a member check in round three of my interviews. Therefore, although I did not observe a familial living room, the description of Margaret's house was grounded in my interview data.

*Constructing content.* I pulled from my data in multiple ways to construct the behaviors, language, and content for the scenes in my data representation. Below I describe the multiple ways I drew from observational field notes and interview data to create both action and content. Although the descriptions found below are separated out as discrete techniques, the construction of the scenes more often pulled from a mixture of such techniques in order to develop characters, action, and content.

The first technique I relied on was to take both action and content directly from my field notes and turn it into a screenplay scene. Since my field notes included setting descriptions, behavioral descriptions, and quotes from participants, I was able to simply transpose the screenplay format onto raw observational data that was fully developed as a narrative within my notes. Although the flag football scene in Chapter Six is the only

scene that exclusively used this technique, other scenes contained elements constructed in this same manner.

Another technique I used was to ground action and content strongly in the specific “framework” of a particular participant observation, but insert additional action and conversational content. This added content did not occur in the original observation, but was grounded in a separate data source. For example, I used this technique to construct the third scene in Chapter 5 in which I inserted a conversation about sexuality based on interview data into the framework of my original observation of participants getting dressed for a date night.

I also constructed scenes or elements of scenes by creating an alternative setting around a story that I observed told first-hand during an interview. Since I had both the quoted story and the action around the story in my field notes, all that I had to do was create the setting around the telling of the story. The best example of this method is the final scene in Chapter Four in which Christine tells Summer about a conflict with the infamous Miss Maddie. The story that Christine tells and the actions the characters engage in came directly from my transcribed focus group. However, I “reset” the telling of the story to take place at the “Greek” bar.

Where the above technique only necessitated the construction of a new setting around a story, I also at times constructed setting, action, and dialogue to “recreate” and play out a packaged story that I was told about through interviews. For example, during round three of interviews a participant told me her story of being raped by a fraternity man and the ways different friends reacted with various responses such as “it was your fault,” “I’m so sorry,” and “we need to do something about this.” Although I did not

observe the scenario or hear the direct words of my participant's friends, in the fourth scene of Chapter Five I created both setting, action, and content to represent my participant's story through a conversation had by Summer and her two roommates. In order to represent the different responses of my participant's friends I used "fictional" dialogue that was grounded in my participant's story. As a general rule for my script, if dialogue was added in order to supplement my data quotes I always made sure to use language and action grounded in my data.

The final technique I used was to pull together both action and content from multiple sources in my data. This method was used more often than others since my analysis had developed so many overlapping and repetitive categories. I often had multiple data sources from multiple participants about a certain topic which allowed me to pull excerpts together. For example, the fourth scene of Chapter Five presents a conversation between Yarah and Margaret in which they discuss "hot guys." This excerpt was constructed from seven different interviews and two participant observations. Although I used all of the above techniques to construct the entirety of my screenplay, this final technique became the most commonly used because, while pre-packaged stories were easy to "plop" into screenplay format, the technique of combining data from multiple sources allowed me more freedom to tell the story that needed to be told and show competing perspectives.

*Subject to Sorority: Director's Comments*

The final addition to the screenplay was my own interpretations of what I had learned about Zeta Chi. The screenplays can be read alone and interpreted by the reader in multiple ways. However, I also wanted to present the reader with my own

interpretations of the data based on my researcher perspective and my understanding of *a priori* and repetitive themes. In this study, I wanted to understand what discourses of femininity were enabled within Zeta Chi, how these discourses of femininity were disciplined, and the ways the women negotiated the disciplined discourses. In order to present my interpretations of discourses, discipline, and negotiation, I included in my screenplay sections of “Director’s Comments” where I offer the connections that I made between the data, repetitive themes, and *a priori* post-structural feminist perspectives.

*Subject to Sorority: Summary*

Although my entire script was heavily grounded in my data, the ways I chose to construct it, the themes I chose to highlight, and the interpretations inherent in those choices are based on my positionality, my subjectivities, and my use of a post-structural theoretical framework. This screenplay was purposefully composed to poignantly expose the contradictions, inconsistencies, and culturally imposed discourses expressed within the Zeta Chi culture and should not be read as the story of “the Truth” of Zeta Chi. Instead, it should be read as one story about Zeta Chi that one researcher, caught up in her own time and place, constructed to tell a “Truth” that “fits the need of the moment” (Williams, 1995, p. xv). The need of the moment for which this screenplay was constructed is less related to the “Truth” of the lived experiences of my participants and more heavily informed by my purpose to understand how discourses of femininity were disciplined and negotiated by Zeta Chi women.

Notes:

1. The methodology and methods used in this research were strongly influenced by the following literature: Best, 2000; Britzman, 2000; Crotty, 1998; DeMarrais, 2004; Esterburg, 2002; Ezzy, 2002; Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002; Richardson, 1997; St. Pierre & Pillows, 2000; Tedlock, 2003; Wolcott, 1994.



CHAPTER FOUR  
DOMINANT DISCOURSES OF FEMININITY

Shooting Draft

January 21, 2008

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**Director's Comments:**

The following four scenes introduce us to dominant expectations of femininity within Zeta Chi and to the issues of discipline and negotiation, both of which will be discussed in detail in the remaining chapters. Using four composite characters who represent different stages of sorority membership (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior), these scenes provide information about Zeta Chi settings and take us into the process of rush/recruitment, issues of reputation, and gender performance including dress, language, and sexuality.

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**FADE IN:**

**AUGUST: CRESCENT AVE-MID-AFTERNOON-DAY OF RUSH**

As we zoom in from a blue sky, bird's-eye view we see a small corner area where students and locals have parked and are crowded around a coffee shop, an ice cream store, and an organic food market. Moving from the bird's-eye view down the street, the roofs of the houses lining the street are wide and black, the first feel we get for the large Southern antebellum houses that set the Greek feel of the Crescent area. We see and hear traffic driving by, female students laughing as they walk down the street with purses and flip flops, and the noise of a university bus stopping to pick up students.

**CUT TO:**

**ZETA CHI HOUSE-CONTINUOUS**

As the camera focuses on the street side of the USouthern bus it pulls away from its stop to reveal two concrete benches surrounded by yellow, white, and purple flowers, manicured shrubbery, and a green lawn spotted with large trees and flowering bushes that lead to the walkway of the Zeta Chi house. Two waist-high bushes frame the six-foot-wide cement square tiled walkway as it opens into a circle right before reaching the cast iron railing and first stair to the front stoop and main door. The door is black with a shiny brass doorknob and kick plate and a gray finger pad for easy keyless access by members. The house has bright white wood siding, a black roof and eight windows facing the street, each divided into nine smaller windows by black molding and each framed by impressive black shutters. The flatness of the roof is broken up by three triangular windows, and the front stoop is covered by a triangular roof held up by four large white columns, all adding to

the impressiveness of the large antebellum house. Most importantly, above the stoop on the triangular roof-front hang three, two-foot-high black cast iron Greek letters that read ZXX (Zeta Chi Chi), the formal name for the Zeta Chi sorority.

A five-by-five-foot white banner painted in blue and orange hangs from the front columns reading "ZETA CHI RECRUITMENT 2007." Bunches of blue, orange, and white helium balloons (official Zeta Chi colors) are tied to the front rail, attached with shiny silver ribbon.

**CUT TO:**

**ZETA CHI FRONT ROOM-CONTINUOUS**

The inside of the house has black marble floors with purposeful white cracks and white walls with waist-high white molding all around the room. There are dark wood couches and chairs covered in thin-ribbed black corduroy and embroidered with the Zeta Chi seal. The couches are situated around a large fireplace whose mantel is adorned with framed pictures of past Zeta Chi bid days, pageants, and philanthropic events as noted in each picture by the banner hanging on the stoop above a group of smiling girls. The room is decorated with large wooden china cabinets filled with books, Zeta Chi yearbooks, black and gold plates with pink, yellow, and blue flowers, crystal knick-knacks, and small gold statues. Antique wooden tables also pepper the room holding various lamps, all antique, ranging from colorful glass lamps decorated with exotic birds to tiered glass/marble lamps with decorative shades. The walls are decorated with random antique frames and paintings including exotic birds and Asian-inspired prints. This room, like the rest of the house, is a combination of comfortable puffy couches, creaky old wooden chairs, metal, marble, candlestick holders, plates, bookends, and old books. The front windows are just as impressive from the inside, each framed by white indoor shutters.

We hear girls' voices yelling, laughing, and talking all around the house, including those gathered in the room we are focused on. Each girl we see is wearing a brightly colored sun dress, big chunky gold and silver Yurman jewelry or pearls, and rainbow flip-flops.

**Yarah**, a sophomore Zeta Chi, enters the crowded room.

She has straight brownish black hair down to the middle of her back that is pulled into a side part and braided down her neck, big brown eyes with long eyelashes, thick red lips, white teeth, and clear white skin with rosy cheeks. She is about 5'8" and has recently put on enough weight to become a size 6, which she comments on often so that "she says it before someone else does." Her mother is from Korea and her father is, as her friends joke, "Pakizilian," since he is both Pakistani and Brazilian. She can speak English and Korean fluently. She grew up in Atlanta and attended public school, an experience about which her private school friends often joke. She is an international business major with a minor in advertising and hopes to move overseas to work with the UN. While her parents knew nothing of the Greek system, her older brother joined a fraternity at USouthern just two years before and played a big part in talking Yarah into rushing. Now as a sophomore living in the house, Yarah gets to see the insider view of rush that one misses out on as a freshman. As she enters, she is

carrying a poster and of course is wearing a light blue sun dress, blue David Yurman earrings, and rainbow flip-flops.

Yarah runs into the semi-crowded room and jokingly yells out her rushie rhyme, knowing that no one wants to hear her again.

**Yarah**

She'll punch your boob in, She's Margaret Steuben.

*Yarah is carrying a poster that she has made to show Margaret's Facebook picture, a list of her high school activities, and the rushie rhyme Yarah made up to promote Margaret as a potential Zeta Chi. Although Yarah has hung these posters of Margaret all over the house, specifically in the chapter room and dining room, this is her last chance to get her friends on board for voting Margaret into Zeta Chi. Since one "no" vote cancels out ten "yes" votes, Yarah is on a mission to keep Margaret in the running all four rounds of rush, or recruitment as they have been told they must officially call it due to the negative stereotypes associated with the word "rush." Yarah runs around the room repeating this rhyme with a big smile on her face as her friends, knowing Yarah is always a bit louder than the rest, jokingly hit her and push her out of the room.*

*After being pushed out, Yarah walks down two flights of black carpeted winding stairs that lead from the front room to the chapter room where she and the other Zeta Chis have spent the last ten days in pre-recruitment workshops learning about the potential new members, or PNMs as they are called. She collapses on a chair and looks around the room at other posters that her friends have made of their favorite PNMs. She recognizes most of the faces from the PowerPoint slides they have spent the last ten days going over, noting legacies (those girls whose family members have been in sororities), cores (those girls whom someone in the sorority knows or has heard good things about), and studies (the girls Zeta Chis are interested in but don't know much about). She and the other girls have spent days calling people they know who might know any of these PNMs, trying to learn as much about them as possible from each girl's rush application and going over what kind of girls they want to invite back to be Zeta Chi this year. So far, everyone is excited about most of the PNMs except for one PNM who was called out by an existing member as being "unladylike," the term used to nicely call someone out for having a "bad reputation." Still, if more girls like her than don't she will probably get a bid to join.*

*Yarah whispers, laughing to herself about the catchy rushie rhyme she has made up, knowing that people tend to remember ones that are a little off.*

**Yarah**

She'll punch your boob in...

*At the same time Girl #1 enters the room. She is wearing the recruitment "outfit," has long straight brown hair in a side ponytail, big blue expressive eyes, and seems simultaneously stressed out and overly cheery. She starts to gather some voting slips for the next party, and overhears Yarah's whisper.*

**Girl #1**

You really are pulling for this Margaret girl, aren't you? What is it you like about her so much?

**Yarah**

Well her grandma and mom are Zeta Chi, she'll be a triple legacy.

**Girl #1**

Yeah but that doesn't mean she'll fit in with us. I mean do you know for sure she's a good girl? Like does she have a good reputation?

**Yarah**

Well, she isn't a cookie cutter sorority girl, you know? I like that we aren't like those other sororities that have all the same kind of girl.

I think Margaret seems like she would fit in, you know, but bring something different, and be really fun.

**Girl #1**

Speaking of bringing something different, did you hear that Summer didn't pass dress check? Apparently her boobs were popping out and they didn't feel it was appropriate for Rush--not to mention it was silk and they always advise against wearing silk.

**Yarah**

Yeah, I heard that, but you know some people can't help it if they are just bigger. I mean the same dress might look totally different on them. Like I have big boobs and it is hard to find dresses that are cute and cover me.

**Girl #1**

Well, even so I think it's necessary because there are people who will wear inappropriate things and like, that one person can mess up someone's perception of our entire sorority.

**Yarah**

Yeah, I guess you're right, I mean it could be worse. I heard that Delta Beta makes them all wear a certain style and color dress and makes them all get their nails done a certain way.

**Girl #1**

Well, we better get downstairs. Another group of PNMs are on their way. This time I have to be harder on the girls. Last group I heard Summer talking about how we usually hang out with your brother's fraternity. How many times did we all go over things we can and can't talk about? She knows we can't mention what fraternity we hang out with the most. If I don't watch her she'll be telling every girl that "she'll see them tomorrow!" They'll have us for dirty rushing! That's all we need.

*Yarah shakes her head in disapproval. Though she is exhausted from the past 10 days she slowly gets up and makes a point to get her energy back and her game face on. She moves toward the stairway ready to float around the chatty crowded room making sure no Zeta Chis are breaking rush conversation rules or insinuating that girls will be voted to come back tomorrow. She wonders if this next party will be Margaret's group. After all they are grouped alphabetically and her last name begins with a S.*

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**Director's Comments:**

Since I had never been a member of a sorority, my entrance into Zeta Chi was also my introduction to sororities and sorority life. Walking up to the Zeta Chi house I was immediately impressed with its size, cleanliness, and decor. Soon into my research I recognized that the appearance of the house had to be meticulous because it was considered an important component of the public reputation of the sorority. As I will discuss at a later time, this same attention to presentation was placed on all aspects of Zeta Chi, including its members, in order to construct a specific public image that reflected Zeta Chi values of order, appropriateness, and ladylike decency.

Although the Zeta Chi house, like most sorority houses, was the public representation of the sorority, to my surprise most Zeta Chi women spent more of their time in other locations. I had expected all 170-plus girls to live in the house, making it the social nexus of my research; however, I found that only sophomores and sorority officers lived there, leaving the large mansion seeming oddly vacant at times. I often visited the house to find little social activity other than a few women talking in each other's rooms, solitary women sitting around reading, and the occasional interruption of women yelling from different floors, walking in and out of the house, or doing "crunches" in the hallway. Meals, Chapter meetings, rush, and some philanthropic events did occur at the house; however, due to house rules about drinking, appropriateness, and men, the social events and parties that are often stereotypically associated with Greek life did not take place there.

When discussing living in the house, my participants mentioned that although they sometimes found it difficult to have rules and a house mother to enforce them (usually an older woman living in the sorority house), there were also some perks to limiting certain behaviors and having an adult around. They were happy to have a clean house (cleaned by an outside cleaning service, often African American women), to have an authority figure to help run the house, and to not have to deal with the negative aspects of having social events at the house such as rowdy drunk men, trash, and general filth. They said that fraternity houses had very different, perhaps no rules concerning alcohol, women, or appropriateness and therefore were the location of most "Greek" parties and were often "gross." My participants attributed differences in rules between sororities and fraternities to the fact that sororities were run more like a business and that each sorority had a house mother as an authority figure to keep things within appropriate boundaries. Fraternities, on the other hand, seemed to be self-governed and have little or no adult authority or supervision and therefore fraternity men could do what they wanted.

Although my participants were well aware that women had different rules than men within the Greek system, many of them failed to see or ignored how these rules were related to gendered definitions of "proper and appropriate" women. Even those women who saw the gendered aspects of these rules often accepted the differences as natural and normal because "boys will be boys" and "there are just certain things you don't do as a girl." In general, my participants accepted the more restrictive rules around sororities because they believed either that the rules were in place for women's own good (e.g., for

safety or cleanliness) or because having them was “just the way things were” and therefore uncontested.

Not only were there rules in place to control women’s behaviors within the Zeta Chi house, but there were also discursive expectations within Zeta Chi that worked to discipline and guide members’ self-presentations in general. I became most aware of expectations surrounding self-presentation during my interviews with women about rush. There was much more to rush than my stereotypical assumption that it entailed little preparation, leaving a potential new member (PNM) to be judged based on a quick look and a five-minute conversation. Preparations for rush actually began taking place during pre-rush, ten days before the PNMs even arrived. During pre-rush current members learned cheers, organized voting processes, practiced performances, prepared the house, and researched PNMs based on their applications. By the time rush occurred, Zeta Chi members had already spent a great deal of time collecting information and opinions about PNMs and had a good idea of which women they were most interested in offering bids to. However, even with all the time spent making “informed” decisions about PNMs, my participants recognized that rush could still be a very superficial process. They noted that many PNMs had concern over their appearances and spent large amounts of time and money finding the right dress, often this season’s designer dress. Although my participants all claimed that when they were PNMs they did not think twice about what to wear, simply “throwing something on” or borrowing older sisters’ rush dresses, they admitted that the stereotype of rush’s snap judgments over appearance and behavior still held true.

Concern over appearances did not end for women once they were accepted to Zeta Chi (see Chapter Five). Participants who spoke about rush from the side of the sorority mentioned that even current members have to consider their appearance and work together to construct a perfect image of Zeta Chi. While pre-rush was used to gain information about the reputations of PNMs, it was also time used to create an image of Zeta Chi that would uphold its appearance as a “good sorority.” This image was constructed for rush through practices such as organizing women to show diversity (explained to me as not having all blondes in a row but mixing up them up with brunettes and redheads and making “ethnic girls” visible), putting the most expensive cars at the front of the driveway, “hiding” girls who might not “fit” in (although there were mixed opinions over whether or not Zeta Chi did this), and forcing all current members to do dress checks in order to make sure their dresses were appropriate (did not show too much skin, were not from last year, were not made of silk). Most of my members were disgusted with these practices, but admitted that they did help to improve Zeta Chi’s reputation during rush and win over PNMs. Caring about the future of their sorority and the maintenance of its reputation, even the women in this study who disagreed with such superficial and demeaning practices chose to participate in them in order to secure new members.

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CUT TO:

**A SMALL TOWN OUTSIDE OF NASHVILLE-TWO AFTERNOONS BEFORE**

We zoom in from a bird's-eye view to a large pink brick house, barely distinguishable from the other houses in this gated community. The perfectly manicured lawn, white concrete driveway, and flower boxed windows create a sterile yet picture-perfect impression of the American dream. We enter the house to find high ceilings, light colored walls, family photos in silver frames, and a smell that gives the impression that the house has just been fully cleaned.

We hear women walking their small dogs outside and a local country music station playing in the background as we zoom to the inside of the house.

CUT TO:

**MARGARET'S FAMILY LIVING ROOM-CONTINUOUS**

**Margaret**, wearing a light brown t-shirt, designer jeans, wallaby Clarks, and pearl earrings, enters the light blue and white living room. Although the room is normally spotless, this past week it has been taken over by Margaret's "away to college" items. The couches, ottoman, and floor are spotted with bags of shoes, hampers of clean towels, clothes on hangers, suitcases, bedding, and toiletries.

Margaret stands in the middle of the room, lets out a sigh and in her head begins to go over what she might be forgetting.

Margaret has straight, below the shoulders caramel blonde hair, big blue eyes with long black eyelashes, freckles, white teeth, and thin pink lips that curl when she smiles, showing her top gums and making her look like a little kid. She is about 5'10", a size 4, and is used to getting the attention of guys although she is not into being girly and has never been one for fashion. Although her family is Episcopalian, she attended a private "hard core" Christian school, and if given a bid will be a third generation Zeta Chi. She tells her mom she loves the idea of being part of the sorority and hopes that these next years in Zeta Chi will be "the best of her life" as her mother has promised.

Her mother is also standing in the living room and is on the phone. She is petite and slender with blonde hair in a shoulder-length bob, perfectly sculpted. She has blue eyes, slightly aged skin, and is dressed in a black pantsuit with diamond earrings.

**Mother**

Okay. Great. We'll make sure it's ready to go by Thursday.

*Mother hangs up the phone and begins to write with a pen on a pad.*

**Margaret**

Who was that?

**Mother**

Oh, it's the Zeta Chi house again. They were calling about some finishing touches that our summer construction crew needs to do before the girls move back in.

**Margaret**

Oh, how funny is it that you are the project manager for construction at the Nashville Chapter of Zeta Chi?

**Mother**

Yes, it's been great. They said that it was so nice to work with a Zeta Chi alumna.

*She continues writing as Margaret looks around at the sprawl of sheets, towels, pillows, and electronic merchandise ready to be packed into her Vera Bradley luggage. Although her Vera Bradley tote was out of style, her malleable luggage will be perfect for stuffing as much in as possible (46-1066).*

**Mother**

Speaking of Zeta Chi, are you ready to show me and grandma your dresses for rush?

**Margaret**

Yeah, I have them all laid out upstairs. Grandma said she just had to put her makeup on and she'd be right over. You know her, she never leaves the house without going the whole nine yards.

**Mother**

And rightly so. (41-378) You never know who you might run into. Why, just last week I was at the football game, I met some men and it turns out one man's wife is a Zeta Chi. I joked, "Well she must be a great lady then."

**Margaret**

Oh really? That's funny.

**Mother**

The point is you just never know when you might be representing something bigger than just you - especially when you become a Zeta Chi next week!!

*Margaret's mother runs over to her with a big smile on her face and grabs Margaret's shoulders, shaking them back and forth in excitement. Margaret laughs with annoyance, breaks loose from her mother's hold, and speaks loudly without shouting.*

**Margaret**

Mom, don't jinx it!

**Mother**

Alright, alright. Go get your first dress on. Have you decided what shoes you are going to wear?

*Margaret looks back at her mother and with a devilish look in her eyes replies sincerely but with a touch of sarcasm.*



**Margaret**

No, but I'm sure you'll tell me which ones. After all, you're the expert.

*As Margaret turns to walk upstairs to her room she thinks to herself that maybe her mom wants this more than she does. In fact, Margaret had never really been sure if she even wanted to rush. She had no desire to fill out the on-line rush application, even if she did look good on paper with her high grades and multiple extra curricular activities. However, whether she wanted to or not, after a week at the beach with her friends, Margaret returned home to find that her mother had filled the application out and sent it in for her. She had even asked two of her Zeta Chi friends to write Margaret letters of recommendation, carefully selecting the pictures of Margaret they would all include.*

*Margaret felt she just had to go through with it at this point, but she sure hoped that rush and sororities were about more than just pretty dresses. Trying to convince herself she was happy with her mother's decision, Margaret told herself that joining a sorority would be a good way to make friends quickly at a big university, maybe even friends that she would have for life. Her mother always said Zeta Chi's motto was "A continual circle of friendship."*

*She decided to listen to her mother's advice and keep an open mind. Maybe it wouldn't be the girliest thing in the world. Maybe she could have fun with it.*

*"Here we go," she thought as she pulled the soft, brightly colored sundress over her shiny blonde hair. She looked in the mirror and for a moment thought, "Thank goodness I have Mom to help me figure out what to wear."*

**Director's Comments:**

Expectations over appearance and behaviors were highlighted during the process of rush as both potential new members (PNMs) and the whole of Zeta Chi were concerned with issues of image and reputation. However, expectations of appropriate femininity reached far beyond rush and were a constant part of Zeta Chi culture. Most of the expectations for femininity found within Zeta Chi had strong roots in the traditions of White, middle/upper class, Christian, Southern culture. Many of my participants used the word "ladylike" to describe appropriate feminine behavior and attributed their desire to "act like a lady" to the influences of their Southern, Christian upbringing.

I was first introduced to expectations about "acting like a lady" during a discussion of rush in which I was told that "unladylike" was a term that was used to acknowledge that a PNM had a bad reputation related to sexual behavior and substance use in high school. However, I discovered through my interviews that ideas of ladylike were much more pervasive and that there were in fact entire discourses of femininity in Zeta Chi organized around ideas of "ladylikeness," both overt ones that the women recognized and covert ones that guided behaviors without explicit recognition. Based on explanations from multiple participants I came to understand expectations of "ladylike" as all appropriate gendered behaviors, especially those tied to notions of acting proper, classy, and

respectable in public in relation to appearance, sexual behavior, use of substances, public presentation, and language. Similar to the way a collective image of Zeta Chi was presented during rush, it was expected that all members of Zeta Chi would continuously participate in constructing and maintaining a specific image of the sorority that upheld those expectations of ladylikeness (a term I began using in place of “femininity”) valued by the sorority.

Getting my head around aspects of being ladylike was difficult because the term already carried some meaning for me. For me, being ladylike was about being reserved, wearing dresses at all times, and keeping your elbows off the table. However, the sorority women who were talking about the importance of being ladylike were often strong, intelligent, outgoing women who wore shorts and t-shirts and played sports. They were women who talked about how they had not even wanted to join a sorority because they were worried it would be too girly. Since these women did not fit my perception of ladylike, I asked them to tell me their perspectives on what the expectations were for being ladylike in Zeta Chi.

From those women’s viewpoints, acting like a lady meant that one should act in the way one was raised. It was assumed that one was raised to be respectful, modest, appropriate, gracious, tasteful, and kind. A lady was to be “feminine, well-spoken, refined, and appropriate.” She was to portray herself in the manner she would want to be thought of. The women admitted that these notions of femininity were very much those that had been passed down and reinforced within their Southern Christian family traditions. During an interview, one participant highlighted these connections to Southern family values when she explained she never left the house without her eye-liner on because she had learned from her grandmother that a woman should always be dressed. She admitted that she had never seen her grandmother in anything but her day clothes with full makeup.

Although most of the women felt that there was an expectation that they act within these Southern expectations of ladylikeness, all of the women admitted that even “good girls” had their bad days. I found many behavioral contradictions both in my observations and in my interviews that reinforced these “bad days,” noting that even the most ladylike members sometimes found themselves in unladylike situations. However, while I heard many stories of wild times, in the end most women in Zeta Chi were making a conscious effort to stay within the boundaries of appropriate ladylikeness. One participant noted that even though women from different backgrounds might come into Zeta Chi with alternative notions of what it meant to be a lady, Zeta Chi soon “sets the standards that members are expected to live up to.”

**CUT TO:**

**UNOFFICIAL OFF-CAMPUS ZETA CHI APARTMENT OUTSIDE-NIGHT BEFORE RUSH**

From a bird’s-eye view we see a bustling ten-block, college-town downtown, filled with street lights, outdoor seating areas for restaurants, and multiple bar fronts. College students seem to be everywhere in packs, girls dressed in designer jeans or skirts, tank

tops, and eye-liner, boys dressed in khaki shorts with tucked-in polo shirts and USouthern ball caps.

The camera scans the crowded streets and eventually focuses on an old, brown, four-story building found at the intersection of two of the main downtown strips. The building, an old post office renovated into apartments for college students, is known for being loud as it has paper-thin walls and is often surrounded by traffic and drunk, laughing students walking back to their parked cars after a long night of drinking at the local bars.

The camera then focuses on **Summer**, a junior Zeta Chi, as she walks toward the cast iron railing that lines the entrance to the side door of the building.

Summer has straight bleached blonde hair cut into a chin-length bob with wispy bangs and big brown eyes lined with blue/black eyeliner which she wears at all times. She has clear, tanned skin with thin pink lips, white teeth, and light brown freckles. She is about 5'4" and is a size 12, which she hates because she can't borrow her friends' clothes, even though she is so stylish wouldn't be caught dead in most of them anyway. Coming a long way from her upbringing on a small dairy farm in upstate New York, Summer has taken to sorority fashion with flying colors and despite being a bit larger than the other girls, is now known as one of the more fashion savvy of her pledge class. Today she has purposefully chosen to wear dark skinny jeans, a long gray shirt, pearls, and a very cute short pink jacket with a ruffle collar and big black buttons. As an education major, she should be more interested in her upcoming student teaching, but with her transformation from Northern geek to Southern chic, her true love has become fashion and fashion photography. While she loves fashion, she also questions the dangers of women's obsession with appearance. She combines her love and her concerns about fashion in her photography and uses her photographs to make statements about American values about women's appearance. Her work has won awards and has given her a new confidence. Her parents, a bit weary of the new and improved Summer, still remain impressed with her acceptance to Zeta Chi since she is the first in her family to become Greek. Summer also gloats, although secretly, about her acceptance to Zeta Chi since as a "discovery," someone the sorority doesn't know anything about before recruitment, she can be sure that Greek ties didn't pave her way. She got in on her own merits.

**CUT TO:**

**UNOFFICIAL OFF-CAMPUS ZETA CHI APARTMENT INSIDE-CONTINUOUS**

We follow Summer through a heavy metal door, up fourteen stairs, and down a stark white hallway with florescent lights. The building is still reminiscent of the original as it has maintained a very raw feel from open-piped ceilings, exposed brick, and chipped painted walls. After fifteen or twenty steps she finally reaches her apartment door. She shares this apartment with three other Zeta Chi members, all of whom, except for Christine, the apartment's lone senior, she roomed near in the Zeta Chi house last year. This apartment is known as the unofficial off-campus Zeta Chi house because it has passed from one Zeta Chi pledge class to another for the past few years.

Summer pulls out her Zeta Chi keychain and unlocks the heavy, paint-chipped door. Walking in, she flicks on the overhead lights and catches a whiff of Christine's notorious burnt rice.

**Summer**

Hello, anyone home?

*After receiving no answer, Summer places her keys on the hallway dresser and notices a note pinned to the hall message board:*

"Hey ya'll, Out to dinner with Stuart.  
 Sorry about the burned pot, I'll clean it up  
 when I get home. Hope you had fun at pre-rush  
 - remember don't mention anything about this week.  
 I told everybody I'm still working at my internship!  
 Much Love, Christine"

*Summer rolls her eyes, shakes her head at the message, and heads to her room down the main hallway past various hanging photos that Summer has taken throughout her recent obsession with fashion and photography. She reaches her small room, climbs up a seven-rung ladder to her loft bed and collapses from an exhausting day of recruitment preparation. She sneaks a peak over the edge of the bed, catches a glimpse of her room and thinks to herself that it looks like a clothing bomb has exploded in her closet and all over her floor.*

*Just then she hears the apartment door open. For a minute she gets nervous that she may have yet again forgot to lock it - something her roommates constantly yell at her about, jokingly taunting, "Dorothy, you're not on the Dairy Farm anymore."*

**Roommate S**

Hello??

*Summer slowly moves down her ladder and meets her roommate in the hallway.*

**Summer**

Hey, how are you?

*Roommate S unpins Christine's note, furrows her eyebrows, and holds the note up in the air by the right corner.*

**Roommate S**

What is she talking about? This week?

**Summer**

Oh, I don't know for sure.

**Roommate S**

Summer, I'm sure you know something.

**Summer**

Well, I don't want to talk about anyone behind their back.

**Roommate S**

It's just me. I won't say anything. She obviously doesn't care if we know or she wouldn't have left the note.

**Summer**

Well, apparently she told Jill that she can't make rush, sorry, recruitment, because of her internship, but really she is just going...

**Roommate S**

To the beach?  
Really?

*Summer nods her head yes and begins to feel very guilty for telling on Christine because of the disapproving look on her roommate's face. Back home she would be worried that everything would get back to Christine, but she finds comfort knowing that her roommate will not confront Christine. People around her are very non-confrontational. She has learned that people would rather just let things slide. Either way, it was Christine that left the note.*

*Her roommate continues.*

**Roommate S**

With Stuart?

*Summer was hoping that this conversation had ended.*

**Summer**

Yeah, with Stuart.

**Roommate S**

No wonder she wants to de-sister. Skipping out on rush, lying to Jill, our advisor?! And it's not like she ever hangs out with us anymore.

**Summer**

Well, you know how much she thinks she loves Stuart. Plus, I think she has some really good other reasons too, and it's not like you haven't ever lied to get out of chapter meetings.

**Roommate S**

Yeah, but that's different. I mean she just hangs out with Stuart so much that...I don't know, I mean I love her to death but when you put guys over your girlfriends, like a lot of times that kinda leaves a barrier to where we can't really be close.

**Summer**

Yeah, I guess.

**Roommate S**

I mean, the last few times we've gone out, it never fails, she always sketches off with Stuart by the end of the night. I heard she even left you at Killian's last night to go off with him. And remember when we all came back and ordered pizza last weekend? Where was Christine?

**Summer**

Well, sometimes she still hangs out. I mean maybe that is what happens when you are in love.

**Roommate S**

Well, maybe. I just hope she knows what she's doing with him.  
Anyway - what's that smell?

*Summer wants to escape this conversation because she knows that her roommate's anger just comes from being sad or jealous that Christine doesn't spend as much time with them anymore. Summer figures it's either this or that her roommate is just jealous that Christine is in love. Even if they didn't particularly like Stuart, it was still hard to not be jealous of two people in love. Who wouldn't be? In fact, Summer has even caught herself wondering what is wrong with her that she herself hasn't met someone. But unlike her roommate, rather than taking it out on Christine, she has decided to accept that things are different from her mother's era when everyone got engaged and married right after college and instead spends her time focused on her education. Still, because of the culture that surrounds her, and although she won't admit it, she secretly hopes to meet the man of her dreams before she graduates.*

*Her roommate interrupts Summer's thoughts.*

**Roommate S**

How it is she always burns the rice pot?

*Summer and her roommate move into the living room, which has three windows to the front of the apartment that all face out to the main strips. The windows have "Happy 22<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Christine" written on them in wipe off paint - a message that is left over from the one time Christine has actually hung out this month. Below the writing on the windowsills are two large yellow vases with silk sunflowers in them. There are two couches covered in beige material, a red comfortable chair, a coffee table, and a TV on a TV stand arranged around the walls of the room.*

*They both sit down on separate couches. Recognizing that pre-rush has everyone stressed out and that her roommate is in a particularly bad mood, Summer tries to divert attention from the absent Christine and redirect the conversation onto herself.*

**Summer**

Did you hear about my dress troubles?

**Roommate S**

No! Was it you? You're the one who didn't pass dress check?

**Summer**

Yeah, can you believe it? They said it showed my boobs too much.

**Roommate S**

Well that's not hard to do.

*Summer jokingly slaps her roommate on the arm. She has always had a large chest and has always had trouble hiding it in summer dresses.*

**Summer**

I felt pretty bad about it, but I figure I'll just wear the yellow one instead.

**Roommate S**

Isn't that the one we all liked the best?

**Summer**

Yeah, but it's last year's version so I...

*Roommate S interrupts.*

**Roommate S**

Oh, Summer you know none of us care about all of that. And if a rushie doesn't like it, well, we probably won't like her. (33)

**Summer**

Well, I care about it.

**Roommate S**

Yeah, that's the weirdest part. Remember what YOU wore to rush freshman year? What was it, pants and a t-shirt?

**Summer**

Well hey, I'm from the North. I had no idea about your "Southern belle dresses." Not to mention the recruitment packet says to wear shorts, or cute pants! I mean I felt like an idiot but how was I supposed to know any better?

**Roommate S**

And don't forget you went to public school!!!

*Her roommate laughs at her own joke. Summer is used to the jokes. Between the dairy farm, being from the North, and going to public school she has heard it all before. Though she didn't know it when she was joining, Summer soon found out through jokes directed her way that there are apparently stereotypes about girls from the North and girls from public schools that make others think that coming from these places means you are trashy or couldn't afford private school. Summer knows that even though her public school was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation, her Zeta Chi friends won't understand as they seem to buy into TV portrayals of public schools as run-down places with crazy Hispanic gun fights and girl gangs. She knows it's just a running joke and has decided it's easier to just play along.*

**Summer**

Exactly. You better watch out!

But seriously, I didn't have a whole line-up of alums in my family to help me pick out what to wear.

**Roommate S**

And look at you now, worried about your dress being from last year!

**Summer**

Well, if you'd felt as stupid as I did that day, you'd make sure to fit in better next time too!

**Roommate S**

Yeah, I guess. But I mean, you've kinda taken it to the extreme, Miss Fashionista.

*Her roommate jokes with her, twirling around the room to mock Summer's fabulousness. Summer replies sarcastically and moves on.*

**Summer**

Ha ha ha.

Remember last year when I called to warn my little sister before rush?

**Roommate S**

Oh yeah, you had met her right?

**Summer**

Yeah. Well I told her to let me know if she needed any advice on what to wear because take it from me, girls from up North don't really always know what's going on.

**Roommate S**

Right. But look, YOU got in. Although maybe we should have been more careful seeing as how you just tried to wear your BOOBY DRESS..

*Her roommate shakes her chest back and forth at Summer like a stripper.*

*Summer jumps over to the couch her roommate is sitting on and begins to jokingly beat her up.*

**Roommate S and Summer**

*Laughing and screaming*

*They might all give her a lot of crap for being who she is and where she is from but she can't imagine making better friends. Plus, she is a strong girl and knew from the judgmental ways some people looked at her on day one, what she was getting into. Still, she wouldn't have it any other way.*

*In the middle of their joking they hear someone entering the apartment.*

**Roommate C**

What the heck's that smell?

*Summer and her roommate stop what they're doing, look at each other, and begin to laugh.*

### **Director's Comments:**

While it was assumed most women in Zeta Chi already upheld these expectations of appropriate ladylikeness because of their upbringing, sometimes new members were seen as needing more guidance about their self-presentation. My participants spoke about new members who "hadn't learned our ways," about the "dissemination of norms" that took place within Zeta Chi, and about the ways in which others noted they had "become sorority women" through their appearance and behaviors. Apparently there was a running joke that girls from the North and girls from public school were the most likely to need guidance regarding appropriateness.

While most of the attention placed on the North was friendly joking caught up in stereotypes, there was at the same time a definite distinction assumed between the North



and the South. I often heard differences in behaviors stereotypically attributed to differences between the North and South. For example, the stereotype was that girls from the North showed more skin, were louder, and swore more often. During a story about a particularly loud and annoying sorority member, the storyteller looked at me and said “No offense, but she was a Yankee.” I also heard women making distinctions between the North and South in their expectations for “acting like a lady.” For example, during a discussion of swearing and ladylikeness, one participant noted that while she watched her language at USouthern, making sure not to offend people, “it doesn’t even factor into my family up North, but in the South it matters.” Although in general I did not feel that women were overtly judging Northern behaviors as “bad,” it was clear that most women at least saw a difference between the two, with the North being more synonymous with “less ladylike” behaviors.

At the same time there was an odd pride in having Northern roots and exhibiting Northern behaviors. I found that when certain women performed more assertive behaviors, they often attributed it to the fact that one parent was from the North. For example, one participant I observed was telling the group about her aggressive driving skills, saying, “My Dad’s from Brooklyn and he taught me not to take any crap from anyone.” I also heard a woman known for her incredibly dry sarcasm attribute it to her parents’ being from New Jersey. Therefore, while the North was often aligned with “less ladylike” behaviors, there were times when one took pride in exhibiting such behaviors and having Northern connections, even if one might become the butt of a joke.

Joking among the women was not limited to jokes made about the North. In fact, I was often pleasantly surprised by the sense of humor of my participants. They were often sarcastic, self-deprecating, and to the point. Their joking mostly revolved around issues of appearance, gender, sexuality, and unladylike behavior in ways that made light of the many expectations they felt caught up in as Zeta Chi sorority women and as women in general. At times jokes were used as a form of discipline, setting boundaries for what behaviors were acceptable by making fun of those that were not. However, joking was also used to show shared cultural understanding, create relationships, and alleviate situations by confronting one another in a socially accepted manner.

Although joking was often used and seen as an acceptable way to confront controversy, my participants noted that there was simultaneously an expectation to remain non-confrontational in friendships with other Zeta Chi. One participant attributed the expectation of such behavior to Southern upbringing, which expected non-aggressive women, and to the values of Zeta Chi, which expected members to maintain close bonds of friendship in light of difference. Although there were women who were specifically known to ignore these expectations, being both up front and to the point with their opinions of others, many participants participated in non-confrontational behavior in order to keep the peace and maintain relationships. This behavior also helped to maintain the image of the Zeta Chi motto, “A continual circle of friendship,” and therefore was again an expectation related to issues of self-presentation and reputation. Overt confrontation was frowned upon. However, in its place covert “behind the back” conversations with friends were used as a way to vent about conflict with others. While

this covert venting was sometimes spiteful and used to discipline certain behaviors (see Chapter 5), it also positively reinforced relationships and opened space for individuals to talk about their own opinions and needs. Not limited to sorority experiences, venting to friends was an important part of disseminating values, staying connected, and “getting over” relational issues with other members without confronting them directly. Although interpersonal conflict still erupted from time to time, it was typically kept private and quickly extinguished through the intervention of mutual acquaintances trying to be good friends, maintain expectations to be ladylike, and uphold the reputation of Zeta Chi.

CUT TO:

**SHARERS-DOWNTOWN BAR-NIGHT BEFORE RUSH**

As we zoom in from a clear, starry, night sky, a bird’s eye view shows the bustling downtown streets that we have already been introduced to in the last scene. The camera scans the whole downtown area, making sure to include an obvious shot of Summer’s apartment building as a reference point to the main strips and adjoining streets we will now be visiting. The camera slowly zooms down to street level on one of the less crowded side streets and we begin to hear the chatter, laughter, and yelling of students dressed to the nines.

The camera moves along the semi-loud street until it reaches the window front of a bar whose hanging sign reads SHARERS, in USouthern’s well known colors of brown and black. Outside the bar is a line of around 10-15 twenty-somethings all waiting to have their ID checked by a muscular, gelled-haired, 30-year-old in a tight t-shirt and baggy jeans, the most metrosexual male we will see on this “Greek” side of town.

For those in the know, SHARERS is the hangout for junior and senior Greeks. For those not in the know, it becomes obvious this is a Greek hangout as stereotypic “fratastic” dress is often well represented by the patrons. Although not all Greeks follow this fratastic dress code, many are at least pseudo-fratty and there is an overabundance of Greek lettered t-shirts, guys in above-the-knee khaki shorts, boat shoes without socks, and tucked-in polo shirts and girls with designer purses, Ugg boots, popped-collar polo shirts, lopsided ponytails and the latest fashion trend, men’s shirts over black leggings.

As the camera skips to the front of the line and enters the bar, we are immediately enveloped by a soft yellowy-orange glow that radiates from the hanging ceiling lights and the accent illumination that frames the seating area and the two bar areas that are to the right and the far back of the room. There are four large black marble columns down the middle of the bar that separate these two bar areas from the bench and cushy ottoman seating that lines a fully mirrored wall. Above each of the bar areas is a large flat-screen TV. The TV over the side bar is showing a college football game, while the TV over the far back bar is showing ultimate fighting. As we enter there are 5 or 6 women sitting and talking in the seating to our left, but most people in the bar are grouped at the far end of the room drinking, ordering drinks from the bar, talking, and ooh-ing and ahh-ing over the events of the ultimate fighting match.

**Christine**, a senior Zeta Chi, storms into the bar. She has wavy brown hair down to her shoulders, which she usually wears in side barrettes, small green eyes with no eyelashes, a prominent, yet elegant nose, thick pink lips, white teeth, and one small blemish which she complains is her worst breakout ever. Although she doesn't wear much makeup and classifies herself as a tomboy, she will never leave the house without at least her eyeliner and some type of earrings, preferably her pearls. She is about 5'2" with a thin, athletic build that she has no trouble maintaining through her participation in every sorority intramural sport available. However, this year has been different. She has found herself spending less time participating in the sorority sport brackets and has instead taken to exercising with her boyfriend, Stuart, and her friends from her pre-med classes. This has caused some trouble with her Zeta Chi friends since as she spends more time with her boyfriend and friends from class, she no longer has the desire to pay dues just to participate in sorority events that she really has no interest or reason to attend.

Her fading participation in Zeta Chi does not upset her parents since they were upset from the start that she joined Zeta Chi over the Jewish sorority on campus. While they never came out and said it to her, Christine knows her parent's insistence that she pay half her Zeta Chi dues was a way to show their disapproval. Still, rather than have this deter her, Christine, being the strong-headed girl she is, ignored her parent's lack of enthusiasm and has been working part-time to pay her dues.

However, there is more to this fading participation in Zeta Chi than just a new boyfriend and new friends. Lately, the typically confident and bubbly Christine has started to feel confused. She has begun to question who she is and what she wants from her life. She has especially started to critique her usually blind allegiance to Zeta Chi. She joined for many reasons, but lately she has been seeing things differently. Sadly, she feels like some of the things going on have confirmed all of the negative stereotypes of a sorority. Torn between her love for her Zeta Chi friends, her love for her boyfriend, her excitement in her new friends, and her newly critical convictions, Christine has found herself anxious and almost absent from her own life.

As we watch Christine enter the bar, it becomes evident from the way she is walking that she is in a hurry and obviously agitated. Taking the short walk from her apartment, Christine has come to the bar searching for Summer, her little sister and roommate, to confide in. Something has just occurred between Christine and a Zeta Chi mother – a confrontation that has made Christine furious. Even though Summer loves being a Zeta Chi more than anything, Christine knows Summer is real enough to admit that with all good comes some bad.

Christine always knew there was bad too. For some reason she chose not to pay attention to it, but with everything else going on in her life, she just can't handle it anymore. She at least knows Summer is one person who is on her side no matter what.

Christine immediately looks for the best-dressed girl in the room. Instead, she is surprised to spot Summer at the back bar in the blue and orange Zeta Chi t-shirt she wore earlier that day for mock rush, a

practice run-through the sorority does of what will occur over the five days of recruitment. Wearing a t-shirt downtown is oddly out of character for Summer and, even in her rage, Christine thinks to herself that Summer must have been in a hurry to come out not dressed to the nines.

In the middle of a grimaced "oohhhhh," Summer's eyes leave the TV screen and she coincidentally locks eyes with Christine. She notices something is wrong, breaks from the group of fraternity guys she has been cheering the fight on with, and pushes her way through the crowd toward her big sis.

**Summer**

What's wrong?

*Summer hopes it might be something with Stuart. Even though she is happy Christine thinks she is in love, none of Christine's friends really like the way Stuart belittles her all the time. Not to mention they blame his anti-frat mentality for most of Christine's current dilemmas about Zeta Chi.*

**Summer**

What? What is it?

*Christine pulls Summer to an open ottoman in the seating area and looks around to make sure no one can hear.*

**Christine**

You are not going to believe what just happened?

**Summer**

Tell me.

**Christine**

Okay, so you know that I designed the Zeta Chi website this year right?

**Summer**

Right.

**Christine**

Well I was just at Zeta Chi working on some really quick finishing touches and guess who I had to meet with?

**Summer**

Who?

**Christine**

Miss Maddie!

**Summer**

Oh no, really? She is that annoying mother right? The one everyone can't stand but that gives us money?

**Christine**

Yeah, you know that sophomore Yarah? It's her big sis's mom.

**Summer**

Yeah that's right.

**Christine**

Well, a few weeks ago she started e-mailing me saying that she wanted to meet with me about the website.

**Summer**

That's weird.

**Christine**

Yeah that's what I thought, but since she is such a big donor, I figured I better keep her happy. I wrote back and was just like "okay, that's fine, meet me today blah blah."

**Summer**

That's much nicer than I would have been.

**Christine**

Well believe me I wish I hadn't.

So, she comes in today, and mind you the website has been done for a while because it needed to be done for rush, or recruitment, whatever...

**Summer**

Right...

**Christine**

And so she sits down and starts telling me that like, she would like to point out the positive points of the website but then she starts to say...

**Roommate C**

Hey chicas, what ya doing?

*Christine is interrupted by their other roommate. She should have known they'd run into everyone they knew at SHARERS.*

*She forces a smile as her roommate sits down ready to become part of their conversation. Even though Christine loves her, she knows that this roommate is not as understanding as Summer. She really doesn't want to tell her story in front of this roommate, but decides she has to finish telling Summer or she'll just explode. Summer, aware of the tension between the two friends, always tries to stay loyal to her big sis, and so rolls her eyes in annoyance to Christine as the roommate takes a quick glance at the rest of the bar. Christine decides to continue on, annoyed that her alone time with Summer has been spoiled.*

*Summer re-starts the conversation with a neutral response that could serve as a cover-up in case Christine wants to continue her story at a later time.*

**Summer**

Oh, we were just talking about what we did today.

*Giving Summer a "thanks, but I'll just tell her" look, Christine starts back into her ordeal.*

**Christine**

Well, actually I was just telling Summer about how angry I am at Miss Maddie.

**Roommate C**

Oh, Miss Maddie, why would you be angry at her?

*Christine shoots Summer a look saying "you were right, I should not have brought her into this" but continues on.*

**Christine**

Well, like I told Summer, Miss Maddie came in today because she wanted to talk to me about the Zeta Chi website that I am in charge of and she starts talking to me about all the great things about the site but then all of a sudden she starts to say it's not good enough yet and yadda yadda yadda. Then she backs up, looks at me and says, "Christine, do you know that we hide girls during rush?"

**Summer**

WHAT?

**Christine**

Yeah, right. I just kinda like looked at her. She goes, "We hide girls during rush, and well, there are girls that we just, you know, we have, we put them in places where they're not seen during rush."

*Summer forgets where she is and lets her Northern roots show.*

**Summer**

Shut the fuck up!

*Roommate C cringes at Summer's use of the F-bomb especially while she is wearing her Zeta Chi letters. Summer notices but ignores her disapproval. Roommate C then continues listening without expression.*

**Christine**

Yeah, right. Unbelievable. She goes, "well some of these people that we hide during rush, well some of their pictures are on this website and I think that you should remove them."

**Summer**

Are you fucking kidding me?

**Christine**

Right, I know.

**Roommate C**

Well I think she just meant to hide the girls that are unpersonable.

**Christine**

You can't tell personable in a picture.

You know she was talking about girls who aren't stereotypically good looking. You know, people who don't have perfect skin, perfect hair, or are a size 2. That kinda superficial crap.

**Summer**

That's bullshit. Look at HER, she's not that attractive of a lady by the way to be saying...

**Roommate C**

Actually, she has a beautiful face, she's just really large.

**Summer**

...and not that obesity is bad, but it's her personality combined with - you just want to go "you should go on a diet." You know that kind of person.

*Roommate C shoots Summer a look like "I know you're not talking about people who need to go on diets." Luckily Summer doesn't notice. Christine does and thinks to herself, "That's exactly why we aren't as close as we used to be."*

**Summer**

Anyway, What did you say?

**Christine**

Well I was appalled!!! I was like "Miss Maddie, these girls are just as much a part of this sorority as I am and their pictures will not be removed."

**Summer**

Damn, good for you. I can't even believe it.

*Roommate C looks on with a surprised and concerned look on her face and decides she just has to speak up.*

**Roommate C**

But Miss Maddie does so much for our sorority. It's one of those like love-hate relationships. Like we can't just disregard her because she's basically the one responsible for everything we've done to the house this year, painting the rooms, expanding, you know?

*Not wanting to hear this right now, Christine ignores her roommate and continues on as if she hadn't heard the last comment.*

**Christine**

Yeah, so that's what I said back to her, which I was really proud of myself cause I'm really not confrontational...anyway. After I told her I wouldn't be removing the pictures, she just looked at me and was like "Well then, there are some pictures of my daughter on here that are unflattering" and then she handed me pictures and was like "I will need you to replace those with these pictures."

**Summer**

Shut up!! This just gets more and more nuts! Is she out of her mind? What did you say?!

**Christine**

I was like "I will not be changing the website. It will not be changed."

**Summer**

Wow! You're a bad ass.

**Roommate C**

So you didn't change it?

**Christine**

Hell no, I didn't change it!

**Roommate C**

I don't see why you are so upset.

*Christine looks at Summer. Summer swears she can see red in Christine's eyes.*

**Summer**

What do you mean?

**Roommate C**

I mean, during rush there are so many things that I disagree with but on the surface it does make a difference with our numbers. Like you both know we line up the more expensive cars at the top of the driveway and we'll put the prettier girls on the front row so that's who people see first. I think you should have just done what she asked. It makes sense.

**Christine**

Are you serious?

**Roommate C**

They've done studies with babies where you know, if a traditional well-kept, clean looking woman says their name or a kind of scraggly looking woman does, they'll go to the pretty women and it's just aesthetically pleasing.

*Christine can't deal with this. This is exactly what she was talking about when she complained about Zeta Chi. She didn't know what had changed in her that made her all of a sudden see things differently. Had she really just been okay with these things in the past or were things getting worse? Knowing that talking to her roommate was useless, she decided to use Stuart as an excuse to leave. She knew this didn't always make him the most popular with her friends, but recently she liked having him as an excuse to get away when she wanted.*

**Christine**

Well, I have to get going.

**Roommate C**

Why? What's wrong?

**Christine**

Oh, nothing, I just told Stuart I would meet him and some of his friends.

**Roommate C**

Oh, okay.



*Summer, knowing that Christine was upset, gives her a little wink.*

**Summer**

I'll be up late if you want to talk when you get home.

**Christine**

Okay, thanks. Have fun! Be good. Especially you, Summer!

**Summer**

Oh, you know me!

*Christine gets up and walks out the front door. She can't stop thinking to herself "What has happened to me?" Things that she used to take for granted are all of a sudden infuriating her. As she is walking she catches a glimpse of herself in a shop window. "Was I just accepted because I looked the part?" she thought. She had specifically chosen Zeta Chi because she thought they were different. She thought they were really laid-back and not really about ridiculous expectations for the girls. Had she just been blind?*

*Christine takes out her cell phone and begins to text Stuart.*

*Back at the bar Summer is left to pick up the pieces.*

**Roommate C**

What's her problem?

**Summer**

Oh, she's just having a bad day.

**Roommate C**

Do you think it was right of her to not change it?

**Summer**

I mean, I'm grateful for her money, but really I'm not the one to be asking. I was probably one of the girls Miss Maddie wanted to crop out of the pictures.

**Roommate C**

Oh, be quiet! You're like the coolest girl in our whole sorority.

**Summer**

Thanks, but you can't see cool in a picture.

*Finally admitting to herself for a moment that Summer might be right, Roommate C decides to change the subject.*

**Roommate C**

Are those guys waving to you?

**Summer**

Oh yeah, those are the guys I was watching the fight with before Christine came in. Want me to introduce you? They are all Kappa Beta.

**Roommate C**

Wow, Kappa Beta, huh? I'm impressed.  
The one on the right is pretty hot.

**Summer**

You WOULD pick him! But somehow I don't see him respecting your wish to wait until marriage, if you know what I mean. He is hot, but I have a feeling he might be a real asshole.

**Roommate C**

Language, language!

**Summer**

Sorry, I forgot who I was talking to.

**Roommate C**

Introduce me anyway. To tell you the truth, the older I get, the more like unrealistic I feel like waiting 'til marriage is.

*Summer is surprised to hear this come out of her roommate's mouth, but not wanting to make a big deal out of it or make her roommate feel like she would judge her for any choice she makes, Summer simply looks at her roommate and raises her shoulders and eyebrows. Without a word she grabs her roommate's hand and leads her over to the crowded back of the bar. Summer introduces her roommate to the guys and "the hot one" offers to buy them each a drink. They accept. However, Summer is sure to follow him to the bar and watch her drinks be poured and carried back to her friend free of anything sketchy. Wanting to have sex and being roofied into sex were two very different things.*

**Director's Comments:**

Although there was an expectation that all Zeta Chi members were blindly dedicated to Zeta Chi and its values, I was introduced to some participants who were very upfront about their negative views of Zeta Chi and their wavering dedication. I was actually surprised by their negative attitudes toward Zeta Chi because at the time I was enjoying being part of the sorority and had become a bit infatuated with my new group of "friends," the constant social events, and the camaraderie I felt. I knew that I would have to step back from my experiences to take a more critical position, but my stereotypes of "happy, naive" sorority women had led me to overlook the possibility of finding women within Zeta Chi who would share that same critical stance. Although three participants in particular introduced me to insider criticism of Zeta Chi, by the end of my research I recognized that many of my participants were not blindly accepting Zeta Chi values and expectations, but instead were aware of many of them and either resisting them, re-interpreting them, or willingly accepting them, both positive and negative, in order to be part of the larger group.

Those participants who critiqued Zeta Chi often made claims concerning superficiality and ignorance among its members. Some noted that they felt their relationships with other Zeta Chi always remained on the surface, that they could not find peers with whom to discuss important societal issues, and that they had trouble with other members' close-minded perceptions of race, class, and gender (although they admitted and I knew that there were many very intelligent women in the sorority). They also complained that while they had made some friends in Zeta Chi that they felt they would keep for life, they had found women more like them who they felt could be just as good, if not better friends

than the ones they had made in Zeta Chi through their classes and other extra-curricular activities.

One participant in particular was strongly questioning her own participation in Zeta Chi and complained that she was just overwhelmed with the lack of care the Greek system gave to issues of rape and female objectivity. She felt that the entire system, as well as her first group of close Zeta Chi friends, ignored the ways that many sorority women were treated by men, always expected to act in certain ways and maintain certain feminine appearances. Although she finally found some very close friends within Zeta Chi, she eventually chose to de-sister (a simple process of signing papers). This relieved her from Zeta Chi duties (such as attending Chapter and pre-rush/rush) and sorority social events, allowing her to spend more time on her other interests. Although her Zeta Chi friends sometimes missed her at events and regretted her decision, they remained close to her even after she de-sistered. Other women also re-considered their membership in Zeta Chi, noting that if they knew then what they knew now as seniors they wouldn't have joined. However, none of them chose to de-sister (although they became inactive members) because as one participant stated, her ties to Zeta Chi would be helpful in making professional connections.

I was impressed by these women's recognition of the negative aspects of being in Zeta Chi. However, except for the woman who ended up de-sistering, my participants almost never critiqued the disciplined expectations of ladylikeness—expectations that, as an outsider, I felt were overwhelmingly restrictive. I had assumed that the numerous expectations for behavior and presentation would be one of the more difficult aspects of being in the sorority and perhaps a top reason to consider giving up Zeta Chi membership. Instead, while participants were aware of the expectations and sometimes resisted or re-interpreted them, for the most part these women who felt so negative about Zeta Chi still believed that they should always try to be ladies. They explained that even though there were more expectations of them than of non-sorority women, the expectations were ones that the women already wanted to live up to because of their upbringing.

I often felt a disconnect when the women I had built strong relationships with still did not recognize the restrictive and overly gendered nature of these expectations of ladylike. Even when they had “progressive” beliefs in other areas, they accepted expectations of ladylikeness as the uncontested “Truths” of being female. It seemed to be such a contradiction. Even the women who saw negative aspects of sorority life tended to view the highly prescribed gendered expectations that I was so shocked by as normal, natural, and important to their development as women. After learning more about Zeta Chi, I soon recognized that most of these women had been so strongly subjected to the combination of their upbringing, the discursive expectations of ladylike within Zeta Chi, and the systems of discipline that Zeta Chi and its members constantly took part in that they could not “see” beyond these expectations to the other possibilities that might be viable as female gender performances. To fully explore the ways in which Zeta Chi maintained these discursive expectations of ladylikeness, I moved into an examination of the

disciplinary practices that defined, enabled, and reinforced specific “Truths” of femininity within Zeta Chi.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCIPLINE OF LADYLIKENESS

Shooting Draft

**Director's Comments:**

The following four scenes reinforce the discourses of ladylikeness that have already been introduced and further develop and explore issues of dissemination and discipline around those discourses. In particular, the following four scenes explore overt discipline enforced by Zeta Chi ruling bodies (Standards and Nationals), dissemination of rules through new member meetings, and covert discipline and dissemination of expectations that occurred through "girl talk" and around issues of "girl safety."

**FADE IN:****OCTOBER: ZX HOUSE-MONTH AFTER BID DAY-DATE NIGHT "CUPID'S BALL"-7:00PM**

We zoom from a birds-eye view of the Crescent Area to an overview of the Zeta Chi house. The front of the house no longer shows signs of recruitment or bid day banners or balloons, as pledges have already been given and accepted their bids to join Zeta Chi and are in the process of being inducted as new members. However, the member holding the "banner office" has created a new banner that hangs from the front columns alerting members and the public to the current Zeta Chi philanthropic project: "The Zeta Chi First Annual Karnival for Kids" – one of many events held to raise money for Zeta Chi's philanthropic effort, St. Anthony's Children's Hospital. The camera follows the banner down to focus on a girl entering the house. She punches in a code on the front door key pad, opens the door, says hello to other passing Zeta Chis, waves to an older White woman (the house mother who lives in an adjacent apartment), and picks up a cookie from a plate left for the girls by the house cook, Miss Althea. The camera follows the sophomore Zeta Chi as she devours Miss Althea's famous chocolate chip cookie and moves up the flight of carpeted stairs leading to the second floor bedrooms where sophomore members and sorority officers (mostly juniors and seniors) dorm. While there are strict rules for living in the house, such as no boys or alcohol, most sophomores hope their GPA's are high enough to earn them a place in the house so that they can build stronger friendships with the other girls in Zeta Chi. The sophomore moves down a cream carpeted hall lined with wooden doors numbered and labeled with hanging pin-up boards that display the room's motto (chosen by the girls) and a picture of the room's inhabitants hugging each other and smiling. As the sophomore stops at the door to her room, we see by the hanging picture that she is in fact Yarah's roommate. Wiping crumbs from her mouth she opens the door.

As the door opens we see Yarah and two housemates commenting on different dresses as they stand in front of Yarah's closet. The camera moves around the green pastel room as a Martina McBride CD plays in the

background. The room, identical to all rooms in the house except for color, is 15 by 20 feet, with two raised single beds with wooden frames, two built-in wooden closets, a 6'-by-4' window, a six-drawer dresser, and a desk and chair. Yarah and her roommate, like all their housemates, have coordinated their brightly colored pastel bed spreads and have decorated their room with a mixture of similar colored posters, drawn pictures, and wall hangings. Their room is also plastered with photographs of themselves and friends/dates hugging and smiling at sorority events and with mascot-decaled cheeks at USouthern football games. Yarah looks over from her conversation, smiling at her roommate.

**Yarah**

Hey, I was wondering where you were! Aren't you going to date night tonight?

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, maybe. But I really don't have anything to wear.

**Yarah**

Well, why don't you borrow one of my dresses? They might be a little big but I'm sure you could find something.

**Roommate Y**

Yarah, you act like you're huge. You're what a size 6 at most?

**Yarah**

Yeah, but what are you, a size 4?

**Roommate Y**

I don't even know.

**Yarah**

Well, let me know if you want to look through my dresses.

**Roommate Y**

Maybe, let me think about it.

**Yarah**

Okay. Just let me know.

*Yarah thinks to herself how weird it is that her roommate isn't all about going to date night. Usually Yarah has to pull her roommate away from the party to get her to go home. In fact, she has a bit of a reputation for, well, having an extravagant personality. Yarah wondered what was up. Wanting to talk to her roommate alone, she tells the girls she is talking to that she'll be over to their room after she gets ready. The two girls walk out, leaving Yarah and her roommate alone.*

**Yarah**

Okay, what is going on?

**Roommate Y**

What do you mean?

**Yarah**

It is so obvious something is wrong. It's not like you to skip a social. Especially this one since so many people are bringing our guy friends from Kappa Beta as their dates.

**Roommate Y**

Promise you won't tell everyone. I mean I'm sure everyone will find out but I'd like to try and not make it the topic of conversation for everyone tonight.

**Yarah**

Yeah, you know me. What's up?

**Roommate Y**

I got called into Standards and now I'm on social probation for the next few weeks.

**Yarah**

Really?! Why? What did they call you in for?

**Roommate Y**

Well, apparently they were concerned with my behavior at the past few events.

**Yarah**

That's weird, I didn't think you did anything out of the ordinary.

**Roommate Y**

Well, they say that is the problem. They think my typical behavior is drawing negative attention to Zeta Chi.

**Yarah**

Well, you like to have fun, but what's wrong with that?

*As soon as this question comes out of her mouth Yarah flashes back, remembering a few times when she was made uncomfortable by her roommate's behavior. Now she begins to feel guilty she never said anything to her about it. Maybe if her friends had spoken to her about keeping it tasteful she wouldn't have to feel embarrassed about getting in trouble from the older Zeta Chis on Standards who don't really even know her.*

**Roommate Y**

They told me that I need to settle down and be more "withholding of my affection." They said that it is okay to have fun but that there has been talk that I date a whole bunch of frat boys and that I'm not being "ladylike" in public with them. (57-39, D-1506) Do you think I'm an embarrassment?

**Yarah**

Well, they are just going on what they have heard from who knows who and are just doing what they think is best. The truth is that none of them are good friends with us, so it is going to be easier for them to call us in for things - things they'd probably let their friends get away with.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah I guess, but that really isn't fair.

**Yarah**

Yeah, but you even heard that senior saying how sophomores and freshmen are more likely to get called into Standards. Those girls don't really know us and we haven't really learned their ways yet so it's more likely we'll mess up. I wouldn't take it too personally.

**Roommate Y**

I just feel like I don't even know how to act now. Like I'll just get in trouble for being myself.

**Yarah**

I'd be yourself, but you know, when you're in public just use good judgment, be tasteful. If you want I'll tell you if you are getting out of hand. You know I think they are being harder on us this year than they were last year because of that whole ordeal this summer with my big sis.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, whatever happened with all that?

*Her roommate hopes that asking about Yarah's big sis will take the focus off of her. She is starting to feel the way she felt the times her mother would talk to her about being proper and not hanging out with un-ladylike friends. "There are just certain things that as a girl you do and certain kinds of things that you don't" her mother would always say.*

**Yarah**

Well you know she went on a date night to a Bisons game and got really drunk and was like making out with guys on the back of the bus. I guess everyone saw it and people were even taking pictures.

**Roommate Y**

See, now THAT I can see getting in trouble for. But, it's not like I'm getting wasted and letting people take pictures of me making out.

**Yarah**

No, but I mean sometimes you drink a lot.

*Yarah thinks maybe if she is Truthful with her roommate now she might save her from getting in trouble in the future.*

**Roommate Y**

Well sometimes, but not to the point where...

**Yarah**

And there are times you have starting making out at the bar.

**Roommate Y**

Wow, tell me how you really feel.

**Yarah**

I'm just trying to help you, don't get mad.



*Yarah is known for her straightforwardness. Most of her friends see her almost as a mother figure. She's isn't always the most eloquent, but she gets her point across. She is such a combination of insightfulness, ditzy cluelessness, and kindness that no one can ever stay mad at her. She can pull off being extremely offensive, while at the same time making you want to be her best friend. Her roommate falls under her spell and quickly forgets she was ever angry.*

**Roommate Y**

I know. Sometimes it's just hard to deal with all these people watching you and always having to follow some kind of rules. It's like having a magnifying glass on you.

**Yarah**

Yeah, but I mean our reputation is everything. You can make an impression on people here faster than you realize. If one girl makes a bad impression on people, it can make a bad impression of all of us. Not that I think you are doing that, but that is why we have to watch each other.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, I know and I don't want to be that girl. But I just don't think my behavior is anything like your big sis.

**Yarah**

Of course not. No one said it was. I mean she really got into trouble. She got called up by Nationals and I heard they are debating the status of her membership. She's basically going to be terminated. How awful does that sound? Terminated.

**Roommate Y**

Wow, she must be really embarrassed. I mean wasn't she the one always talking about how being Zeta Chi is "very, very highly valued"? Getting "terminated" must be really embarrassing for her.

**Yarah**

Totally. So I mean don't worry about missing a few social events. They have to call someone into Standards or they wouldn't have anything to do. I heard someone got called in last week even for some financial stuff. I'm telling you, they feel like they have to be tougher because of this whole thing with my big sis.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, well just don't spread it around. I'm just going to tell people I have a big project coming up or something.

**Yarah**

Don't worry. People will be so busy trying to hook up that they won't even notice. You know how these events are – there are so many of them people forget what happens from one to the next.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, you're right.

**Yarah**

Well, I have to go jump in the shower or I'm going to be late. Just don't worry about it. No one cares.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, I know. Well, let me know if you want me to do your hair again.  
It looked really good last time.

**Yarah**

I was just going to throw it up in a wet bun. It will be fine.

**Roommate Y**

No it won't. I'll do it for you. Hurry up.

**Yarah**

Alright, I'm going, I'm going.

*Yarah grabs her towel and toiletries and heads to the shower. She feels guilty that Roommate Y can't go, but at the same time she feels like it is kind of her own fault. They've all been told what kind of behavior is expected. Hopefully she learned her lesson and won't have to miss any more events. Yarah knows it just won't be as much fun going out without her.*

*After her shower she gets dressed and takes off her black toenail polish and polishes them pink. Then her roommate does her hair. Yarah thanks her with a hug and leaves to go downstairs, meeting her other friend in the hall to head over to their date's fraternity house for pre-game drinking. Her friend walks up and points to the half-closed door of Yarah's room.*

**Friend A**

Isn't she coming with us?

**Yarah**

No.

**Friend A**

What? Why? What's wrong?

*Yarah looks to make sure her roommate isn't looking. She meant her promise not to tell anyone, but this is her good friend. She can't keep things from her.*

**Yarah**

You promise you won't say anything to anyone.

**Friend A**

Yeah, I promise.

**Yarah**

She got called into Standards and is on social probation.

*Their other friend comes out of her room and overhears them talking.*

**Friend B**

Wait, who's on social probation?

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**Director's Comments:**

My first experiences with the more overt types of discipline found within Zeta Chi had to do with stories that I heard about Standards and Nationals. Standards is a ruling body run by elected upperclassmen that acts similar to a court system within Zeta Chi. After every Chapter meeting, Standards would organize to reprimand and give out punishments, usually forced exclusion from future social events, to women who had committed offenses. The most common offenses were those that could potentially create negative press for Zeta Chi and often had to do with public displays of “unladylikeness” including dancing on bars, being too sexual, being too drunk, or underage drinking. I was told that these offenses were most problematic because they would make a bad impression of the entire sorority. I did hear of one member being called into standards for being late with her dues, but all other instances in which Standards was brought up had to do with “inappropriate” public behavior.

Public displays were constantly watched and judged by all Zeta Chi members, any of whom could report a fellow member to Standards for “inappropriate” behavior. Although most members were only reported after repeat offenses (and the “inappropriate” behaviors of close friends were often overlooked), there was what seemed to be an acceptance of “tattling” on one another if it meant upholding the respectable reputation of the entire sorority. Members who were brought into Standards accepted their punishment with the recognition that the reputation of the group was more important than their individuality. The intense pressure for all Zeta Chi to help maintain the reputation of a “good” sorority created this overt system of discipline that pitted member against member in a fight to uphold ladylike decency. Similar to the ways in which my participants accepted different rules for sorority women and fraternity men, members of Zeta Chi accepted Standards and the constant “watching,” believing that standards were an important part of maintaining a good reputation, part of their proud tradition of being “self-run,” and a fair way of keeping individual members from causing problems for the sorority.

As somewhat of a contradiction to the overt power of Standards, being called in was often joked about and recognized as a rite of passage for many new members who were learning their own limits in behavior and alcohol consumption. Being called into Standards was embarrassing to some extent and could develop individual reputations as “the bad egg” or “the wild one;” however, in my experience, the women with such reputations were not particularly shunned. They often still had large friendship groups (even if they were judged by those outside their group), were considered fun at parties, and even after punishment often maintained aspects of their “wildness.” While reporting to Standards was an overt method of discipline, the typical consequences were often meant more to remind members of the need for “ladylike” behavior than to threaten termination from Zeta Chi. If an offense was committed that was severe enough for termination to be considered, Standards often referred the case to Nationals.

All written minutes from Standards are copied and sent to Nationals, the national ruling body of all local Zeta Chi chapters, which functioned as the Supreme Court of all Zeta Chi. For the most part, Nationals allows each chapter to run its own system of

discipline/standards, but there are times when Nationals interfered. In particular, Nationals interfered or was called when major public offenses were committed by members. I gained firsthand knowledge of this process when Zeta Chi was harshly punished by Nationals during my research because of a Zeta Chi public offense having to do with underage drinking. The local chapter and USouthern banded together to quickly reprimand the entire sorority (many of the individuals involved were on Standards and therefore the entire sorority was held accountable). However, when Nationals heard about the offense they felt the punishment given by the local chapter and USouthern was too lenient and enforced a much harsher punishment. Although most members and the advisor of Zeta Chi felt that the punishment was disproportionate to the offense, it was decided that they would accept it rather than trying to fight it, an action that would have drawn negative public attention to the local chapter. Trying to maintain their reputation, Zeta Chi accepted the rules that were placed on them by Nationals, even though they did not agree with them. This acceptance of discipline by those in positions of power was an important part of the health and reputation of Zeta Chi sorority.

**CUT TO:**

**USOUTHERN FRESHMAN GIRLS DORM-DATE NIGHT-7:00PM**

As we zoom in from a sunset sky, bird's-eye view we see a large university campus spotted with green spaces, street lights, sports stadiums/fields, and brick buildings. Moving in from the bird's-eye view, the camera focuses in on a fifteen story, gray brick building with square windows and a white and black marker reading BOGART TOWER, FRESHMAN WOMEN'S DORM. The camera lands on this marker at the doorway of the building and then moves quickly up the outside of the building until it reaches a ninth floor window. We immediately hear the song *Soulja Man* blaring from the room's iTunes library. The camera moves inside the window to reveal a typical freshman dorm room with two beds, two closets, and two desks each displaying a MAC notebook. The room is decorated with pictures of family and friends from high school, a USouthern Centaurs calendar marked with sorority events and course exams, and white Christmas lights strung around bed posts and over the window. We find Margaret, a newly pledged Zeta Chi, pouring newly purchased eye-liner, mascara, blush, and lip gloss from a Macy's bag onto her desk top. She seems exasperated as she moves from the desk to the mirror to her closet and back again, picking up dresses, holding them up to herself, and then throwing them on the bed. She has spent the last half hour sorting through dresses as she attempts to get dressed for one of her first Zeta Chi events. Her Roommate M, a high school friend who decided not to rush a sorority, sits on her own bed looking on in disbelief.

**Roommate M**

Margaret, why are you getting so crazy about this?

**Margaret**

What?

*Margaret is obviously distracted.*

**Roommate M**

Look at you, this is supposed to be fun, not stressful.

**Margaret**

I know, I know. But you know me, I have no idea what to do with makeup.  
I have no idea what to even wear!

**Roommate M**

Just throw on some mascara and that light blue dress. It's not a fashion contest.

**Margaret**

Well, I'm worried that dress isn't formal enough. And don't you think I need to wear a little more than just mascara?

*Margaret is surprised to hear this come out of her own mouth.*

**Roommate M**

Well, is it formal or not?

**Margaret**

No, they said semi-formal. Just wear something casual.

**Roommate M**

What does that mean?

**Margaret**

I know, not much help, right? I asked Mom and she said just like not as dressy as formal, like you know down to the floor, but more dressy than like a dress I would wear downtown. I told her that didn't help cuz I would never wear a dress downtown. I think she got annoyed.

**Roommate M**

Well what is your big sis wearing? Can't she help you?

**Margaret**

Yeah, Yarah said she was going to wear a short, peacock blue strapless dress.

**Roommate M**

Well then, I think you should wear that red one with the spaghetti straps.

**Margaret**

Do you think it's too short?

*Margaret makes a face as though she is very uncomfortable.*

**Roommate M**

Well, I mean Margaret, isn't that the point? Isn't the point of these things to be a little sexy, have a little fun?

*Roommate M pulls out clear nail polish and begins doing her nails.*

**Margaret**

No, they told us it's very important how we look and act in public.

**Roommate M**

That doesn't mean you can't look sexy and have a little fun, does it?

**Margaret**

Well, they specifically told us not to publically draw attention to ourselves. Like nothing too revealing, no dancing on tables, no taking pictures with alcohol if we are under 21...

**Roommate M**

Man, that's a lot to worry about. Who told you that? What do you mean THEY tell you?

**Margaret**

We have to go to these things at Zeta Chi called New Member Meetings and we have to go through like a certain number of hours for the first six weeks of school. We like learn about the history of Zeta Chi and like what it means to be in our sorority and what values we hold. Like our morals and stuff. That's where I've been going on Wednesday nights.

**Roommate M**

And they tell you EXACTLY how to act when you are in public?

**Margaret**

You make it sound horrible. I mean it's not like "you have to do this or else," it's more like they just tell us to act in a ladylike manner that would portray or I guess embody the ideals that Zeta Chi has set forth.

**Roommate M**

Well what happens if you don't "act ladylike"?

**Margaret**

Well if you really are out of control, like wearing a miniskirt dancing drunk on a table, then you get sent to Standards, which is like the Zeta Chi "court" and they just talk to you and like give you a punishment.

*Her roommate is shocked and answers with her usual sarcasm.*

**Roommate M**

Oh, right. That doesn't sound horrible. What was I thinking?

**Margaret**

Well, I mean there is a higher expectation of what we do because we are in a sorority and we always represent more than just ourselves. You know, like we don't want one crazy girl to give us the reputation that we are all sluts or alcoholics.

*Margaret realizes she is starting to sound like her mother. She's not sure what she thinks of that.*

**Roommate M**

Okay, I guess -  
If that's what you want to worry about.

**Margaret**

But seriously, it's not like they are asking me NOT to do things I would WANT to do.

*During this entire conversation Margaret is trying to put on her makeup, mascara, eyeliner, a little blush, and do her hair. She ends up leaving it in a messy side pony-tail, a style she saw older Zeta Chi's wearing during rush.*

**Roommate M**

Wow, you're defending all of this? You've always tried to get away from having rules and now all of a sudden you are just okay with it all. You have a big bump in the back of your ponytail.

*Margaret takes her ponytail out and re-does it as she continues with her point.*

**Margaret**

It's not like it's really anything new. You know, in the South being proper and having manners, you have to, that's the standard anyway.

**Roommate M**

Yeah, all I'm saying is that's a lot to worry about all the time.

**Margaret**

But it's not like new rules. It's like you wanna get an A on a test, because you want to, but you're also being expected to. I guess it's like they expect me to act in a way I already want to act - like because of my upbringing. It becomes natural to you. I mean, I don't think your family would like it if you were drunk dancing on a bar.

**Roommate M**

My family wouldn't know if I were drunk dancing on a bar. They aren't out spying on me.

**Margaret**

Well, you let me know the next time you plan on dancing on a bar. I'd love to see it, but I don't see it happening. Don't forget you're a good little Southern girl too.

**Roommate M**

Yeah, but if I did do it I wouldn't have to go get punished.

**Margaret**

Yeah, but you don't have 175 girls who will always have your back either, you know? I mean I have instant friends for life and I really don't think it's such a big deal to follow rules I already try to follow so that I can be part of that.

**Roommate M**

Yeah. I guess I can see that.

**Margaret**

Now are you gonna help me pick out a dress or not?

**Roommate M**

I still think the red one. Maybe they'll kick you out and you can actually spend a Friday night with me.

*Margaret walks over to her old friend, sits down next to her on the bed and holds out her hand.*

**Margaret**

I bet you five bucks you'll be pledging Zeta Chi as a sophomore next August. Then we can still live together and hang out all the time.

*Her roommate playfully shakes her hand smiling thinking to herself that she likes being a GDI (God damn independent), the name non-Greeks have given themselves as a "fuck you" to Greeks.*

**Roommate M**

I bet you five bucks I don't. GDI forever!  
I don't have to pay for my friends...

**Margaret**

Yep, you're right, I'm paying for my friends, write a check every semester! Either way, I'd rather be Greek than a Geek - worried you're not cool enough to get in, huh?

*The two joke about common stereotypes non-sorority women have of sorority women: paying for friends, only dating fraternity boys, partying all the time, and living off of Daddy's money.*

**Roommate M**

More scared I would get in.  
Now put that red dress on, you hussy.

*Margaret jokingly hits her on the arm and walks over to her closet.*

**Roommate M**

Who are you going with anyway?

**Margaret**

This guy who Yarah is friends with. I guess a bunch of the girls are taking Kappa Betas, so she just asked one of them to be my date. That way the guys will know each other and it won't be weird for them.

**Roommate M**

Kappa Beta, huh? I hear they're a top fraternity on campus.

**Margaret**

That's their reputation. I guess I'll find out why tonight.

*Her roommate replies dripping with sarcasm.*

**Roommate M**

I heard it's because they are gentleman-like. No dancing on tables.

*Margaret jokingly flashes her friend an evil look. She picks out a light purple and turquoise strapless dress, pulls it on, and throws on a pair of black sandals. Looking in the mirror she thinks even though she might not be the best dressed; at least she will be comfortable.*



*She says goodbye to her roommate and heads out the door to meet her Zeta Chi friends who live down the hall. She doesn't know them well, but like her mother promised she thinks this will be the start of life-long friendships. She sees that it is 7:28 pm and begins to walk faster since she dates her big sister Yarah has set them up with are supposed to meet them outside at 7:30 pm to go to dinner.*

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**Director's Comments:**

While overt discipline and explicit punishment were established through both Nationals and Standards, the dissemination of the blatant rules of this discipline took place through New Member Meetings. These meetings, run by current members, were held over a six-week period in which new members learned the history of Zeta Chi, the founders' names, the symbols of Zeta Chi, and the expectations for behavior within Zeta Chi. I was told that while women often forgot some of the more historical information, such as the date that Zeta Chi was founded, they often remembered the more blatant rules that were made clear, rules that often were focused on gendered performance. These rules included but were not limited to no dancing on tables or bars, no smoking while in your car if marked with Zeta Chi letters, no taking pictures with alcohol if one is underage, no alcohol or boys in the house, and no "unladylike" behaviors (swearing, smoking, making out, drunkenness) when wearing your Zeta Chi letters; all rules concerned feminine modesty, decency, and ladylikeness meant to uphold a specific reputation of Zeta Chi women. Again, most of my participants believed that these rules were "easy" to follow since they were similar to those with which they were brought up, although they also admitted that there were times when even the "good girls" broke these rules.

Never having been part of a group with blatant rules and explicit punishment around "feminine behaviors" I was surprised by this entire system of overt discipline; four different entities (new member meetings, individual monitors, Standards, and Nationals) worked together to create a system of overt discipline around discourses of ladylike in order to maintain a specific reputation. New member meetings established blatant rules of behavior. All members constantly monitored one another's behaviors to make sure these rules were followed. Members who "acted out" or "slipped up" were reported to Standards, punished, and warned about repeat behavior. If the offense was severe or involved a large number of people, the case was referred to the fourth component of this system, the National ruling body, which then enforced a punishment meant to match the intensity of offense and maintain the reputation of both the local and national chapter.

I was both impressed and overwhelmed by this system, often finding myself questioning why women would want to be part of an organization with such a strong system of discipline. Were the friendships, the events, the prestige, and the connections worth it? Was being part of the larger group of Zeta Chi good enough to endure such discipline? Apparently it was. In fact, my participants disregarded such overt discipline as "something to endure" saying again that the rules it put forth were mostly rules that they had already established for themselves through their own upbringing, making those rules "expected" expectations and "not a big deal." When one participant spoke to me about these rules, she replied "Do I really want to dance on a bar? No! People don't even dance at USouthern, so how hard it is to follow a rule to NOT dance on a bar?" Participants

made light of the “restrictiveness” of these rules, acting as though following them at all times was not difficult. However, there was simultaneous recognition that no one followed all the rules all of the time. In this sense it seemed that rather than the rules themselves not being restrictive, it was the members’ constant negotiation of the rules and the potential to get away with breaking them that made them less restrictive.

Negotiations around these rules of ladylikeness were complex as both the behaviors and the discipline around them were simultaneously followed, overtly disregarded, covertly disregarded, made light of, joked about, worried about, and accepted. While each woman knew about the rules and did not want to get called to Standards, there was also the understanding that the rules sometimes would be broken, stretched, and manipulated depending on the location, the people involved, or the event. A great deal of this negotiation about when rules should be followed, broken, or become open to reinterpretation centered on ideals of public reputation. The more public the behaviors, the more likely it was that women tried to adhere to the blatant rules to uphold Zeta Chi’s public reputation of decency. Such circumstances as the number of people, the type of people attending (non-Zeta Chi, non-sorority), the public nature of the event, and the ability to identify individuals as Zeta Chi all interacted to determine the extent to which rules were followed, broken, or reinterpreted.

Alcohol consumption also seemed to be an indicating factor of how rules were negotiated. I often heard stories and observed the ways in which alcohol “negatively” affected behavioral decisions leading to various extents of disregard for Zeta Chi rules. One specific example came during my participation in Fall Formal. Recognizing all the rules and standards that Zeta Chi were introduced to and disciplined for, I had not expected to see the different/alternative “unladylike” dancing that erupted on the dance floor after hours of alcohol consumption. As my field notes indicated:

*Where dancing at the beginning of the night was very much groups dancing without touching each other, as the night went on and more and more alcohol was consumed, the women often began to take on the role of a seductress, sometimes bending down in front of the guys, putting their butt to his crotch, shaking shoulders, or looking at him with “bedroom eyes” swerving their body back and forth. It is very much the woman the seductress/object and the male the onlooker. There were some men that actually did dance moves, not just standing on the dance floor bopping up and down “watching,” although two of them told me they only dance after having many drinks. Ty (my participant’s date) said that I should note that the skirts got higher and higher (held up by the women as they danced) as the night went on and as people got more drunk.*

Even with alcohol as an excuse, the potential for these “drunk” behaviors to draw negative attention and tarnish the reputation of Zeta Chi still left them open to the discipline of Standards. However, my participants noted that many of the women who I had observed during formal were less likely to be called into Standards to be disciplined because it was a closed sorority event, where judgmental eyes of other sororities or non-sorority members were prohibited. Therefore, the “unladylike” dancing at this formal

was not seen as overly problematic because the public reputation of the sorority was not threatened.

While I was told that this “breaking” of rules at Formal would not elicit the discipline of Standards, in its place was what I found an even more “startling” covert system of discipline that was taking place at this event, at all events, and in all day-to-day experiences within Zeta Chi. This was the discipline of “girl talk,” the rumors, discussions, and confrontations that occurred among the women of the Zeta Chi sorority that helped to set boundaries of appropriateness through joking, name calling, opinion gathering, trash talking, and complaining. Although this covert system did not have the blatant rules of the more overt system, it disciplined Zeta Chi members based on those same standards of ladylikeness and often was successful in reinforcing gendered performances similar to those outlined by the overt rules of Zeta Chi.

Since expectations around ladylike were not explicitly stated like the rules of Standards, in order to adopt these expectations one had to pay attention to members’ own performances and their reactions to the behaviors and appearances of others and note the ways in which certain performances were accepted and imitated while others were made fun of, negatively commented on, covered up, or some combination of these actions. My position as researcher forced me to pay explicit attention to these indicators of expectations, but for my participants it seemed to be less about paying explicit attention and more about a slow process of re-socialization in which they began to unconsciously adopt the expectations and blurred boundaries set up through girl talk.

**CUT TO:**

**UNOFFICIAL OFF-CAMPUS ZETA CHI APARTMENT-DATE NIGHT**

The camera scans the crowded downtown streets and eventually focuses on the old, brown, four-story building that we recognize as Summer and Christine’s apartment. The camera enters their second-story apartment window where “Happy 22<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Christine” was written a month earlier. Entering, we see the familiar living room now decorated with Christmas lights illuminated under a sheer, purple wall hanging which gives the room a purplish glow. A roommate’s long-time boyfriend is sitting in the living room watching football on TV, drinking a beer, dressed in black pants, a tie, and black suit coat. We hear voices coming from the front of the apartment and the camera leaves the man behind, following the voices to where we find Summer and her two roommates getting ready for date night.

Summer is walking around in sweatpants and a blue shirt t-shirt with no bra made obvious by the way she is crossing her arms over her breasts as she runs frantically from room to room. The doorbell rings and knowing it is her date, a best friend from high school who fills in when she has no real prospects, she runs to the door to let him in.

**Summer**

Hi! I’m running late! Christine, come take care of Brooks.

*Summer runs off before Brooks really can get a good look at her. Brooks is about 5'9", with floppy, wavy brown hair, big hazel eyes, devilishly handsome dimples, and wire glasses. He is thin with a 32-inch waist and is wearing khaki pants with a blue shirt, a Centaur bowtie and a black Centaur lined sports coat. Although he does not even attend USouthern, his father, mother, and brother did and he is a big fan of their football team. While his dress may seem corny in other cultures, here two girls who held the door for him to enter the building have already complimented him on his USouthern pride. Although he knows he will never "get anything" from Summer, he likes being her date to get the Zeta Chi event t-shirt she is obligated to buy him. The shirt lets him brag to his buddies that he's hanging out with USouthern sorority girls.*

*Christine comes walking out of her room in a white shirt with a black short shirt over it with a hippy-like necklace and jeans. She seems oddly out of place compared to her roommates' dress. She has chosen not to attend the date night since she'd feel weird attending an event for a sorority from which she might be de-sistering. As she approaches Brooks she is immediately put off by his Centaur pride, but remembers the times she wore similar offenses and tells herself to be nice. She greets him in the hall and they both go to meet her roommate's boyfriend who is watching football in the living room. The three begin to have a very surface conversation about football. These are the types of conversations Christine has grown bored of.*

*Back out front Summer and her roommates continue to get dressed.*

**Summer**

Do my hair, will you?

**Roommate C**

Well, come over here.

*Summer is standing in the bathroom in her sweatpants and shirt while Roommate C begins to curl Summer's hair with a large curling iron. She curls, teases it, and sprays it with hairspray. Roommate S is in her room fussing over her hair, makeup, and jewelry. Summer yells to her.*

**Summer**

Hey, what do you think about my hair? Does it look okay?

*Roommate S pokes her head out of her room to check.*

**Roommate S**

Well, the back of your hair needs a little more puffiness, it's kind of flat.

*Roommate C re-teases the back and sprays it again. Summer looks in the mirror and moves her head from side to side to see the view.*

**Summer**

Well, I like to put it behind my ears.

*She pushes her blonde hair behind her ears and then back in front of them and then behind again.*

**Roommate C**

It looks okay like that.

**Summer**

I didn't think it did.

**Roommate C**

No, it does.

**Summer**

What time is it? I have to throw my dress on!

*Summer runs to her room and reappears in seconds wearing a black satin strapless dress. She has decided to go with a simple black dress she calls sophisticated. She moves back into the bathroom and begins to put on black eyeliner and green contacts, which she only wears on special occasions.*

**Summer**

I feel like I'm stuffed in this dress. I can barely breathe.

*She begins to adjust the dress in the mirror, pulling it up and re-organizing her breasts.*

**Summer**

My boobs are everywhere. I even have them in the back. Wait till I have to sit down, I'll probably explode.

*Roommate S chuckles, recognizing that Summer has a good sense of humor about her size.*

**Roommate S**

Better watch those boobs. How soon you forget your Rush debacle!

*Roommate S says half joking.*

**Summer**

You know I really can't help it. What, do you want me to wear a sack?

**Roommate C**

Maybe you better. At least pull it up a bit. You don't want people to think you're trashy or that you're asking for it.

*Roommate C isn't joking. Summer is a little surprised and offended. She feels the need to defend herself.*

**Summer**

It's not like I act slutty. The problem is like a combo of dressing and behavior. Everyone knows I'm a dead end. I don't sleep around like some people.

*Summer reminds herself that Roommate C is waiting until marriage to have sex and so everything seems trashy to her. She quickly tries to forget the comment.*

**Roommate S**

Yeah seriously, the best part about that whole thing was that we all know the girl-who-called-you-out's reputation. Talk about sleeping around.

**Roommate C**

For real, it's a joke SHE is talking to people about being more ladylike. She's had oral sex with half of the Jewish Fraternity.

**Roommate S**

I know. Talk about being a slut. She doesn't need a dress to make herself look slutty. Not that you look slutty.

*Looking to Summer.*

**Summer**

Oh thanks, I feel better.

*Summer replies with sarcasm. Christine walks into the bathroom and uses the mirror to put her hair into a ponytail as an excuse to leave the boring conversation in the living room. Listening in for awhile she thinks to herself that maybe it was better to be bored talking football.*

**Roommate C**

Right, but she says oral sex isn't the same as real sex. It doesn't count.

**Roommate S**

That's bullshit. Remember when she said Christine was trashy because she had slept with her boyfriend of like two years.

**Roommate C**

Yeah maybe someone needs to tell that girl oral sex with half of a fraternity doesn't make you a good girl. A lot more people are having sex than should be and outside of relationships. I'm kind of, just cause of my upbringing, I'm just appalled at people.

**Summer**

Yeah, my friend told me they call her "cum dumpster #2."

**Roommate C**

I wonder who's cum dumpster #1?

**Roommate S**

Gross. Maybe someone should tell her, "Hey, don't be a whore, that's not ladylike!"

*Summer and the roommates laugh. Christine, who has been listening in for a few minutes, chimes in.*

**Christine**

Maybe instead everyone should just mind their own business. You never know what has happened to someone for them to act like they do. I know a lot of her friends and they all think she is a really nice girl. Maybe she is just a serial dater and really isn't having oral sex like everyone thinks. Who cares who she has sex with or doesn't anyway?

*Summer feels guilty that she was a part of this conversation. She really doesn't really care about who sleeps with whom but sometimes she just gets caught up in it all. Now she feels sick to her stomach.*

**Summer**

Yeah, you're right. I actually heard that she was raped in high school.

**Christine**

Really, see? Maybe that's why she does what she does. She is probably really screwed up. Maybe she doesn't care about herself because no one else seemed to care what happened to her. I love it too because, how gross is it that supposedly multiple frat guys all got oral sex from her? But I don't hear you talking about them being sluts.

**Roommate C**

Well, it's a well known fact that girls are always going to be watched and judged more than boys are. Boys can do anything and no one should be surprised. Plus boys aren't out wearing short little shorts and little tank tops. Girls are doing that and drawing attention to themselves. They are always going to be called a slut before anyone says anything about a guy.

*Christine finishes putting her hair into a ponytail. Thinking to herself that she much preferred the surface talk about football to the catty talk about other girls, she leaves the room.*

**Christine**

I'm gonna go keep the boys company.

*Christine walks out and Roommate S gives Summer a look that says, "What is her problem?" Summer just shrugs her shoulders to say "I'm not sure." Christine's friends aren't sure what to do with this new attitude she has. Roommate S whispers.*

**Roommate S**

She used to be the first one to talk about others, and now she acts all high and mighty, like we are so wrong to do it.

**Roommate C**

I don't really care what she says. I still don't think being raped gives you the need to have oral sex with half the fraternity. That's only making it worse.

**Summer**

I think Christine just means that maybe we shouldn't be so quick to judge someone.

**Roommate C**

Well, judge or not, I don't want a few girls to give Zeta Chi a bad reputation. You know what I mean. Raped or not, I don't think you should be getting the reputation as "cum dumpster." I don't want that kind of reputation for our sorority.

*The girls continue getting dressed. After a few moments, Roommate C notices lines on Summer's back, dark burn lines interspersed with light natural skin. She points to Summer's back.*

**Roommate C**

What did you do?

**Summer**

I only went tanning for like 16 minutes. I didn't expect to even see a difference.

**Roommate C**

That's what you get being in the cancer machine.

*Summer tries to see her back in the mirror. Roommate S shoots Roommate C a look to say "leave it alone" and thinks to herself how odd it is that Summer tries to fight against ideas of beauty but at the same time tries so hard to meet them.*

**Roommate S**

Oh you look fine. Don't worry about it.

*The girls finish up in the bathroom and head out to the living room where Christine is watching football with the two men. The doorbell rings and the final date arrives. After about an hour of pre-gaming, drinking beers, and having chips and dip, Summer, her two roommates, and their dates head to a friend's to continue pre-gaming, then to CHISMS, a fancy downtown restaurant where they are meeting five other couples for dinner before going to date night. These eight girls make up a clique of best friends who always make sure to pre-game and treat their dates to a fancy dinner before social events. At about 10:00 pm, they leave the restaurant to head to Metzger's bar for Cupid's Ball.*

**Director's Comments:**

I became particularly aware of the "blurred" boundaries of expectations disseminated through girl talk during my experiences dressing for different Zeta Chi events. I always gathered the opinion of my key informant about what I should wear to different events so that I might "fit in" as well as possible. While there were often obvious things not to wear (those styles outside the "thinkable," such as gothic, hippy, biker gear), the descriptions of what I should wear were always very much open to interpretation (or misinterpretation) and included such advice as "dress cute," "dress classy," or be formal, semi-formal, or casual. I quickly found that these words had specific cultural meaning within Zeta Chi and that my interpretations of these descriptive words often did not match with my key informant's "native" meanings. For example, after being told an event was casual, I dressed in blue jeans and a black and white tank top, only to find that most women were in sun dresses. As another participant explained after that event, "Casual usually just means a casual dress versus like pants." While I was sure I would not be dancing on the bar that night, the blurred lines and cultural meanings of expectations concerning "what to do" that were disseminated through girl talk left me unsure as to how to present myself. Everyone could tell me what not to wear, but no one could seem to tell me what to wear—it was an expectation that I, like all Zeta Chi, had to learn for myself through listening to girl talk and participating in sorority culture.

As long as one's "mistakes" or resistance of expectations remained within acceptable boundaries of ladylike, the "punishment" for misinterpreting or purposefully challenging



expectations was the potential threat of being judged, excluded, or talked about by fellow Zeta Chis. In particular, there was always the looming threat of developing a “bad reputation,” embarrassing yourself or your friends, or just not fitting in. Where the explicit discipline of standards came from the top down, this more subtle discipline through girl talk came from a lateral, local, and “friendly” power centered around relationships with roommates, best friends, big sisters, and members in general. Rather than being overtly connected to “authority” and “punishment,” the more covert discipline of girl talk was hidden in friendly gestures meant to “help” a friend keep safe and preserve her “good girl” reputation. Most of the women participated on both ends of this friendly “discipline,” considering the “monitoring” of or by friends as helpful advice meant to guide a friend toward success within Zeta Chi, not as authoritative regulation.

The “monitoring” of each others’ behavior, both through girl talk and Standards, produced a disciplinary system of self-surveillance in which women would decode the encrypted messages in girl talk and use both those expectations and the blatant rules of Standards to set up boundaries for their own gendered performances. Although my participants sometimes were aware of their complicity within these systems of discipline (I’ll wear this dress rather than that one because it is cut too low), they were mostly unaware of the more covert discipline and considered the intense group- and self-surveillance of sexuality, appearance, drinking, and general behavior to be “natural” aspects of being a woman.

**CUT TO:**

**METZGER’S DOWNTOWN BAR-DATE NIGHT-9:45PM**

The camera focuses in on a familiar downtown scene. We recognize both Summer’s apartment building and Killian’s bar before settling a street away at Metzger’s bar, a bar well known for holding Greek socials and date nights because of the open upstairs venue. Coming up to Metzger’s bar, there are sorority women and men standing outside chatting and hugging one another. Pushing through this crowd you find yourself at the bottom of fifteen black rubber-covered stairs that lead upstairs to Cupid’s Ball, date night for both Zeta Chi and Gamma Beta, another sorority sharing the cost and space for the night. As you walk up the stairs, the side walls each have a row of plastic triangular banners that follow up the stairs displaying logos for Coors light beer. The stair walls are also decorated with shiny hearts, cupid cut-outs and pink and red streamers. Finally, there is a permanent sign in black and white that says “Beware pickpockets and loose women.”

At the top of the stairs, IDs are checked and those who are of age are given plastic bracelets to indicate their status at the bar. Walking in, the space opens up and both side walls are lined with six half-circle booths covered in black leather with a square table in the middle. In the middle of the room is a wooden dance floor crowded with sorority women and their dates, both dancing and just standing talking. The bar is across the back wall and has a wooden top with tall wooden bar chairs and a wall of liquor in front of a mirrored background. Hanging over the bar is a giant blow-up Centaur wearing a USouthern football helmet. There are Cupid decorations such as red/pink

streamers, shiny hearts, and arrows hanging all around the dimly lit room. A band is playing 60's Motown at the front end of the bar on a two-foot-high wooden stage that reaches from one side wall to the other with a backdrop of four large picture windows facing the outside street. The music is blaring and the dark, semi-small space quickly feels crowded, loud, and sweaty. Two of the four windows behind the band are open, someone's attempt to bring the temperature in the small space back to bearable.

Margaret and her freshman friends and their dates arrive at the front door. Margaret uses a fake ID her big sister Yarah gave her to get her in over age. After being checked, Margaret passes the ID to a friend behind her who takes it back outside, giving it to another friend waiting to use it. Although this could get them in trouble, Yarah tells her everyone does it and just not to get caught. They are successful and after receiving their bracelets, Margaret, her friends, and their dates walk into the loud, dark, hot space. Margaret quickly scans the crowd for familiar faces. As a freshman she still doesn't know many women in her sorority and since this date night is with Gamma Beta she finds she doesn't recognize many of the people there. Luckily, she meets eyes with Yarah who, excited to see her little sis, calls her and her date over. Margaret grabs her date and pushes through the crowd trying to make her way over to Yarah and her friends who are in the middle of the room dancing around their dates.

**Yarah**

Hey you two! Margaret, you look gorgeous.

*The two girls hug. Margaret's nerves calm down now that she has Yarah's approval.*

**Margaret**

Thanks, I love your dress.

**Yarah**

Thanks! I think you know most everyone, but I'll introduce you anyway. Hey everyone this is my little sister Margaret.

*Yarah gets the attention of everyone around her and makes sure they all meet Margaret. As her big sister, she knows how important it is to help Margaret meet as many people as she can. Margaret says hello to everyone and immediately notices that one of Yarah's friend's dates, the guy with a bright pink tie, can't keep his eyes off of her. It is making her a bit uncomfortable but excited at the same time.*

**Yarah**

Hey let's go get you a drink.

**Margaret**

What about my date?

**Yarah**

Oh, he is friends with all the guys we brought so he'll be fine. See if he wants a drink – you know whenever you invite someone to our event you need to pay for them. So find out what he wants to drink and we'll go get it.

*Margaret whispers in her date's ear to find out what he wants to drink while Yarah turns back to joke with her friends. Margaret taps Yarah on the shoulder and the two head over to the bar.*

**Yarah**

So how is it going? Do you like him?

**Margaret**

Yeah, he is nice. But I don't necessarily trust him. Before we went out to dinner he apparently was "pre-gaming" and was like pounding beers. (61-5102) My friend thinks he was already drunk before dinner and that's why he's been so touchy feely. (61-5103)

**Yarah**

I kind of think that is just something that boys do. Like girls may just have a drink or two to have a head start, but guys want to already be drunk so they like pound the beers.

**Margaret**

Really!? Well, it still sketched me out.

**Yarah**

You know, I don't know him that well. He is a new member in Kappa Beta and my friend in the frat just thought it would be fun to set him up with my little sister. They think he is a cool guy, but that doesn't mean he isn't an ass with women. Just give him a chance and if you don't like him I'll introduce you to some other guys.

**Margaret**

I mean he is hot, but it's like he knows it.

*Yarah orders four beers from the bartender. Margaret is a bit overwhelmed and is so thankful Yarah has taken her under her wing.*

**Yarah**

You know as a generalization, hot guys are assholes. They kind of have a superior image of themselves, like they're God's gift to earth. They can be real nice one day and the next they act like they don't know you. Plus the hot guys are usually only after one thing.

**Margaret**

Well, I'm sure not going to give him anything tonight!

**Yarah**

Yeah, but you need to realize that most college guys are only after one thing and they know if they can't get it from you there are other people willing to give it. That's the problem with college guys in general. There's nothing that's calling them to be mature. But with hot guys it's even worse, they don't date people, they just sleep around.

**Margaret**

So how do people ever end up with boyfriends?

**Yarah**

Well, they usually are with the not-as-good-looking nicer guys. But I have to warn you, I feel like no college guys are ever really looking for a relationship, girls are constantly in relationship mode and guys

just want to hook up. Finding a guy here is very hard because a lot of them are not quality guys – they are very superficial. All about the physical stuff.

**Margaret**

That's sad.

*The girls pay for their drinks and begin to try making their way back to their dates.*

**Yarah**

Hey, hold your cup from the top as we walk back. Like this..

*Yarah grabs her beer-filled cup from the top so that the palm of her hand covers the opening as they walk back to through the crowd with their drinks.*

**Margaret**

Why?

**Yarah**

You don't want to get roofied, do you? Girls get roofied all the time. Someone just slips something into your drink and you don't even know it.

**Margaret**

Really?

**Yarah**

Yeah, but don't worry. I'm watching out for you. I'll teach you the ropes. Just remember not to trust anyone too quickly.

**Margaret**

You mean like when we are out.

**Yarah**

I mean ever. But if you are out and you see someone you like, always make sure they are friends with someone you know – that way you at least know they are decent people.

**Margaret**

Yeah, okay.

**Yarah**

Yeah, it's like don't just go up to some guy who you don't have any connection to cuz you never know what their intentions are. Always try to find someone you both know to introduce you.

**Margaret**

Yeah, I would never go up to a guy I didn't know anyway.  
By the way, who is the guy with the pink tie on?

**Yarah**

Oh, that's my friend's date. They are just friends. Why, do you like him?

**Margaret**

Well, I just noticed he kept looking at me and he seems nice.

**Yarah**

Well, when we get back over there make sure you stand next to him. I'll get you two talking and you can see what happens.

**Margaret**

Your friend won't be mad I'm talking to her date?

**Yarah**

No, she doesn't really like him. She just brought him cuz he is friends with my date. That happens a lot at these things. You'll see most of us take guys we either only know through people or that are our friends. Unless you know someone is actually crushing on their date, everything is fair game.

**Margaret**

So she won't care at all?

**Yarah**

No, she shouldn't. I've even had friends switch dates halfway through. It's expectational. Just be careful the girl isn't really into him - you don't want to go after another Zeta Chi's crush. That could get you into trouble.

**Margaret**

Like with Standards?

**Yarah**

Oh no, just like with girls in the sorority. You have to be real careful to find out like if the guy you like has any history with Zeta Chi. Like when I was a freshman my friend started dating a guy who never told her he had gone out with the president of Zeta Chi for two years. So then after they had been dating for a few months she got this letter from the president at the time that was like "you better stop dating him because of this and that."

**Margaret**

Well how was she supposed to know?

**Yarah**

I don't know, but all her friends were coming up to my friend too. I mean it is an extreme case but just be careful that you know the guy's history.

**Margaret**

Did she stop dating him?

**Yarah**

No, because she had already been with him for three months and she didn't know. But it got weird at date nights when he would come with her and then his ex-girlfriend, the president, would be there too.

**Margaret**

But they stopped being mean to her?

**Yarah**

Well, I think she just kind of ignored it. I mean, there are so many girls in Zeta Chi you are bound to have some that don't like you.

**Margaret**

Well, I'll check with people before I date guys.

**Yarah**

And that is another reason to always get introduced. That way someone will usually give you a heads up.

*After much struggle through the crowd, made even slower because of the girls' constant chit chat, the two finally make their way back to their dates. Margaret, with a bit of resentment, gives her date his beer and then turns her back on him to face Yarah. As Yarah has promised, she moves Margaret into place to stand next to the boy with the pink tie. She quickly falls into a conversation with him about surprise over their shared hometown. The two continue talking the rest of the night as Yarah refills Margaret's beer. While her original date has wandered off with a Gamma Beta, Margaret could care less because Pinky, the nickname this boy will forever be called by her friends, holds her close as the music beats through her body and the room begins to spin.*

*About an hour and a half later Summer arrives with her clique. They search the crowd for people they recognize. She sees Yarah and waves to her, then spots some of her pledge class friends, grabs her roommates and makes her way over to them with dates following behind. On the way over, Summer grabs Brooks to take a picture with the hired photographer who walks around snapping photos. Though she doesn't seem overly excited, as the picture is snapped she puts on a picture-perfect grin. She grabs hold of her roommate as they continue walking across the room.*

**Summer**

I don't recognize half of these people. They can't all be Gamma Betas. They must be new girls.

**Roommate C**

Yeah, I only recognize a few of them. I think that girl is Yarah's little sister.

*Roommate C points to Margaret, who has by this time been drinking for more than an hour straight. She is hanging all over Pinky and seems to be having some trouble standing up straight. She looks up at Pinky, but her eyes don't seem to focus.*

**Summer**

Wow, it looks like she's been drinking a little too much.

**Roommate C**

Yeah, she is sloppy drunk. She can't even walk. That is like taking it to a whole different level. Totally unladylike. She obviously hasn't learned our ways yet.

*Margaret and Pinky begin kissing.*

**Summer**

Whoa, she is like making out with that kid in the middle of the dance floor.

**Roommate S**

Wow, I mean it happens to everyone at some point but there is definitely a difference between like kind of randomly making out for a short period in the corner and that – making out in the middle of everything.

**Roommate C**

It doesn't happen to me.  
That's really gross.

**Roommate S**

Yeah, Yarah needs to take care of her.

**Summer**

I hope she knows that guy. Though he doesn't seem too with it either.

**Roommate C**

Yeah, well, it's one thing if he's falling down and acting stupid, but it is different if a new Zeta Chi does it. She'll get a reputation quick.

**Summer**

Who cares about her reputation, I just hope the guy is a good guy.

**Roommate S**

Let's go get something to drink.

*Summer and her roommates go to buy themselves and their dates beer and then head back over to where they were standing. For the next hour they stand around talking to each other, dancing, and being bumped into by drunk people on the way to the bathroom. Summer is not overly excited to be here since it is extremely hot and she knows that nothing is going to happen with Brooks. In fact, she purposely made them come later than usual so they didn't have to spend too much time in the loud, sweaty venue. After two years of these events, they sometimes just aren't as exciting, at least not when you go with your high school friend. After screaming over the music for an hour Summer finally convinces her friends to leave and go back home to drink. On the way out, they see Margaret stumble to the ground.*

**Roommate S**

Yeah, someone really needs to watch that one. She could get into trouble. I'm gonna go say something to Yarah. Just to make sure she takes care of her.

*Roommate S, a friend of Yarah's, walks over to her to remind her of the buddy system. Although the sexual way Yarah is dancing makes it obvious that she has been drinking, she still is coherent enough to agree with Roommate S. Yarah tells her not to worry, she has Margaret under control and they were planning on leaving soon anyway. Roommate S walks back over to her friends as Yarah begins to gather her group of friends to leave, telling Margaret that she will be staying with her tonight. Summer and Roommate C have already walked outside. Roommate S meets*

*them outside and they begin to walk home, the three girls up front and the three dates following behind talking among themselves.*

**Summer**

What did she say?

**Roommate S**

She said she'll take care of her and not to worry.

**Roommate C**

Well, if she keeps this up maybe someone needs to say something to Standards.

**Summer**

Let's not be crazy. We were all freshmen once. I remember many crazy nights that probably shouldn't have happened.

**Roommate S**

Seriously, most of us have had nights like that. She'll learn, just give her some time. I just don't want her to get hurt.

**Roommate C**

What do you mean, by who? Like from guys?

**Summer**

Yes! Sometimes you are so naive. Don't you remember Christine's friend who got raped?!

**Roommate S**

Oh, I forgot about that. What happened?

**Roommate C**

I never heard about it.

**Summer**

Oh yeah. Last year, one of Christine's good friends in Zeta Chi, who I won't name, really liked this guy - apparently he was the past president of his frat - and he usually ignored her until one night they were all out and he was really friendly. Well, he invited her to go home with him and she thought he just meant to the frat house, which she was fine with because all her best guy friends were in the frat. Anyway, what she told Christine is that instead he took her to his new apartment.

**Roommate S**

That would freak me out.

**Summer**

Well, she knew his roommate pretty well so she wasn't overly concerned. I won't give all the details but basically he raped her and then passed out.

**Roommate S**

God, so was she stuck there?



**Summer**

Basically she was trapped. Luckily she called one of her friends to come get her.

**Roommate S**

Did she call the police?

**Summer**

Christine said that when she told people they said it was her fault. I guess like even her Mother said it was her fault and that she shouldn't tell anyone.

**Roommate C**

Well, maybe she led him on. I mean why else would you go home with someone.

**Summer**

Are you kidding me?! And you wonder why Christine gets so frustrated with you.

**Roommate S**

Seriously, no one asks to be raped. No one should touch you without your permission, even if you came home with them. I know a lot of girls who just expect to talk and maybe kiss a little. I highly doubt she was expecting to sleep with him the first time they hung out.

**Summer**

Christine said that her friend told the current fraternity president what had happened and that he said he believed her but couldn't do anything about it because it would ruin their reputation to terminate a past-president.

**Roommate S**

No wonder Christine was so sensitive earlier when we were saying that other girl was slutty.

**Summer**

Yeah, Christine said that the way the sorority and the fraternity dealt with or didn't deal with the situation started her questioning if she wanted to be part of it all.

**Roommate S**

Yeah, I can see that. Like here we are boasting "a continual circle of friendship" and then turning our back when people need us.

**Summer**

It just sounds like the girl had a bad group of friends. I mean not everyone in Zeta Chi would have acted like that. If that happened to someone we were friends with it would have been different.

**Roommate S**

Well, I wouldn't have been quiet about it. I'd sit there 'til something was done about it.

**Roommate C**

Yeah, but at the same time what are you going to do? Try to bring down the whole Greek system because someone made one mistake? Sometimes it

is just better to forget about things and move on. Now she knows better.

**Summer**

You know what. Maybe Christine is right. Sometimes you act so high and mighty, like you are so pure. What good is it if you turn your back on the people you are supposed to care about? Are you really that shallow?

**Roommate S**

Okay, okay. We are all tired and drunk, let's not say things we don't mean. Remember we still have to live with each other tomorrow. It's all just a misunderstanding. Maybe we should go out instead of going home. What do you think, a drink at Killian's?

**Summer**

Sounds good to me.

**Roommate C**

Fine, I'm in.

*The girls stop walking and wait up for the boys who are tagging along behind them. Each girl grabs her date's arm and couples walk single file to Killian's bar. Roommate S can't help but think how different girls in Zeta Chi can be. People always stereotype sorority women as all being the same, but when she sees how different even her roommates are from one another she recognizes how diverse Zeta Chi really is. Even though it can sometimes cause problems, she likes that everyone has their own opinion - even if most other people, unlike Summer, aren't always as forward about what they are thinking.*

**Director's Comments:**

Some of the more prevalent topics of girl talk that were particularly important to both group and self-surveillance were centered on issues of sexuality (heterosexuality was considered by most of my participants to be the only viable sexuality of sorority women), promiscuity, and public drunkenness. I originally thought that girl talk focused on these issues only because of these behaviors' ability to earn Zeta Chi an unladylike reputation. However, as I became more involved with participants I came to understand that there was also an underlying concern for safety that drove the disproportionate focus and strong disciplinary talk on sexual behaviors and drinking. Many of these behaviors were not only strongly disciplined because they could earn Zeta Chi a "bad" reputation, but also because such behavior left the women of Zeta Chi open to male gaze and desire, creating greater possibility for personal harm. It was clear that much of the discipline regarding these women's behaviors and appearances was meant to ensure "girl safety" in a highly heterosexual Greek university environment. Whereas discipline within Zeta Chi had always seemed restrictive, here was an example of the way in which that same discipline was "productive" as it was used to produce a system of protection for the women.

I first started to piece together the covert ways that "girl safety" influenced girl talk and the expectations of ladylikeness when a woman I was interviewing told me the "safe way" to carry my glass through the bar crowd. Because she had known friends who had

been “roofied” at bars, she and all of her friends made sure to watch their drink be poured and carry it so that their palm protected the opening. Once her story alerted me to issues of safety, I realized that I had a number of stories that covertly were about “girl safety” rather than just expectations of ladylikeness. These stories included discussion about buddy systems, not walking home alone, taking care of drunk women to avoid male predators, fending off men, only dating men you know, not accepting drinks in bars, and in the most extreme cases, rape. It became clear that many of the expectations of ladylike worked to reinforce feminine decency in order to protect women from potential emotional, physical, and sexual harm by men. These issues of safety gave me a new perspective on those “restrictive” expectations of girl talk and rules of Standards. Rather than being restrictive because of expectations about ladylikeness, they were also restrictive because of discourses of masculinity and expectations of masculine sexuality, power, and action that constructed women as weak and passive sexual objects.

Within the Greek system, discourses of masculinity seemed to be as prescribed as those of femininity within Zeta Chi. From the perspective of many of my participants, men were innately different from women. For example, my participants said that men were only concerned with sex not relationships, were free to act how they please, could drink and act dumb without consequences, and could sleep with as many women as they liked, getting the reputation of stud rather than whore. In the same way my participants accepted different rules for sorority women versus fraternity men, most accepted these difference as innate and uncontestable. Even when I asked one woman why she felt she had to change her behavior rather than ask men to change theirs, she responded with “that’s just the way things are.” It was frustrating to see this bright young woman accepting that she should unquestionably spend her lifetime restricting her behaviors in order to protect herself from potential harm by men. It was clear from the women’s perceptions of men that there was no comparable “gentlemanlike” within the discourses of masculinity that surrounded Zeta Chi.

CHAPTER SIX  
NEGOTIATIONS OF LADYLIKE SUBJECTIVITY

Shooting Draft

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**Director's Comments:**

The following four scenes reinforce the discourses of ladylikeness that have already been introduced and further develop and explore issues of negotiation around those discourses. In particular, the following four scenes explore the ways that Zeta Chi women simultaneously reproduce, resist, and re-create expectations for femininity through their bending of rules, recognition of inconsistency, use of language, discussions of "difference," and use of vulgarity.

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**FADE IN:**

**MID-NOVEMBER: UNOFFICIAL OFF-CAMPUS ZETA CHI APARTMENT**

The camera shows a white-out screen that eventually gets darker and darker to reveal the living room of Summer and Christine's apartment where we find Summer, Christine, and Roommate S all in shorts and t-shirts eating dinner. Summer and Roommate S are on one couch eating a broccoli casserole. Christine is on the other couch eating a bowl of her infamous rice with stir-fry vegetables. It is one of the first times in the last month that Christine has been home for dinner. Coincidentally, it is also one of the first times that these three have been able to hang out without Roommate C. They all face the TV, which is tuned to the new sitcom "Greek," although the girls find they are paying more attention to each other than to the new show. Summer swallows a forkful of casserole and lets out a massive burp.

**Christine**

Well, Summer, that's not very classy.

**Summer**

But everybody burps.

**Christine**

You know I'm just kidding.

**Roommate S**

I remember when you wouldn't have been.

*Christine has grown used to her friends talking about how she has changed. It used to bother her, but now she takes it as a compliment. She has tried to change, and she is happy they notice.*

**Christine**

I know, I know. I used to be all about acting proper. Can you blame me with my upbringing?

**Summer**

How funny is it how different we were raised? And now I'm more about being proper, acting as a lady should act, and you turned into the opposite. So weird!

**Roommate S**

Yeah, but it's more like you both moved to the middle.

**Christine**

What do you mean?

**Roommate S**

Like, you were both extremes to start with. Like, Christine you grew up in the South, and had all that hazing for your high school sorority.

**Summer**

You got hazed in high school?!

*Summer looks at Christine, surprised that her high school had a sorority, surprised that Christine would put up with hazing, and even more surprised Christine never mentioned it to her.*

**Christine**

Yeah, it was like a tradition that even my Mother and grandmother participated in when they were in high school - the high school girls dress in all white and then the high school boys pee in cups and throw it at us. Like a really gross wet t-shirt contest.

**Summer**

WHAT?! That is absolutely disgusting! Why did you do it?

**Christine**

I never would now, but at the time it's like you're young and you want to fit in and the whole town does it. Like everyone is telling you that if you want to be in the cool group you have to do it. It makes me sick to think about it now.

**Summer**

Wow, I have never heard of anything like that in high school.

*Roommate S is frustrated that they have interrupted her. She likes to be the center of attention and often feels jealous when Christine or Summer steal her limelight.*

**Roommate S**

Anyway, like I was saying, Christine, you grew up all Southern and all about being appropriate. And you, Summer, grew up, from what you say, in a place where it was okay to burp, or swear, or look kinda a mess.

**Summer**

Well not a mess, but not as polished or perfect.

**Roommate S**

Well, all I'm saying is that it's not like Christine is never "proper" or that Summer, you now always are. You're both a mix of things, like Christine, even though you aren't as worried about fitting in as you were, you still dress the part when you go out and I've never heard you

burp or fart or even talk about it, and Summer, you have changed and adopted Southern or Zeta Chi ways but you still burp and swear like a sailor.

**Summer**

Ahh, but now I don't say God Damn or any words pertaining to the anatomy.

**Roommate S**

That's only because it has gotten you into trouble. Like when you said GD in front of that guy at the football game and he was like "That really bothers me."

**Summer**

Oh yeah, well since then I've proven to him I'm a good girl. We're friends now. He just thought that cussing coming out of a girl's mouth just sounded too harsh.

**Christine**

Well, let's worry about what HE thinks.

*Christine shows her newly found sarcasm, some of which she has picked up from Summer and Roommate S.*

**Summer**

You know what I mean.

**Roommate S**

Hey, did you hear about our perfect little Roommate C?

**Christine**

She has really been getting on my nerves lately.

**Summer**

Mine too.

**Roommate S**

Well, then you are both gonna love this. Apparently, little miss perfect got completely sloppy last night and had some guy she met at the bar buying her drinks all night. She was making out with him in the bar and then he tried to take her home. Supposedly, she was at a point where she couldn't make a decision.

**Christine**

Really? That's scary!

**Summer**

That's scandalous for her!

**Roommate S**

She told me that she wasn't being bad, she was just sitting in a chair. (57-4517) But according to her friend she was pretty sloppy and her friend had to pull her away from the guy to get her to not go home with him!

**Summer**

I guess it happens to everyone at some point, but there is a difference in like what level you take it to.

**Christine**

Yeah, but she's always talking about other people's behaviors and how she would never do this or that. I'd love to see her called into Standards. How funny would that be?!

**Roommate S**

It would be funny. But maybe it is good for her to loosen up a little. Even the good girls have their moments where they hook up with a guy - granted they may like kiss them once and then like go to sleep, but everyone hooks up.

*The girls hear keys jingling and the front door opening. In walks Roommate C. The girls look at each other with evil smiles.*

**Roommate C**

Hello?

*Roommate C enters the living room to find all the girls smiling at her with eyebrows raised. She can tell something is going on.*

**Summer**

Oh, hello.

**Christine**

Oh, hello there.

**Roommate S**

Well, hello.

*Roommate C turns bright red.*

**Roommate C**

Who told you?

### **Director's Comments:**

Discipline was a major part of Zeta Chi culture. Through the overt rules of Standards and Nationals, the covert expectations of "girl talk," and the necessities of behavioral modification for "girl safety," all members of Zeta Chi were disciplined around discourses of gender. The strength of such discipline was pervasive since day-to-day existence was both intentionally and unintentionally organized around gendered performances considered viable and appropriate reflections of ladylikeness. However, the strength of discursive discipline around femininity not only reproduced expectations but also opened the possibility for the women of Zeta Chi to negotiate and resist such expectations.

It was clear that the women constantly took part in negotiations within the discourse of ladylikeness. Discussion about the ways in which women "broke" or "bent" the rules of Standards, used "masculine" vulgarity/aggression, trash talked other members who acted

outside of appropriateness, and participated in behaviors deemed unladylike such as swearing, smoking, getting drunk, and sleeping around, all indicated that the rules and expectations reproduced within Zeta Chi were also resisted and re-interpreted. However, except for those participants who intentionally resisted the sorority by de-sistering, the women's resistance and re-interpretation within Zeta Chi did not seem to be intentional acts of rebellion. Since many of the women accepted the rules and either accepted expectations or didn't recognize the expectations of girl talk as negotiable, there was less chance for purposeful rebellion against a "known" enemy. This left their resistance and re-interpretation more reliant on chance or opportunity or accidental re-interpretation during times when self-surveillance was more lax, such as while drinking, socializing in private spaces, or socializing in public spaces free of Zeta Chi's "watch." This is not to say that the women did not recognize that they were "bending" rules or acting unladylike, but that this behavior was not a direct act of defiance against the overarching power of Zeta Chi. Instead, their resistance was local, subtle, fleeting, and at times "accidental."

The more interesting aspect of the women's resistance and re-interpretation was that it often remained within those boundaries of acceptable female performance. The social expectations that were defined and disciplined through Standards and girl talk not only defined the boundaries around dominant expectations, but also worked to set up boundaries around even that which was acceptable as "resistance" or "re-interpretation" within Zeta Chi. Since "performances" of gender that fell outside of those enabled by discourse within Zeta Chi could easily get one snubbed or even terminated from the organization, even the most resistant of negotiations remained within the "acceptable" boundaries of ladylike for fear of total exclusion. For example, sexual behaviors that "bent" the rules or challenged the expected norm still fell within the boundaries defined by the overarching discourse that constructed "thinkable" versus "unthinkable" sexuality. Therefore, while a woman might challenge the dominant discourses of ladylike by "accidentally" making out in public, such options as bi-sexuality, queer, or transsexual subjectivity remained "unthinkable" options, even as resistance/re-interpretation, because they were outside of the discursive boundaries. Many of those women who did cross the discursive boundaries during through re-interpretation or resistance of expectations were either "terminated" by Nationals or ended up de-sistering on their own. In this sense, even the possibilities for negotiation were disciplined by discursive expectations for ladylikeness.

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**CUT TO:**

**INTRAMURAL FIELDS AT USOUTHERN-FLAG FOOTBALL FIELD-6 PM**

As we zoom in from a blue sky, bird's-eye view of USouthern, we find the camera moving closer and closer to the open green space at the north end of campus. The camera sails over this green space, showing baseball diamonds, tennis courts, parking lots, and students playing Frisbee, walking their dogs, and jogging in sports bras and short shorts. The camera finally settles on a large, open field surrounded by a metal fence with a white square sign marked with a black number five. The lush green grass of the field appears to be well taken care of and is divided into sides and goals by perfectly placed white lines and



orange cones. The field is overshadowed by imposing 30' leaf-filled trees that are interspersed with seven large flood lights which turn on after dark, creating an atmosphere akin to that of a Centaur varsity game. From the flag football field we can hear laughter, yelling, clapping, and whistles blowing from the other six fields that make up the whole of this impressive intramural green space.

Moving from the perimeter of the flag football field, the camera zooms in on the middle of the field where there is a group of nine Zeta Chis, among them new members, sophomores, and juniors, all of whom are standing in a circle throwing around a football and periodically diving to catch it before it hits the ground. These are the women who call themselves the "sporty girls" of the sorority. "Coach," as they call the fraternity brother who has coached them the last three years, stands around watching, and at intervals yells out plays which the girls then enact, falling out of their circle formation while yelling "HUT, HUT!"

For this particular game, the Zeta Chis are all wearing dark colors, as they were told to do in the e-mail the "intramural officer" of Zeta Chi sent out earlier in the day. Most of the girls chose to wear black shirts, some with ironed on Zeta Chi letters in animal print fabric, and black shorts, most of which are short mid-thigh women's shorts or shiny men's soccer shorts rolled up at the waist to bring the length to hit mid-thigh.

Two Zeta Chis are sitting on the sidelines watching the other nine practice. These girls are not particularly interested in playing but have come as back-ups to keep the team from forfeiting the win if the nine girls required to play do not show up. Sitting with these girls is Margaret's dad, who has come to cheer on the team. Although Margaret doesn't get as much playing time as some of the older girls, her Dad, a former football player, enjoys watching his daughter play and has made a special trip for this big game. He is wearing a gray suit with a white shirt, which makes him stand out among the casually dressed college students. Margaret yells to him as she practices.

**Margaret**

Dad! What do you think of my new shirt for the game?

**Dad**

Very nice, Honey. Let's see a win!

*Zeta Chi has played hard to make it to this game, one of the final games in the women's flag football tournament. Until this point they have only had to beat other sorority teams, but this game will be against a non-sorority team from another league. As the Zeta Chi team finishes practicing and walks to their sideline, they pass the non-sorority team who is practicing on the far end of the field. These opposing players are all wearing longer black shorts to the knee and orange shirts that they have decorated with stars on the front that say *McLovin*, a play off the recent hit movie *Superbad*, and their last name and number on the back. As the Zeta Chi team walks by, *Yarah*, a team captain known more for her positive attitude on the sidelines than her football skills on the field, sizes up the other team. She thinks to herself that these girls might be hard to beat because they seem much larger than most of the Zeta Chi players, many appearing overweight*

*given the obvious stomach bulges which are hanging over the top of their shorts. As Yarah walks by she looks them up and down and gives those who catch her eye a hard stare of intimidation.*

**Yarah**

Okay, everyone gather round. Listen, the ref is being a real asshole and says we have to have shirts with no pockets, so if you have a pocket turn your shirt inside out. Also take off all jewelry and be real careful on the field – like watch your hands while you are blocking. Remember to keep them behind you so that they can't call us on holding. Alright, gather round. Ready.

*At the last minute, a few new members show up on the field. They throw their purses down into the existing circle of designer LongChamps bags, Zeta Chi wallets, sweatshirts, and key chains at the side of the field and run into the circle as it is being formed by the rest of the team.*

**Yarah**

Okay on three. One, two, three.

*All the girls throw their hands into the middle of the circle.*

**Team**

GOOOO ZETA, GOOOO ZETA CHI CHI!

*The girls all raise their hands and throw them into the air. The starting players take the field and the rest of the girls line up on the side line next to "Coach" and Margaret's dad. On the first play, the quarterback throws to Margaret who completes the pass.*

**Dad**

There she goes. She's a hot dog with ketchup and mustard.

*The girls on the side line look over at him and laugh while they clap and cheer in excitement. The Dad looks to his left and jokes to a new member.*

**Dad**

I used to play football, but Margaret doesn't get any of her athletic qualities from me, she gets it all from her mom.

*The game continues with the girls on the sidelines cheering and clapping and talking among themselves. Every once in a while, players on the bench take the field to substitute for those who have been playing, although the key seven players stay on regardless of whether they are defense or offense. Yarah grabs the flag from the back of the shorts of a player from the other team, making her fall to the ground.*

**New Member A**

Yes!!! Oh I mean, oops that looks like it hurts!

**Sophomore Zeta Chi**

That's BA, that's BA.

*A sophomore Zeta screams "that's BA" to Yarah, meaning that her behavior was Bad Ass.*

**New Member B**

Look at Yarah after she hits someone. She walks with her chest all puffed out and her legs spread like "What now!"

**Junior Zeta Chi**

Yeah, you're right. It's funny.

*The next play, Zeta Chi Player #1 gets called and flagged for putting her hands out while blocking the other team. After some confusion and a lot of yelling on the field, Player #1 and Player #2 run off the field and change places with the sophomore and junior on the sideline.*

**Player #1**

That girl called me a bitch!

**Player #2**

Don't worry. We are all saying shit under our breath to them. The ref hasn't caught it yet.

*Margaret's Dad overhears this and jokes back to them.*

**Dad**

Wow, you girls really play dirty. I would have sent Margaret to another sorority had I known that!

*Player #1 runs up and down the sidelines yelling.*

**Player #1**

Come on, we need to start blocking better!

*The excitement and intensity of the players and those on the sidelines rises as the refs continuously make calls against Zeta Chi.*

**Player #2**

It's because we are sorority and they don't like us.

**Player #1**

Seriously, I've never seen referees be so particular or follow all the rules so exactly.

*The quarterback makes a good throw to Yarah, who catches the ball and runs down the field as the other team pulls at her shorts. The pulling begins to reveal her red and white underwear.*

**New Member A**

Watch your pants!

**New Member B**

Yeah, cute undies!

*Annoyed at the new members' lack of seriousness, Player #2 shoots them a nasty look while yelling to the team.*

**Player #2**

Come on, let's go! We have to pick it up!

*Player #1 and Player #2 exchange places again with the sophomore and junior girls running off the field. New Member A, a very sarcastic girl with parents from New Jersey, becomes annoyed that she is never put in. She begins to voice her opinion about her lack of playing time in a very monotone voice to New Member B.*

**New Member A**

Apparently I'm a disgrace to the intramural team. I feel like a burden, like they have to put me in.

**New Member B**

Yeah, but they don't put us in. And in the rare case we do get in, the older girls yell at us cuz we don't play good enough.

*New Member A replies in a very sarcastic monotone voice with a non-heartfelt cheer.*

**New Member A**

Maybe we should just be the best cheerleaders we can be.  
Go Zeta Chi.

**New Member B**

Go Zeta Chi!

*Someone from Zeta Chi causes the ball to go out of bounds near the Zeta Chi sideline. A girl from the opposing teams runs to get it while her own teammate yells to her.*

**Opposing Player**

Don't get it for them, it's on their time, let them get it.

**Opposing player running to get ball**

I was just trying to be nice

*New Member B looks at the girl and smiles. She feels kind of bad that everyone is being so nasty to each other. Yarah comes off the field for the first time just to catch her breath and everyone congratulates her. The sophomore Zeta takes her place on the field and congratulates her as she runs past.*

**Sophomore Zeta Chi**

Good job Yarah, you'll get it next time.

**Junior Zeta Chi**

Yeah, you go girl! Nice work.

*Yarah, breathing heavy, points to a larger girl from the other team.*

**Yarah**

See that girl, she called me a bitch. I want to hit her. I want to hook her. I want to punch her!

*The two new members look at her as to question her behavior. Yarah looks back at them both.*

**Yarah**

What? This is the only time that you can really take aggression out on girls, you know you can push them down during football.

**Junior Zeta Chi**

Yeah, it's like the only time it's actually acceptable.

*Yarah is put back in. The sophomore returns to the sideline cheering. Even though most people are caught up in the intensity, the two new members who have no hope of playing find themselves a bit disinterested.*

**New Member B**

I'm hungry.

**New Member A**

You're always staving and you eat dessert first!

**New Member B**

Well, my mother always fed me the best food so now I just expect it.

*The quarterback throws the ball to Margaret, still the only new member to play, and she dives for the ball making the catch. A flag is thrown and Player #1 is called again for using her hands to block. A fight breaks out on the field, getting the two new member's attention.*

**Coach**

Watch the defense! Get over here!

*Player #1 runs in off the field.*

**Player #1**

That was the gayest call!

*Player #2 is still on the field yelling at the referee. Yarah runs over to her.*

**Player #2**

You have got to be kidding me! This is bullshit! This is so retarded!

**Yarah**

Come on, it's not worth it, it just causes more problems for us. Come on.

**Player #2**

It's cause we are fucking sorority. I'm telling you. It's not fair they keep calling us and ignoring everything the other team's doing.

**Yarah**

Come on, hush.

**Player #2**

So fucking annoying. What an asshole!

*Feeling a tension in the air, the girls on the sidelines, even the two new members, begin to get more rowdy and start trash talking the other*

*team, especially making references to their weight and other outward characteristics.*

**Junior Zeta Chi**

Rollin', rollin', rollin' down the field. Nice stomach rolls on them.

**Player #2**

Fuck that bitch, that fat ass one, the blonde fat ass that keeps talking shit.

**New Member A**

It's like she is wearing pads under her shirt but she literally doesn't need to buy them, she's grown them herself.

*A girl from the field overhears this.*

**Opposing Player**

Are you talking to me?

*Yarah yells from the field.*

**Yarah**

Keep it down, you're just making it worse. Let's just beat them.

*The sideline has gotten into the game. They are jumping up hitting each other chest to chest.*

**Player #2**

Make them bleed!

*New Member B looks at Player #2 and jokes.*

**New Member B**

You're a bad influence. You are a bad, bad person.

*Player #2 ignores her and turns her attention back to her own team.*

**Player #2**

Come on, trash talk them back if you need to. Pull it together, pretend that girl is your ex-boyfriend.

*The sideline moves back and forth between yelling to their teammates on the field and trash talking about the other team among themselves.*

**New Member A**

That minority girl is giving us problems; wait 'til I tell her how good her boyfriend was last night.

**Player #2**

Come on butterfingers, hold onto it! I'm gonna be so depressed if we lose.

**Junior Zeta Chi**

Yeah, that same Indian girl has baby oil on her, you grab her flag, you touch her, and you're all greasy when you come back up.

**Player #2**

Hold them, hold them!!!

*Tension builds and it comes down to the final two plays. Everyone is talking about how competitive this is becoming and that the tension can be cut with a knife. In the middle of all the trash talk between the teams, the trash talk on the sidelines, and the encouragement from the sideline to the players on the field, Margaret gets an interception and runs it down the field for a game-winning touchdown. Everyone on Zeta Chi begins screaming and Margaret runs over and jumps into her Dad's arms, putting her legs around his waist as they both laugh and scream.*

**Dad**

Good work, good work!

**Yarah**

Come on everyone!

*Everyone runs over to Yarah and forms a circle with their hands all in the middle.*

**Yarah**

One, two, three!

**Team**

Zeta Chi, POP A CAN!

**Margaret**

Dad, did you hear that, Pop a can?!

**Dad**

I sure did, I've heard a lot of things tonight that I never thought I'd hear coming out of such nice young ladies.

**Coach**

These girls take this pretty seriously.

**Dad**

I guess so!

**Director's Comments:**

Although discourse set up boundaries even around the resistance, re-interpretation, and re-creation of dominant rules and expectations, the women constantly negotiated within these boundaries. One of the more acceptable ways to resist or re-interpret the rules and expectations of ladylikeness was to invert expectations for femininity by engaging in more masculine performances. Since the gendered system within Greek culture was based on a binary system in which women (passive, nurturing, respectful, prudish) were the opposite of men (active, aggressive, vulgar, sexual), it was easy for women to identify behaviors that were considered "stereotypically" male and take on those characteristics—something that was done at times intentionally and at times without awareness. I was made particularly aware of both the use of "masculine" behavior and the women's pride in that behavior during my observation of flag football games. The women in flag football were very proud of their identification as "the sporty girls" because to them it

meant they were not stereotypical “girly girls” of a sorority, a category of which they disapproved. They often made a point to stress this “otherness” and the fact that they were not typical sorority women.

These women presented particularly relevant examples of women’s negotiations of rules and expectations of ladylikeness. At times they resisted and reinterpreted dominant expectations of ladylikeness through their athleticism, identity as “not girly,” physical confidence, and use of vulgarity, aggression, and physical force. This behavior was particularly common during football games, but it also carried into their everyday presentations of self as many of these women both claimed and appeared to be “less feminine” in their everyday performances. They often were the women who “threw” on a dress, wore flip flops to formal, took little time for makeup, and did not “do” their hair. This claim to “more masculine” or less girly performance challenged notions of ladylikeness; however, it also by default reinforced the fictive binary of masculinity/femininity within Greek culture.

Even though these women saw their performances as “more masculine,” they also reproduced expectations of ladylikeness by remaining inside the discursive boundaries of femininity. The women recognized that “more masculine” behavior was not always appropriate, particularly in settings where they were supposed to be ultra-feminine (formal, date night, dances), and they altered their performances accordingly. In addition, even though they behaved in a more stereotypically masculine way, they all retained the appearance of “ladylike femininity” (the women never came close to performing “butch” femininity) even as they performed these “more masculine” behaviors. For example, even the participant who was easily recognized for her swearing, in-your-face personality, and partying (all “less ladylike” behaviors), still used makeup, wore “cute” clothing, and physically presented herself in a traditionally feminine manner. In general, many of my participants who claimed to *not* be girly at the same time wore nice dresses (even if they threw them on), upheld expectations of beauty (bleached teeth, long hair, jewelry, eye-liner), preached about the importance of ladylike, had designer purses and jeans, were abstaining from heterosexual intercourse, and always tried to maintain appearances of feminine decency. Therefore, even as they maintained a “more masculine,” “not girly girl” status among the sorority members, this “less feminine” performance still reinforced expectations of ladylikeness that were dominant within Zeta Chi culture.

In general, my participants’ negotiations of ladylike were “messy” since instances of absolute reproduction or resistance were less common than the more “messy” instances of negotiation that simultaneously reproduced, resisted, and re-created various aspects of dominant discourse. In this example of the “sporty girls,” they reproduced stereotypical expectations of masculinity, challenged and reproduced stereotypical expectations of femininity, and through resistance and the inclusion of masculinities within their construction of femininity, re-created expectations of ladylike to include stereotypical masculine behaviors. Such “messy” negotiations remained within the appropriate boundaries established by discourse. However, this re-working and negotiation of



expectations opened up space for the women to both purposely and accidentally alter or re-create that which was disciplined as acceptable gender performance.

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**CUT TO:**

**ZETA CHI HOUSE-YARAH'S ROOM-MONDAY-4:00 PM**

The camera begins in the front hall of the Zeta Chi house and slowly makes its way up the stairs to Yarah's room. It passes girls sitting silently in the living room doing school work and girls dressed in sports bras and cheerleader shorts in the hallway doing crunches as they count out "one, two, three..." The camera moves up the stairway and turns down Yarah's hall. With Formal coming up in the next few weeks, the hall is lined with formal dresses hanging in clear dress bags outside of many of the girls' doors. By the looks of things, royal blue seems to be the color of the season.

The camera continues down the hall, passing open doors that reveal short views of each room's culture, including color schemes and musical tastes. There is a familial feel in the hall as we see girls freely walking in and out of each other's rooms to join conversations, borrow clothes or jewelry, and text message friends about plans for the week.

As a girl walks toward the camera and enters a room to our right, the camera moves beyond her, turns to the left, and enters Yarah's room where we find Margaret, Yarah, Roommate M, and Roommate Y sitting and talking. Margaret has come to the house for the weekly Chapter meeting where sorority business is discussed and for Monday dinner, a meal that, unlike nightly dinner that is provided only to those living in the house, is open to all Zeta Chis who have come to attend Chapter. Margaret's roommate has driven her to the house and has come upstairs to hang out with the girls before they all leave her to go eat. Margaret has been telling a story about how a classmate made fun of her for being a sorority girl. The four have started talking about sorority stereotypes and how it stinks that Zeta Chi gets a bad reputation even when it is so different than all the other sororities.

**Yarah**

Yeah, I feel like non-Greeks stereotype us pretty, pretty negatively.

**Roommate Y**

Well the problem is that a lot of the stuff that we do that like sheds bad light on us is publicized more so than the good stuff we do. You're not going to hear about when we go volunteer at the homeless shelter every day for the year.

**Roommate M**

You volunteered at a homeless shelter every day?

*Roommate Y looks at them all half joking.*

**Roommate Y**

See what I mean?

**Margaret**

Yeah, you know, I have learned that you can have an idea of people who are sorority, but they always surprise you.

**Roommate Y**

There's just such a diverse population here that you can't really classify people. There's always someone to break the Standards.

**Yarah**

Seriously, I mean you've got your girly girls, you've got your flag football players, you've got your really smart girls, and your not so studious ones. I mean I feel like that's everywhere though. You can't really get that many girls in one place and have them all be exactly the same. Zeta Chi also is just not like the typical sorority stereotype either.

**Margaret**

I feel like we are really, really diverse. That is one of the things we pride ourselves on.

**Yarah**

At the same time, we aren't really racially diverse.

**Roommate M**

Yeah, I was gonna say--

**Roommate Y**

Well, we do come from all over the country, and we have a lot of Jewish girls, but I was really shocked that there weren't more people of different races when I came here. So really, I guess it is hard to say we are diverse because we don't really have other races, but I think we're as close as we can get because we're not all from the South in-state. We really try to get the girls from New Jersey and we really want girls from Chicago and California.

**Yarah**

Yeah, we are diverse in comparison to others. There are a lot more cookie cutter sororities than we are. I feel like we have the most diverse groups of girls.

**Roommate Y**

I think a lot of other sororities, they have a reputation of being all bleached blonde-haired girls and they care to keep that reputation up and have bleached blonde-haired girls. I think Zeta Chi girls still take care of themselves and care what they look like, but we're not going to say this girl doesn't really fit our stereotype or what we normally look like. (33-1000) I don't really care what others look like and I'm not that concerned about what I look like in general.

**Margaret**

Yeah, I heard from a friend that in other sororities, if you're rushing a girl then they expect you to look cute and look thin.

**Roommate M**

But, you don't feel like that happens at Zeta Chi?

**Yarah**

I mean, I kind of feel like everyone here is size-wise pretty much the same, but I don't think that it would be like, like - there are sororities that we know that demand, like before rush, you have to be a certain size. Like they'll tell you to lose 10 pounds or you're not participating. But we don't do that.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah seriously, we have cookies at Rush. We have cake and ice cream every day. Ms. Althea makes her bomb chocolate chip cookies. I think in general we don't care as much about looks or money or stuff like that.

**Yarah**

I agree. I don't think looks or money factors in with us as much. It is more about personality. We try not to be superficial, like we really try. We hold our standards a little bit higher than others do in terms of personality and activities.

**Roommate M**

Yeah, but what about all the rules and expectations y'all have to like act in "classy" ways - and it's not like any of you are ugly!

**Roommate Y**

Well, those are in place just because there is a lot more at stake if you are sorority. YOU can be stupid, drunk downtown and you have no one to answer to. A lot of things that aren't acceptable in sorority are fine for other people.

**Yarah**

And too I think a lot of it is just about tradition. Like being part of tradition, you know?

**Roommate Y**

To be honest I think it's a lot worse in other sororities than it is here just because a lot of sororities have more rules, like especially around rush, like you have to wear this color dress, this style, which we don't have.

**Yarah**

I mean, I'll admit that our rush can get superficial.

**Roommate Y**

Oh, totally. Sometimes rush is really superficial, which makes me really unhappy and I think that's why a lot of girls have such a hard time with it.

**Roommate M**

I think it is that superficial stuff that makes people not like Greeks.

**Margaret**

Probably, but I don't think people should say they don't like Greeks. They would be smarter to say they don't like certain aspects of some people who happen to be Greek or some aspects of Greek culture. Like, don't buy into all of the stereotypes when you don't know anyone who is Greek.

*They all nod in agreement.*

**Yarah**

Well, again I think the problem is that sometimes the stereotypes are partly true, or at least they probably at one point were legitimate things. Not as much anymore.

**Roommate M**

Right - if they knew Greeks they would find out the stereotypes aren't true all the time and maybe be less judgmental.

**Margaret**

Yeah, totally. People always think we go out all the time and are like slutty and drink a lot and have sex with boys because they are in a fraternity. Then there is this whole other side where they think we are like prudish. So there is no in-between, we are either prudes or whores when really we are all in between. I think the same goes for anything. It would be the same for just about everybody. The same for sororities.

*Yarah points to Roommate M.*

**Yarah**

And like you said none of us are ugly, but how many ugly girls do you see at USouthern? Everyone always acts like we spend so much time looking a certain way. I don't think we spend any more time than anyone else. I mean, yes we have nice hair, good teeth, good skin, we are fashionable, but that is what society expects. We aren't any different from everyone else who cares about what they look like, and most girls at USouthern care about what they look like!

**Roommate Y**

At the same time, I mean I think we really are "supposed" to be cute, and if you look around Zeta Chi we are, but I don't think it's done on purpose. In our classes we're talking about this idea of "attachment theory" where you are drawn to people who look like you, like on purpose. I do think that in a way we do pick people to be in Zeta Chi who look like us.

**Yarah**

Well excuse me, Miss Smarty Pants.

**Margaret**

That's another thing! People always think we are dumb, but the Truth is Greeks have like some of the highest GPA's on campus.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah! Tell that to the kid that made fun of you!

*A member from across the hall walks into the room holding a dress and looks at the four of them.*

**Member From Across the Hall**

Hey y'all, any of you have blue Yurman I can borrow, like maybe a ring or something to go with this dress?

*The four girls all shake their head no in unison.*

**Yarah**

No, but ask next door, I think they both have some. If they're not in there look on the dresser in the black box.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, but I'd ask before you borrow it. I think she got pretty mad a few weeks back because someone borrowed her stuff without asking.

**Margaret**

I heard she thought the cleaning ladies had stolen her ring. They're Black.

*Yarah ignores the comment as she has learned not to draw attention to her ethnicity.*

**Girl from Across the Hall**

Okay, thanks girls!

*The woman walks out of the room.*

**Roommate Y**

I hate that David Yurman stuff, it's so ugly.

**Margaret**

I kinda like it. I didn't like it at first but everyone is wearing it these days and it has kinda grown on me.

**Roommate Y**

I think it's very much like look how much money I have. And I'm like you could get something prettier for that much money - I'd like a car for that much money.

**Yarah**

See, everybody's different.

**Roommate M**

Well I better get going. Don't y'all have dinner soon?

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, we better get down there before they sing the prayer.

*Yarah looks at her sarcastically.*

**Yarah**

Actually, I was hoping we might miss it.

**Roommate Y**

Yarah!

**Director's Comments:**

While there was not an atmosphere of "rebellious" resistance around women's negotiations of rules and expectations within Zeta Chi, there was a strong attitude of resistance against societal stereotypes of sororities and Greeks. Although many of the women agreed that these stereotypes may have at one time held true and that in some

“other” sororities they still may hold true, there was a general consensus among my participants that Zeta Chi was not a typical sorority and therefore the members of Zeta Chi were not typical sorority women. While the women were either unwilling or found it unnecessary to “rebel” against the discipline and expectations of Zeta Chi, many of them recognized and wanted to resist others’ expectations of them as stereotypical sorority women.

Issues regarding such stereotypes and the rejection of them were extremely complex. My participants often ended up contradicting themselves on different occasions during our discussions of stereotypes and Greek culture. At times, in defense of the entire Greek system, my participants claimed that none of the stereotypes of Greeks had any Truth to them. Other times when my participants were attempting to distance Zeta Chi from other typical sororities, the women admitted that others, particularly other sororities, fulfilled the stereotypes while Zeta Chi did not. For example, they said that other sororities checked to make sure new members wore designer labels before giving them a bid, something that was “unheard of” in Zeta Chi. Finally, when the women had their guard down, they admitted that they themselves fulfilled some of the stereotypes of Greeks, often following such an admittance with an excuse for their behavior. For example, there was discussion that Zeta Chi fulfilled the stereotype of having women who looked similar, but that this was not necessary fulfilling a stereotype because it was not done on purpose and therefore could be excused. In the end, most of my participants recognized that just like with most things, stereotypes were not “true” and “untrue,” but somewhere in between.

The stereotypes themselves and my participants’ understanding, interaction with, and use of them were complex and contradictory. Much of this complexity and contradiction seemed to come from the defensive stance my participants took in regard to their “identities” as sorority women, often defending themselves and their choice to be in a sorority. This defensive stance caused them to be both proud and critical of their sorority membership and aware of and embarrassed by their fulfillment of some of those stereotypes. This stance often forced difficult negotiation and blatant contradiction around their constructions as sorority women.

I became particularly aware of their need to defend themselves during my time in Zeta Chi. I was shocked by the very negative responses and opinions that were expressed about sorority women by many of the people to whom I spoke about my research. For example, an acquaintance came with me to a Haunted House that was set up as a fundraiser. I immediately regretted bringing her because she made many negative comments about the sorority women’s appearance, lack of intelligence, and uselessness. The number of people who revealed to me their disgust for sorority women was incredible, particularly since so many of the people who spoke against sorority women had never met a sorority member. My participants were aware of the negative views some outsiders held of them, and although they often ignored comments or stares (as I learned to do during my research) they recognized that they were not always liked, simply because they were sorority. Negative stereotypes of sororities often made my participants feel the need to defend their participation in a sorority. Similar to the ways in

which the women's negotiations around and through stereotypes were complex and contradictory, attempts to defend their position as sorority women was also challenging as it often ended in similar contradiction.

In order to "defend" themselves, my participants often made claims that people did not understand Greeks, that Greeks were no different from anyone else, and that Greeks should not be stereotyped but should be understood as individuals. However, in their attempts to "other" or set Zeta Chi apart, they also ended up reversing the above claims by stereotyping all other sororities as typical and reinforcing negative stereotypes of the entire Greek system. For example, when trying to "prove" that the stereotypes about sorority women dating fraternity men were untrue, a participant commented that "I don't date frat boys, they are never looking for relationships, all they want is to hook up and they know that if you won't give it to them, someone else will." In this single comment, my participant both challenged the stereotype that sorority women date fraternity men and that sorority women sleep around. However, she also reinforced stereotypes about Greeks by saying that all fraternity men are the same (not understanding them as individuals), they are different from men outside of the Greek system (are different from everyone else), and that they all want to "hook up." This comment both defended the Greek system by sending the message "Look at me! I'm Greek and not the stereotype!" (also "I'm a proud member of the Greek system") and rejecting it by sending the message that "I don't date men in the Greek system because they are no good." Therefore, it seemed that any negotiation around stereotypes, and the attempt to defend oneself or one's sorority from stereotyping, was often "messy" and contradictory.

These experiences regarding stereotyping helped to show that sorority women's performances were many times judged without recognition of the ways the overarching discourse disciplined and expected certain behaviors. It seemed that the women were criticized for their individual performances—even when many of those same performances were enabled and expected by the discourse within which the women were constituted. Rather than critique the discourse and its promotion of such performances, there instead was a lack of recognition of discursive "enablement" and an inability to see how the overarching culture, even the culture outside of the microcosm of the sorority, had a hand in enabling the existence of or the "thinkability" of such performances. This was problematic because, while it critiqued individual women, it left the cultural discourse free from "attack." Changing the values of a culture as a whole demands the recognition of discursive power on individual performances—something that is lost when people are "blamed" for individual performances with disregard to the ways the overarching cultural discourse enables certain values and expectations.

Within Zeta Chi, my participant's comments concerning race provided examples of how individual actions, values, and beliefs were not only held by the individual, but were values enabled and expected within the overarching cultural discourse. I was at times disturbed by comments my participant's made when alluding to issues of race and ethnicity. Similar to the ways discourse and discipline "blinded" the women to their own complicity in gendered expectations, it seemed that many of these comments were part of a larger discourse on race—in this case a discourse that for many of my participants

had been shaped within a culture historically influenced by slavery, lynching, and war. Often my participants' negative comments about people's race seemed to simply be a value or Truth that they were raised to believe (e.g. Black people steal).

There is obvious need to change these racist beliefs. I feel that even within a strongly disciplined discourse on race people have responsibility to become more aware of their own complicity in racism, and sexism, heterosexism, and "-isms" in general. Participation in "-isms" should never go unchallenged. However, when participation in racism is only attributed to individuals, with disregard to the cultural discourse that shapes those individuals, the values and beliefs of the overarching culture remain unchallenged and are allowed to perpetuate themselves. While I do not defend my participant's use of racist comments, I do make a call to not only "blame" the women, but to also recognize, deconstruct, and challenge the overarching cultural discourse that has enabled the women's values, beliefs, and performances. Recognition of the power of racial discourse made it clear that these women were not only disciplined by and negotiating discourses of gender, but they were also disciplined by and negotiating discourses of race, sexuality, class, and other social categories.

**CUT TO:**

**SHARERS DOWNTOWN BAR-TUESDAY-9:30 PM**

Zooming in from a black screen, a glowing light begins to brighten, eventually illuminating the familiar setting of SHARERS bar. Although the bar is considerably less busy than on the weekends, it still appears to be bustling as women and men trickle in, order drinks, and collect in corners and seating areas in same-sex groups.

The camera focuses in on one group of four women all sitting on cushy ottomans in front of the mirrored wall toward the back of the bar. We recognize two of the women as Yarah and her roommate. They are sitting with Friend #1, a Zeta Chi junior, and Friend #2, a non-sorority friend of Yarah's from Bogart dorm from freshman year). Friend #1 is sipping on champagne, the only alcohol she will drink, while the other three are drinking bottles of beer. They are all wearing jeans, flip-flops, and light colored tank tops – a common choice of dress for many of the girls at USouthern.

Downtown for a girls' night out, the friends sit around talking about their week, current romances, juicy rumors, and memories from the past two or three years at USouthern. The camera zooms in on them in the middle of their conversation. Friend #1 has just finished telling a story about a girl in her dorm.

**Roommate Y**

That story always cracks me up!

**Yarah and Friends**

*Laughing*



**Yarah**

My favorite story is the one where your friend -

*Yarah points to Roommate Y. They lock and roll eyes, both knowing the story Yarah is talking about.*

**Roommate Y**

Oh god, not that one.

**Yarah**

Tell it.

**Roommate Y**

No, not again!

**Yarah**

Come on! It will be the last time, okay?

**Friend #1**

Oh, just tell us.

**Roommate Y**

Fine, fine. You probably heard it already.

**Friend #1**

Well tell it again.

*Roommate Y is known for her stories. Things happen to her that don't seem to happen to anyone else, not to mention that she makes anything she tells funnier than it probably ever was in real life. She has a way with words. Her friends already know she repeats her stories to everyone, making them even better with every telling. Roommate Y begins her story.*

**Roommate Y**

Fine. Okay, well I'll never tell this girl's name. She is Greek. She's one of those girls that use drinking as a way to get away with anything - like she repeatedly does things like this. Okay. Her roommate, she lives near my room and we are really good friends, like I am good friends with her and her roommate.

**Friend #1**

Oh, I think I know who it is.

**Roommate Y**

Well don't tell anyone, y'all are going to figure out who it is. Anyway, it's like the middle of the night and the roommate comes in my room cuz I'm like the mother of everyone, you know like I deal with everyone's issues, and so her roommate comes and wakes me up in the middle of the night and is like "Wake up, wake up, you-know-who got sick, oh shit! She got sick!" I was like, "Okay we'll clean it up tomorrow, no big deal, go back to sleep." You know.

**Friend #2**

Don't you just love how frank she is?

*The girls all smile and shake their head yes. They have all been on the other side of Roommate Y's "frankness." She and Yarah get along so well because they are both very similar in this way—they both tell it like it is.*

**Roommate Y**

I'm like "why are you gonna wake me up in the middle of the night telling me somebody got sick?," and she was like "NO, like, she got SICK, like it smells bad, she got sick." She just thought she had thrown up. Okay. I guess like she had woken up from her sleep, smelled the girl and started gagging because of the smell. Yeah. So, I was like...

*The girls are all looking at each other in disbelief with looks of disgust on their faces.*

**Yarah**

This would only happen to her.

**Roommate Y**

I was like you've got to be kidding me, so she was like "No, I really need you, I really need you to come help me with this." So I get up and I like walk to their room and I'm like ten feet from their room and the door is shut and I smell it! And before I even got to the door, I was like, I looked at her, I was like, "She didn't get sick, she took a shit!"

**All**

*Laughing hysterically*

**Roommate Y**

You don't confuse this! It smells, right? You don't confuse them. I mean it's very distinct. And I was like thinking to myself, "What, is she retarded?" So like we ended up, I ended up going in there and I turned on the light and...

**Yarah**

This is my favorite part!

**Roommate Y**

Essentially what had happened is that her roommate had gotten out of her bed in the middle of the night and I guess pulled down her pajama pants and doo-dooed a pile right in the middle of their floor.

**All**

*Laughing uncontrollably.*

**Roommate Y**

In the middle of their carpet, okay. So then she proceeded to walk all through it. Like she walked all through it and tracked it all over their room. I'm talking like doo-doo carpet, all over.

**Friend #1**

Oh my god.

**Roommate Y**

Then to get back into her bed, she climbed up into her loft, she had to step up on her computer chair and then her desk, and it had to have been all squirted between her toes and everything and just all over her. So she had stepped on her chair, gotten it all over her computer, all over her desk.

**Friend #2**

Oh my god.

**Roommate Y**

Like just from coming off of her feet it was on everything. She climbed up in her bed and got doo-doo all over her comforter. Like she was literally, by the time we woke her up, it was on her entire body, all in her sheets, all over her.

**All**

Laughing hysterically.

**Yarah**

That is so filthy!

**Roommate Y**

The best part was that this girl is like clean and perfect about almost everything and here she is sleeping in her own doo-doo. Essentially I cleaned it all up that night from the floor, but I was like screw this - she's gonna sleep in it. You know what I mean?

**All**

Yeah, sure.

*Everyone begins to calm down and slowly stop laughing. The funny part is over.*

**Roommate Y**

Like, what am I gonna do? Wake her up and take her to the shower?

**Friend #1**

Well, did she at least thank you for cleaning the floor?

**Roommate Y**

Well, I guess she got up the next day covered in shit and thought, "What the hell?" I mean she must have been embarrassed, like really embarrassed but she's just kinda, not prudish, but like she would not acknowledge like the fact that the event ever happened.

**Friend #2**

Wow.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, well she is like one of those type girls. Kinda like her shit don't stink to begin with. Like, I just would never shit to begin with, like I would never ever shit in the middle of my floor. I mean she was just one of those girls. Yeah, so she just pooped everywhere.

**Friend #2**

What is it with you and doo-doo?

**Yarah**

You should have seen Margaret's face when she heard the story.  
Priceless.

*Friend #1 addresses Yarah.*

**Friend #1**

Speaking of Margaret, she has turned into quite the crazy girl.

**Roommate Y**

Yeah, she has really changed from that good little plain girl she started off as – she's all about partying and brand names now.

**Yarah**

Well, you remember what's it is like to be a freshman. Everything is all new. She'll calm down I'm sure.

**Friend #2**

Hey, that boy keeps staring over here.

**Yarah**

Which one?

**Friend #2**

The one with the floppy brown hair.

*Yarah laughs and rolls her eyes.*

**Yarah**

That could be any boy in here.

**Friend #2**

The one with the blue shirt on.

**Yarah**

I thought you said you were done with guys.

**Friend #2**

Well, you know how it is.

**Yarah**

Yeah, everyone has that moment when the cute couple walks by and you're like "oh, I wish I had a boyfriend." But college boys don't make good boyfriends, you know?

**Friend #2**

Yeah, and then too if you start talking to them and you don't like them you have to try and lie to them or start thinking, "What am I going to say or make up to get him away from me?"

**Yarah**

Or like I always end up thinking, "I have to end this conversation or he's going to think I'm going home with him."

**Friend #1**

Yeah, why does it have to be so complicated? Like when you have a boyfriend you can go out and not worry about anything because who cares how you treat guys – you already have a boyfriend.

**Roommate Y**

And then without a boyfriend there is, like, pressure to flirt or give guys your attention and if you don't you're either a bitch or prudish.

But when you have a boyfriend you can be rude because you have a boyfriend.

**Yarah**

Having a boyfriend is like the only acceptable answer to get guys away. Like what are they going to say – they can't think you are a bitch just because you already have someone.

**Friend #1**

It's just easier with a boyfriend. Sometimes I think to myself, what is wrong with me that I can't find anyone?

**Yarah**

Yeah, but you are so career-minded, would you really want someone right now?

**Friend #1**

Probably not. I mean I came to college to get a degree, but sometimes in the back of my mind I still think I thought I would meet my husband.

**Yarah**

Yeah, but it's better to do your own thing for a while. You'll find someone down the road. Just get yourself established.

**Roommate Y**

Well, should we call it a night? I have a long day tomorrow. I have to help plan the big bowling tournament for St. Anthony's. You better all be coming, and invite everyone you know. We are hoping to raise a lot of money this year!

**Friend #2**

I don't know how y'all keep up with all your sorority events! There is something almost every week! Y'all are crazy! Good girls, but crazy!

**Director's Comments:**

The women rarely spoke openly about or fully recognized the ways they negotiated rules, discursive expectations, and stereotypes. However, by listening to their stories and discussion about their day-to-day experiences, it was clear that the women were grappling with how to negotiate the expectations placed on them as sorority women and women in general. The stories they told and the discussions they had, even when lighthearted and humorous, often highlighted the ways that they tried to make sense of competing expectations (e.g., to get married or not to get married, how to deal with drunken mistakes) through the messy negotiation of those expectations. These negotiations were particularly apparent in humorous stories in which the "teller" challenged expectations through the use of vulgarity and discussion of unladylike topics,

and at the same time reproduced appropriateness by disciplining the protagonist's unladylike actions or "wrong choices." Discipline or support of both the teller (for telling an unladylike story) and the protagonist (for being unladylike) was also provided by the audience through laughter and comments of disgust or disbelief. Like all other aspects of girl talk, the dominant messages that were conveyed through stories and discussion relayed expectations of ladylike found within discourses of ladylike within Zeta Chi. However, the different interpretations of stories, the contradictory opinions offered, and the various reactions of the women helped open a space to explore the competing beliefs, differing personal expectations, and complicated values that existed and were negotiated inside of the overarching discourses of ladylikeness.

Just as the women's negotiations of discursive expectations were complex, so must be the view of sororities. Some might look at the ways that Zeta Chi reinforced highly proscribed and restrictive expectations of gender performance and conclude that the sorority was an overly privileged, exclusive, and anti-feminist organization deserving of judgment, hatred, and disgust. Others might look at the ways Zeta Chi reinforced philanthropy, unity, respect, decency, and self-worth and conclude that the sorority was a respectable, important, woman-centered organization deserving of recognition, reverence, and support. However, both of these perspectives are essentialist and fail to acknowledge the complexity within the sorority. Zeta Chi was neither "good" nor "evil," but rather was simultaneously both, in between, and beyond. Zeta Chi and the women in it were not easily simplified or defined, but instead were complex women constantly making messy negotiations among those discursive expectations that organized their everyday lives.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

In the existing academic literature, discussions of sorority women are often limited to quantitative research concerning issues of drinking, eating disorders, hazing, and academic achievement. Many of these previous studies ignored the complex lived experiences of women by focusing only on decontextualized and segmented aspects of sorority culture. In particular, these studies failed to explore the complexity of gender and the ways that sorority women negotiate discourses of femininity within the highly proscribed and gendered Greek system. In order to show this complexity and explore the ways sorority women negotiated gender discourse, I conducted an ethnographic study of a Southern sorority.

The lens of post-structural feminism provided a theoretical framework that promoted complex and contextualized understandings of multiple and competing discursive experiences. In particular, this theoretical lens provided a perspective on discourse, subjectivity, discipline, and performativity that allowed me to “see” sororities and sorority women in ways previous research had not yet explored. My research was guided by the following research questions: 1) What discourses of femininity are enabled within Zeta Chi sorority culture?, 2) How are such discourses of femininity disseminated and disciplined within Zeta Chi culture?, and 3) How do women in Zeta Chi negotiate the gendered expectations disciplined within such discourse?

The specific sorority selected for this study was Zeta Chi (a pseudonym), a traditional sorority (not specialized based on race, religion, or interest) of over 150 members ranging from freshmen to seniors who were mostly White, middle class,

Christian, heterosexual women between the ages of 18-24. Zeta Chi was located at USouthern (a pseudonym), a large Southern university situated in an active college town in the Southeastern region of the United States. Using participant observations and formal interviews as my primary methods of data collection, I began my research with Zeta Chi in July 2007 and continued my work until May 2008, spending over eight months in the field and taking part in 20 participant observations, 17 two-hour formal interviews, and numerous informal interviews and observations.

Data collected from these methods were analyzed using post-structural feminist themes of discourse, discipline, and performativity. During my analysis I also identified themes that grew out of repetition within the data. Using these themes as a starting point, I constructed my data representation as a pseudo-screenplay to present the data in a contextualized, polyvocal genre. This ethnographic screenplay was organized into three groups of four scenes, with each set of scenes representing one of my research questions. To offer my own interpretation guided by post-structural feminist theory, I added “Director’s Comments” to each scene in which I discussed the connections between my data, my theoretical framework, and my own understandings.

#### Connections to Post-structural Feminist Theory

Since the beginning of this research, my understandings, representations, and interpretations have been guided by post-structural feminist theory, particularly the work of Foucault and Butler and their notions of discourse, discipline, and performativity. In the following, I will make connections between these works and the findings of my research.



*Discourse*

According to Foucault (1972), discourse is always already present as a regulatory structure, however contingent or fleeting, that imposes rules and regulations. These discursive rules and regulations reinforce those expectations and regularities that we come to regard as “the realities of our lived experiences.” Within the culture of USouthern, discourses of femininity helped to construct and regulate the reality of gender for college students. These dominant discourses were multiple and competing and offered various options for acceptable gender performance.

However, the multiple and competing discourses of femininity at USouthern were not all represented within Zeta Chi. Instead, within the sorority there was a strong disciplinary process that reinforced one very dominant discourse of femininity grounded in White, Christian, upper-class, heterosexual values. In order for this one discourse to remain dominant, Zeta Chi had to create and discipline boundaries around the women’s performances of femininity, forcing the exclusion of alternative or competing expectations, performances, or possibilities of gender. In this sense, in order to remain the privileged discourse or only dominant discourse within Zeta Chi, there was a need to compete with and exclude those alternative discourses of femininity found outside the sorority.

While this dominant discourse of femininity within Zeta Chi competed to maintain its privileged position against “outside” discourses, there was no clash of competing discourses inside the sorority. Instead, the disciplinary process of exclusion maintained this one dominant discourse and limited the potential for multiple and competing discourses within Zeta Chi. The power of this overarching dominant discourse

was pervasive and was cyclically reinforced within the various spheres of the women's lives, including their Southern upbringings, the general USouthern culture, and the specific culture of Zeta Chi.

I am not making an essentialist claim that the overarching dominant discourse of femininity within Zeta Chi is discrete, bounded, stable, and singular. Foucault (1978) reiterated the need to trouble any essentialist claims of overarching dominant discourse when he warned that “we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (p. 100). Rather than *being* a bounded discourse, the dominant discourse of femininity in Zeta Chi only *appeared* to be bounded due to the coordination of discursive elements that were strategically disciplined to create the “fiction” of a singular, bounded, and stable discourse of Truth.

My observational conclusion that there is only one overarching discourse of femininity within Zeta Chi very much troubled the way I had expected women to negotiate discursive expectations within the sorority. I had hoped to explore the ways the women negotiated among discourses *within* Zeta Chi, but my observations led me to believe that there were no competing discourses to be negotiated. Instead, as discussed in Chapter Six, the women's negotiations of discourse were almost always local, fleeting, and “accidental,” remaining within the boundaries of the dominant discourse of ladylike—the type of small resistances often discussed within post-structural theory in critique of “revolutions of resistance” promoted within humanism.

Such “in-discourse” negotiation was illustrated through the “sporty girls” resistance to being labeled “girly girls.” For example, the sporty women often downplayed their attention to appearance and saw this “rough and tumble” attitude as an act of resisting the dominant discourse of femininity. However, even though they wanted to present themselves as rough and tumble, they still had long hair, wore jewelry, dressed well, and wore makeup while playing their sports, all dominant expectations of ladylikeness. Therefore, even their resistance took place within that which was accepted by the discourse of ladylike.

I had expected to see negotiations across competing discourses and negotiations that possibly opened space for gendered performances that strongly deviated from the norm. Instead I found only one dominant discourse. I also found negotiations of femininity that, rather than cross the boundaries of the dominant discourse or strongly deviate from the norm, remained within the allowable boundaries disciplined within Zeta Chi that were set up to maintain the dominance of that which was considered appropriate for a woman.

Foucault explained discourse as “a violence” imposed on subjects. The use of the term “violence” to describe discourse was because of discourse’s ability to conceal power, set boundaries, create expectations, limit that which is considered possible, and discipline individual existence to remain within what the discourse deems “appropriate.” To Foucault, these actions were violent because they work together to conceal power and expectations in notions of taboo, rationality, and Truth, and impose regulations on individuals without their awareness of their own complicity. Individuals accept many contestable, discursively imposed expectations as Truth and remain unaware of their own

complicity. The failure to recognize one's own complicity becomes particularly difficult when discursive expectations are misjudged as innate, natural, and uncontested Truth rather than as historically and culturally defined regulations open to contestation and negotiation. This means that many discursive regularities, rather than appear as expectations that could be challenged or subverted, are instead often regarded as uncontested "Truth" to be performed without question. For example, within Zeta Chi women were expected to be heterosexual and were "not good girls" if they were too loose with their sexuality. Rather than challenge this, many of my participants disciplined their own and others' sexual behaviors and accepted that these expectations of decency were just the way things were for women—a Truth of the "lived experience" of being a woman.

Many expectations of femininity in Zeta Chi had attained this privileged status of Truth and seemed to remain hidden to the women, making the negotiation of those expectations inconceivable. However, other discursive elements were apparent to the women, revealing their discursive nature as they fell from a privileged position. For example, my participants "saw" and constantly negotiated the micro expectations of femininity around appearance such as hairstyle, dress color, perfume scent, jewelry shape, and clothing fit. They saw such expectations as guidelines that could be resisted, re-interpreted, and negotiated, and they often tried out new styles, colors, scents, or shapes. While the women recognized these performances of femininity as expectations that could be negotiated, at the same time they did *not* see or consider challenging the macro or underlying expectation that made such performances important to femininity. In

other words, the expectation that women should even be concerned with hair, dress, and jewelry was considered a given, a Truth, and therefore non-negotiable.

I have tried to understand why, in this highly disciplined system, some expectations of this discourse of ladylike remained hidden while others became apparent to the women. In order to present a possible explanation for this phenomenon I will pull from Butler's notion of "failure to repeat" and "parodic repetition." These processes might explain my participants' ability to see and resist some discursive elements while they simultaneously accepted others as Truth.

Butler (1990) discussed the notion of failure to repeat or parodic repetition in relation to gender, asserting that gender performances are compelled to repeat themselves in order to establish the illusion of a Truth of gender or the illusion of a true gender core. In other words, the gendered self is constituted through performative acts that are repeated over and over in order to establish and re-establish that which is considered the discursive gendered norm or ideal. She explained that these repetitive gendered performances are considered the Truth until they fail to repeat or are repeated through parody, exposing the so-called Truth as a fictitious construction of a specific discourse.

As Butler (1990) explained:

The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this "ground." The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (p. 178)

In order to explain the notion of a failure to repeat and the way that such a failure can reveal gender as a fabrication and open it up to possibility, Butler (1990) discussed

drag. She saw drag as a gender performance that subverts and mocks the notion of a true gender identity, quoting the work of Newton (1972) to explain drag's ability to trouble gender:

At its most complex, [drag] is a double inversion that says, "appearance is an illusion." Drag says [Newton's curious personification] "my 'outside' appearance is femininity, but my essence 'inside' [the body] is masculine." At the same time it symbolizes the opposite inversion; "my appearance 'outside' [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence 'inside' [myself] is feminine." (p. 103)

Drag provides an example of a failure to repeat because, through its contradiction of the inner/outer "Truth" of gender, it displaces the hegemonic ideal of a binary gender system in which there is a True gender connected to the biological body. This failure to repeat or parodic repetition exposes the fantasy of gender that dominant culture accepts and repetitively re-establishes as Truth. Only through the failure to repeat can the illusion of Truth be displaced. As Butler stated, "This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities" (p. 176).

However, to some extent even this explanation of failure to repeat or parodic repetition is too simplistic. Rather than failure to repeat taking place in an instance, such as an individual seeing a drag performance and then instantly re-configuring their understanding of gender, the subversion of hegemonic gender takes place gradually over time as Truth is slowly revealed to be a discursive expectation that can be challenged, subverted, or mis-repeated. These failures to repeat potentially build up over time and collectively create small ruptures in hegemony, slowly allowing previously unthinkable

questions about the compulsory nature of gender to form and open up new gender possibilities (Butler, 1990).

I apply the processes of “repeating” and the gradual process of failure to repeat to explain sorority women’s ability and inability to recognize discursive expectations. Within Zeta Chi, a dominant discourse of femininity has reached a privileged status of Truth only because specific discursive expectations have been disseminated, taken up, and repeated by subjected individuals. Since dominant discourses of femininity must repeat themselves in order to maintain positions of Truth, there is also the possibility for failure to repeat or mis-repeat.

The repetition or failed repetition of gendered Truths enabled women of Zeta Chi to both remain *unaware* of their complicity in discursive elements positioned as Truth when properly repeated, and also potentially become *aware* of discursive elements forced from the position of Truth through a failure to repeat. However, as noted in Chapter Four, while there was always a possibility of a mis-repeat, the dominant discourse within Zeta Chi was so strongly disciplined that there were very few opportunities for ruptures in that which was seen as Truth. In fact, because most of the sorority women’s social lives took place within spaces where this particular dominant discourse resided (upbringing, University, sorority), there was so little room for a mis-repeat that the dominant discourse often remained unquestioned.

At times during my research, there was evidence of the collective effect of failures to repeat, particularly with my participants who began to “see” the sorority in a more negative light. In particular my participant who choose to de-sister had apparently “seen” enough of the gradual and subtle failures to repeat that she was able to become

aware of the expectations of Zeta Chi and her ability to subvert or challenge them. Just as failure to repeat was gradual and often subtle, her transformation from “good Southern sorority girl” to “the one who de-sistered” took place over four years of high school and four years of college during which small ruptures in what she had always believed to be Truth began to create a space for her where she could see the possibility of something “other” than that which she had always been. Therefore, Butler’s (1990) notion of failure to repeat helped to illuminate the ways that some Zeta Chi women slowly became aware of their own complicity in and ability to subvert certain discursive expectations.

### *Subjectivity*

How does one become a subject who negotiates Truth exposed as expectation through a failure to repeat? For many post-structural theorists the question of subjectivity--how one becomes a subject, a self, a position, an identity, or an “I”--requires a re-theorization of humanist notions of a rational, coherent, and consistent self capable of knowing and manipulating the world (Chanter, 1998; Grosz, 1990; Lather, 1991; Mansfield, 2000). This re-theorization of the rational, manipulative subject of humanism was particularly important to Foucault’s (1977) notions of the subject. He theorized the subject not as a rational being but as a subject of discursive power who is both a cause and, more importantly, an effect of that power. For Foucault, one does not become a subject through rational choice and manipulation of the world, but instead through subjection to discursive power—a power that creates the soul. This soul created by discursive power then acts on the exteriority of the body to produce the subject. In this sense, for Foucault, the body is no longer the prison of the soul (as in Christian imagery), but rather “the soul is the prison of the body” (p. 30). Foucault (1977) explained:



It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within, the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those that are punished – and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives. (p. 29)

Throughout his collection of work Foucault gave an explanation of the processes

of subjectivity, particularly in relation to discursive power and the formation of the disciplined subject. However, much of his theorization ignored the specifics of how one becomes a *gendered* subject through the processes of gendered subjectivity.

### *Gendered Performance/Performativity*

Butler (1990) theorized the process of gendered subjectivity to be performative. Many use this notion of performative gender interchangeably with the notion of gender performance. However, such an interchange is inappropriate due to theoretical difference between the two—difference that is paramount to Butler’s theorization of performativity.

Typically, the notion of a performance indicates that there is in fact an actor behind the performing. When one speaks of gender performance there is the assumption that an actor is choosing to perform—a doer behind the deed. However, Butler’s (1990) theorization of gender performativity contradicts the notion of a doer behind the deed and troubles the use of the term gender “performance.” She made the distinction between these two terms when she stated that “gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed” (p. 25). From this perspective, gender performance and performativity are both “doings;” however, while performance assumes an actor behind the doing, in performativity the actor is a fiction constituted through the “doing” itself. Although Butler often used the terms

gender performance and gender performativity interchangeably in *Gender Trouble* (1990), in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) she attempted to clarify the concept of performativity by offering the following explanation:

There is no power, construed as a subject, that acts, but only . . . a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability. This is less an “act,” singular and deliberate, than a nexus of power and discourse that repeats or mimes the discursive gestures of power. Hence, the judge who authorizes and installs the situation he names invariably cites the law that he applies, and it is the power of this citation that gives the performative its binding or conferring power. And though it may appear that the binding power of his words is derived from the force of his will or from a prior authority, the opposite is more true: it is through the citation of the law that the figure of the judge’s “will” is produced and that the “priority” of textual authority is established. (p. 225)

This theoretical concept of performativity helped to explain the processes of gendered subjectivity, meaning the way bodies are constructed by discourse as gendered subjects, selves, and I’s. However, attempting to talk about the ways I observed women construct gender in their everyday experiences and simultaneously attempting to remain true to the idea that these women were not agentic actors but “fictitious,” performatively constituted subjects, was difficult and almost contradictory. Even though I observed the women performing gender, making choices, and negotiating expectations, in using performativity to theorize these processes of gendered subjectivity I was unable to talk about the women of Zeta Chi as agentic actors who made choices among discursive expectations. Rather than the woman performing, it was the action of performing that in turn produced the woman. Theoretically this idea of the performatively constituted woman made sense, but how could I then talk about the women I had observed in the field? Could I simultaneously talk about these women as performatively constituted subjects and at the same time as actors who made choices?

In trying to negotiate a space between performativity and performance I questioned whether a gendered subject who is performativity constituted can potentially become or appear as a subject or a doer who chooses and performs gender. If one keeps the “subject” as that which is constituted by the performance rather than as that which existed before it, can that “performatively constituted subject” then appear as an actor in her own experiences? Can a fictitious actor be discussed as one that acts?

In struggling with these questions I concluded that gendered subjectivity was a cyclical process in which a subject is constantly, performatively constituted as a fictitious actor through hidden discursive elements. That performatively constituted fictitious actor then appears to “act” and “perform” gender as she reproduces, resists, and re-creates those discursive elements that often remain hidden, although at times such elements might become apparent through failure to repeat. Once discursive elements become apparent, they no longer maintain a position of Truth and so come up for grabs and can be actively negotiated by those “fictitious actors.” Therefore, in our discursively constituted “lived experiences” we observe actions of others that appear to come from an “inner” actor who chooses to perform, even when it is not the actor who created the performance but the performance that created the actor. Through this discussion I have tried to make room within performativity to allow space for discussing women who actively choose and act out gendered performances, even if those women are theorized not as actors choosing action, but rather as fictitious actors constituted by the very action that they “appear” to have chosen.

This understanding of gendered performativity is important to understanding the subjectivity of the women of Zeta Chi as “effects” of discourse rather than the causes of

it. Since sorority women are often judged for their so-called complicity in highly proscribed gendered systems (often considered anti-feminist), understanding the women as subjects performatively constituted within a specific discursive system moves the critique of their performances away from the fault of individual choice and toward a critique of the historically and culturally constructed discursive system within which they are constituted. Rather than blame the women for their complicity, understanding them as performatively constituted subjects opens the space for critique of the culture that enables and promotes those performances through which the women come to be understood. Butler (1993) reinforced the need to focus not on the “performer” but on those expectations that precede the “performer” when she stated that

performance as bounded “act” is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in the reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s “will” or “choice;” further, what is “performed” works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable. (p. 134)

Butler (2005) concluded that “there is no making of oneself (*poiesis*) outside of a mode of subjectivation (*assujettissement*) and, hence, no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take” (p. 17).

When the norms that constitute the possibilities of subjectivity are coordinated to discipline subjects into prescribed ways of being, critique should not focus solely on individual performances, but rather on the ways in which historically and culturally constructed discourses have enabled and promoted those performances. The question is no longer “How can these women act in such ways?” but instead “What processes of discourse have enabled these performances of self?” “How have they been disseminated and disciplined?” and “How might they be negotiated, resisted, and re-created?” Or, as

Butler (2004b) questioned, “What, given the contemporary order of being, can I be?” (p. 58).

Therefore, although I appeared to discuss these women as active subjects, even these active subjects were performatively constituted within discursive structures. These performatively constituted subjects should be understood as reflections of the discourses that have produced them, rather than as individuals freely choosing how to perform their own gender. While the failure to repeat opens space to subvert discursive expectations, the subjectivities of the women of Zeta Chi were not based on simple choices to perform, but rather were constituted within “socially constructed rules and regularities [that] organize a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world” (St.Pierre, 2000, p. 485).

Within Zeta Chi it was apparent that there was a strong dominant discourse with rules and regulations that constructed specific ways of thinking about femininity. What regulations were in place and how did they help to hold discursive expectations in privileged positions of Truth, constantly constituting and re-constituting the sorority women through the production and reproduction of repetitious acts of certain gender performances?

#### *Discipline in Zeta Chi*

Although I had some expectations that I would observe systems of self-surveillance within Zeta Chi, I was not prepared for the extent to which discipline and its power, both overt and covert, were used to reinforce those performances of gender made viable through the discourse of ladylike. Disciplinary power was used on and by the women to maintain a specific reputation of Zeta Chi and to uphold the discourse of

ladylike that constructed the appearance of this reputation. Discipline, as Foucault (1977) stated:

trains the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements—small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments. Discipline “makes” individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. (p. 170)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) examined the modern techniques of discipline used on criminals and concluded that the modern system of control uses discrete punishment rather than spectacle, punishes the criminal rather than the crime, and attempts to reform the criminal rather than gain retribution. Although control was no longer connected to corporal brutality, he believed this “gentler” system of discipline was potentially more intrusive than those that focused on bodily punishment because it aimed to gain psychological control over the individual subject.

Foucault’s (1977) theorization of systems of discipline and control have been applied to other modern institutions, including schools, hospitals, and factories, and they can also be applied to sorority culture. Looking at Zeta Chi through a framework of discipline illuminated the ways that the women of Zeta Chi were produced and reproduced within discourse. Through discipline, the women of Zeta Chi became docile bodies, “bodies subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136), and were used to uphold the reputation of ladylikeness for Zeta Chi. Foucault theorized that these bodies became subjected to discourse and discipline through three distinctive means: 1) hierarchical observation, 2) normalizing judgment, and 3) examination. Adaptations of these three principles were used within the sorority to discipline Zeta Chi women within the discourse of ladylike.

*Hierarchical observation.* Hierarchical observation is based on the principle that we can control people simply through the act of observation. Foucault (1977) applied this principle to the architectural structures of the prison, “an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct . . . to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (p. 172). Although Foucault’s discussion of hierarchical observations is more concerned with physical structures that create systems of surveillance, such as the watchtower of a prison that always subjects the prisoner to the gaze of authority, I build on his numerous theories of power relations to suggest that the sorority sets up similar systems of observation, not within the physical structure but within the social structure of the sorority.

While the physical architecture of the sorority itself is not structured with hierarchical observation in mind, there is in its place a *social* architecture of hierarchical observation which creates the same sense of constant surveillance and acts to transform individuals. Hierarchical observation that occurs within this social architecture includes the observations of Standards, Nationals, officers, and big sisters within Zeta Chi. However, the disciplinary system of Zeta Chi also employs lateral observation of “subjects” when members of equal status discipline each other’s behaviors related to issues of public reputation and ladylikeness. Therefore, multiple features of discipline converge to create this social architecture of hierarchical and lateral observation within Zeta Chi. As Foucault (1977) explained, these observations are

organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network “holds” the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another; supervisors, perpetually supervised. (p.177)

Supervision of Zeta Chi members was more difficult than within other, more structured institutions, such as a prison or factory, since there was no architectural structure surrounding the women of Zeta Chi that continuously “marked” them as “subjects” of this particular disciplinary system. However, the visual nature of sorority membership that occurred through displays of Greek letters on shirts, necklaces, bumper stickers, and bags marked the women as subjects easily recognized and open to observation by Zeta Chi. This marking was particularly important at social events that took place outside of the sorority, making the women’s membership known to others both inside and outside of the sorority. Members publicly marked as Zeta Chi were more strongly observed and disciplined by other Zeta Chis since public behaviors would reflect on the entire sorority and could be detrimental to its reputation. Therefore, this visual marking of members made their performances of self easily visible to both hierarchical and lateral observation that was set up to control, alter, and survey performances of gender expected within the discourse of ladylikeness in Zeta Chi.

*Normalizing judgment.* Foucault’s (1977) second principle of disciplinary control is concerned with normalizing judgment. As Foucault explained it, normalizing judgment

brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum toward which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value abilities, the level, the “nature” of individuals. It introduces, through this “value-giving” measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other difference, the external frontier of the abnormal. (p. 183)



This normalizing judgment that compared, separated, measured, introduced conformity, and defined difference among individuals occurred both overtly and covertly within Zeta Chi. For example, overt normalizing judgment took place around issues of Zeta Chi's local and national rank compared both to other Zeta Chi chapters and to various local sororities. The women of Zeta Chi did not want to be merely a good sorority, they thought they should be one of the top sororities on campus as ranked by a system that measured factors such as academic status, numbers in membership, and amount of money raised for philanthropy.

Normalizing judgment in Zeta Chi also worked through a more covert process in which women compared themselves and others to certain "standards" of ladylike in relation to issues of beauty, sexuality, and general behavior. For example, normalizing judgment often took place through girl talk while women talked about other sorority women's sexual behaviors and judged such behaviors against the ranked scale of appropriateness set forth by the expectations of ladylike within Zeta Chi. Although women in Zeta Chi might not have been aware of the normalizing judgment or have had an awareness of a scale of appropriateness, they informally judged and rated themselves and others based on norms and expectations. This normalizing judgment differentiated members within Zeta Chi based on their "rank" of appropriateness as judged by their attention to discursive rules and expectations, both the overt rules of Standards and Nationals and the covert rules of girl talk.

As normalizing judgment disciplined gendered performances and differentiated between individuals, it also set boundaries around what performances of self were considered normal within the discourse of Zeta Chi. Foucault (1977) reiterated this when

he stated that normalizing judgment “traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*” (p. 183). In defining what was normal within Zeta Chi, normalizing judgment also defined that which was to be considered abnormal or unthinkable within the discourse. Foucault (1977) highlighted the power of the “norm” when he claimed that “like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power” (p. 184). These techniques of normalizing judgment and those discussed as hierarchical/lateral observation combine to form the last of Foucault’s processes of discipline: the examination.

*The examination.* Examination is “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that . . . establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them . . . [I]t manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected” (Foucault, 1977, pp. 184-185). As an individual undergoes an examination, such as a medical check-up or a final class exam, she is observed, judged, and controlled based on the established norms. This type of examination clearly took place within Zeta Chi, particularly in the practices of rush and the acceptance of new members who were examined based on grades, activities, school, appearance, personality, and interests. However, examination also took place within the everyday experiences of Zeta Chi women as they were constantly watched, judged, and examined through overt and covert process of power and discipline.

Foucault (1977) explained that the examination, such as a medical or academic exam, culminates in describing individuals in writing and then recording and filing those details about them. As Foucault explained, “The examination that places individuals in a

field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing . . . . A ‘power of writing’ was constituted as an essential part in the mechanisms of discipline” (1977, p. 189). However, examinations within Zeta Chi were not as ritualized as those found within medicine and education, and most were not recorded in writing (the only formal examinations that took place in Zeta Chi was during rush, when records of potential new members were collected and created, and during Standards, when disciplinary files were recorded and reported to Nationals). Instead, as an adaptation to the more ritualized written examination, Zeta Chi employed the *social examination* of others that documented “results” in a symbolic record of oral history.

This oral history was recorded within the rumors, complaints, stories, and confessions of girl talk. Results were “written” into the social “diary” of Zeta Chi and were often passed down from generation to generation, to disseminate lessons of appropriateness and inappropriateness. An example of this “diary” of documented examinations can be seen in stories centered around unladylike behavior, such as the one story Yarah tells to Roommate Y in Chapter Five about a sorority member who became intoxicated on a date night and ended up making out with a fraternity man in the back of a tour bus. The women listening to this story were appalled by her behavior and embarrassed that she would risk ruining the reputation of Zeta Chi (which “taught” them boundaries around what was acceptable and not). Throughout my research I heard this story told or referred to at least four other times. By telling and retelling stories like this one, the women were disseminating rules about the ways performances of gender were classified, judged, and ranked within Zeta Chi. The women would “learn” the

expectations of Zeta Chi from the repetition of the verbal records of these social examinations.

This socially recorded examination, its recording within the social diary, and its telling and retelling also created a “ceremony of objectification” in which the “subjects” of the story remained visible and objectified. Foucault (1977) explained that disciplinary power

imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects that have to be seen. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection . . . The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification (p. 187)

For example, although I never met the woman about whom the above story was told, each time the story was told she was re-examined, judged, and made visible as an example of abnormal behavior—behavior to be disciplined and from which to refrain. Even in her absence, the protagonist of the story was still constantly visible as the record of her was continuously brought to the surface of discourse through girl talk. Through the telling of and listening to the story, all members involved were reminded of their own visibility to discursive power and that their own abnormal performances would also be disciplined. As Foucault (1977) noted, “The examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency” (p. 187).

The women of Zeta Chi were disciplined through hierarchical/lateral observation, normalizing judgment, and social examination in order to fulfill those expectations of gendered subjectivity enabled by the discourse of ladylike within the sorority. The

combination of the overt power of Standards/Nationals and the covert power of girl talk worked to simultaneously to construct a disciplinary process that observed, judged, normalized, examined, and recorded the gendered performances of women and revealed that within sororities there were strict forms of domination, particularly around performances of gender. Although the women negotiated ways to subvert such disciplinary power, their subjection to discourse and discipline therein often left them “caught in a punishable, punishing universality” (Foucault, 1977, p. 178). The combinations of discourse, discipline, and performativity all worked together to produce and reproduce “appropriate” women as subjects of Zeta Chi sorority. Although there was always the potential to resist, re-create, and re-interpret expectations, the highly proscribed discourse of the Greek system easily maintained the appearance of “uncontestable” boundaries and disciplined the possibilities of viable gender performance, often limiting the women’s failure to repeat.

#### Final Reflections

Never having been in a sorority myself, my first opinions of Southern sorority women were based on my own uninformed observations, media representations, and quantitative academic articles that focused on sorority women’s drinking, sexual behaviors, and eating disorders. My opinions were particularly close-minded and judgmental, and I often found myself making fun of the ways I saw these women enact femininity. “Skirts and high heels at football games—what is wrong with these women?” I would ask. However, my judgmental ideas of sorority women were quickly challenged by a sorority member with whom I conducted a life history interview a year prior to the start of this study. The sorority woman I interviewed was not the stereotypical character I

had assumed all sorority women to be. Instead, she was a complex person struggling to negotiate multiple messages of what it meant to be a “good girl” within the culture of her sorority. The complexity of this woman’s experiences forced me to reconsider my opinions of sorority women and recognize that, rather than judge the individual women for their behaviors, it was important to consider the culture that both enabled and at times demanded sorority women’s participation in specific gender performances.

I began to feel uncomfortable when other people stereotyped sorority women. It seemed that people judged sorority women without even thinking to critique the larger culture that enabled them to exist. I also felt that many people ignored the complex ways that the women negotiated multiple expectations of femininity within that culture. I think that my defensiveness about the women and their struggles to negotiate expectations of femininity was mainly due to my own struggle to exist within the Southern culture I had newly entered. If I better understood how sorority women negotiated their positions as women within discourses of femininity, maybe I could figure out how to negotiate that which was expected of me and find a way to make my own space where I could feel comfortable—fulfilling some expectations, resisting others, and re-creating some anew.

Therefore, I entered into this study because I wanted to better understand the lives of sorority women and how they negotiated discourses of femininity. I also wanted to explore discursive power and the ways discursive expectations were disciplined within the sorority, causing women to both intentionally and at times inadvertently fulfill those expectations for which they are often judged and stereotyped. How were these women the effect of discursive power, rather than simply the cause of it?

Throughout this study, I became increasingly respectful of the power of the discourse of femininity within Zeta Chi. In sharing experiences with the women, I began to see just how difficult it could be to subvert the power of discourse and challenge that which was expected. At times the women did not even see the possibility of “acting differently.” How could I judge them for their fulfillment of that which they saw as the Truth of being female?

My participants could see that there were women outside of the sorority who performed gender in competing ways. However, if one wanted to be part of the sorority, those alternative performances of gender were not a possibility. The women in Zeta Chi might adopt certain elements of other discourses, for example borrow the use of black nail polish from Gothic culture; however, they did not perform complete Goth—black clothing from head to toe. For many of the women, the prestige of being in a sorority was too much to give up just to “try on” these alternative performances. Although these alternative performances were not necessarily considered by the women to be “bad,” they were considered inappropriate for women in Zeta Chi.

Although I recognized that the women had choice in some of their performances of gender, the difficulty to subvert the power of discourse was apparent. I saw the ways multiple forms of discipline organized the women, limited their existence, and constructed almost impenetrable boundaries within Zeta Chi. The strength of the discipline was so strong that I felt a great deal of respect for those women who made room to resist or reinterpret discursive expectations. I recognized that resistance or reinterpretation within Zeta Chi deserved more praise than those negotiations I was making outside of such a strictly disciplined culture. Growing up in a culture where

gender was less disciplined, more open to possibility, and somewhat up for grabs, my ability to challenge expectations has always been fairly supported and almost expected. However, the ability of some of my participants to resist, renegotiate, or in extreme cases de-sister seemed a much greater achievement because it was not supported and was strongly disciplined against.

I was particularly impressed with one of my participants who not only challenged expectations, but seemed to “see” more expectations than many of her peers. Her personal experiences, knowledge, and interest in critical media studies helped her to see beyond what was expected. Able to recognize that many of the Truths she was raised with and disciplined around in Zeta Chi were just expectations in disguise, she became frustrated with her sorority and ended up de-sistering. She now does photographic work portraying those Southern expectations of femininity that she desires to resist.

The fact that some women resisted and re-interpreted expectations even within this strictly disciplined system gave me hope that all of us can potentially “see” how we are disciplined, challenge that discipline, and open new possibilities for our own gendered or potentially un-gendered (removing gender as a label to fulfill) selves. As Foucault (1994) contended, “maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are . . . .We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries” ( p. 336).

Though a common critique of post-structural feminism is that it does not easily move into practical, applied examples, it clearly helps illuminate and explain the issues of discourse, discipline, and negotiation within the experiences of Zeta Chi sorority women.



I hope that this study will begin a trend in research that uses emancipatory and deconstructive theory to contextualize women's experiences and consider the ways that cultural discourse enables, constructs, influences, and disciplines women's performances of femininity. It is through this post-structural feminist lens that we can recognize expectations, subvert discipline, and open new possibilities of subjectivity.

Continued→

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**Date:** Fri 23 May 13:00:01 EST 2008  
**From:** Julie W. Dunlap <jules242@lab.edu>  
**Subject:** Thanks!  
**To:** Lisbeth A. Berbary <lberbary@lab.edu>

Hey Lisbeth!! \*

I am so sorry I'm just now getting back to you, but it was finals week and I was freaking out! Anyway, I read the screenplay and I think it sounds great! I love how you took aspects of everyone and spread them out into different characters! I think that it is very true to what happened and the constructed reactions sound great too. I really enjoyed reading it, it brought back memories of the past year, it just went so fast! I've really enjoyed being involved in this whole process and I'm glad I could be part of it! I just realized how valuable my college experiences, including Zeta Chi, have been and how they have made me so much of who I am now.

I remember that in one of our last e-mails before you started into your research you talked about how you wanted people to read your research and begin thinking differently about themselves, our culture, and how we all have to deal with expectations to act in certain ways. I wanted to let you know that reading your work did that for me. I started to think about how quickly I'm judged and how quickly I judge others without considering that they are probably just as worried about how to act or look or talk as I sometimes am. Who am I to criticize them when I have no idea what expectations they are wrestling with? I had never seen it that way before, but the way you pointed out all the expectations in Zeta Chi and the way we all tend to follow them without even thinking, well, it made me start questioning a lot of things. Like what things am I doing just because it is expected? You'd be proud of me because I spoke up the other night when my friend was talking about how some girl was a slut. I asked her why it was okay for the boy the girl slept with to get away scot-free. I think it surprised her, but I felt good making her think about her ideas on the differences between men and women. I had never really thought about it before.

Well, I'm off to bed, sorry again that it took me a few days, but I wanted to be able to really pay attention to the screenplay and not be distracted by a looming to-do list. Yay for school being over!! Now that I have some free time I'm gonna treat myself to something fun. Maybe we could have lunch somewhere and then maybe do something fun after. Let me know what you think! Talk to you soon...

Julie

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\*Based on an e-mail received from a participant on May 23, 2008.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH TIME LOG

Time Spent	Date/Time Category	Content	Location	Folder	Tape number	Transcribed*
5 hours	7.19.07	Entry Notes Begin	Meeting Nichole	See Notes		X
1 hour	8.10.07	In-depth Interview	coffee shop	Folder B 15	DS400089	y
2 hours	8.10.07	Participant observation	coffee shop	See Notes		yes
1 min.	8.10.07	Artifact Collection	House	Green folder		X
30 mins	8.31.07	Entry Meeting	Cloth Hand Towel with Crest	See ENTRY Notes		yes
30 mins	9.6.07	Entry Meeting Follow-up	Gain permission from Jill	See ENTRY Notes		yes
2 hours	9.10.07	Entry Dinner	Find out dates of events	See Notes		yes
2 hours	9.11.07	In-depth Interview	Introduction at Dinner	Folder A/01	DS400008	yes
2 hours	9.18.07	Participant observation	Nichole - Greek Life	Folder C/01	DS400011	yes
2 hours	9.18.07	Personal Journal	intramural Football	Folder B/01	DS400010	yes
2 hours	9.18.07	Personal Journal	intramural Football	Folder D/1-6	DS400013, 0014, 0015,	yes (01-06)
3 hours 4-7pm	9.19.07	Participant observation	house description	Folder B/02	DS400019	yes
7pm	9.19.07	Personal Journal	house description	Folder D/7-8	DS400023, 00024	yes
4 hours 7-11pm	10.02.07	Participant observation	outside house/Carnival	Folder B/03	DS400025	yes
11pm	10.02.07	Personal Journal	Carnival	Folder D/09	DS400026	yes
1 hour 6	10.02.07	Participant observation	Miss Usouthern	Auditorium Usol		yes
1 hour 4	10.02.07	Artifact Collection	Miss Usouthern pamphlet	Green folder		X
1 hour 4	10.02.07	Personal Journal	miss Usouthern row	Folder B/04	DS400034	yes
1 hour 4	10.02.07	In-depth Interview	Amy-Greek Life	Folder A/02	DS400031	yes
1 hour 4	10.02.07	In-depth Interview	Kate -Greek Life	Folder A/03	DS400033	yes
1 hour 4	10.02.07	Personal Journal	Amy/Kate Reflections	Folder b/05	DS400035	yes
1 hour 13	10.02.07	Advisor Meeting	Jill- Probation	Folder B/06-07, See ENTRY	DS400036, 0037	yes
1 hour 26	10.02.07	Artifact Collection	Jill-Thank you letter	Green folder		X
1 hour 26	10.17.07	In-depth Interview	Mary Kate -Greek Life-stand	Folder A/04	DS400041	yes
1 hour	10.18.07	In-depth Interview	Nichole-Greek Life	Folder A 05/06	ds400043/0044	yes
1 hour	10.19.07	In-depth Interview	Mary Kate -Followup Frats, L	Folder A 07	DS400046	y
1 hour	10.19.07	Personal Journal	Mary Kate Reflections	Folder B 08	DS400047	yes

4 hours 7-11p	10.19.07	Participant observation	Parents Weekend-Dinner Pa Bar	Downtown	Folder D 10	Ds400048	yes
4 hours 12-4p	10.20.07	Participant observation	Parents Weekend Bowling	Bowling Alley,	Folder D 11	ds400049	yes
	10.20.07	Artifact Collection	Blue T-Shirt -Parents Weeke	Bowling Alley,			X
4 hours 8-12p	10.20.07	Participant observation	Parents Weekend Casino Nii	Downtown	Folder D 12	Ds400052	yes
	10.20.07	Artifact Collection	casino cup-Casino Night	Downtown			X
	10.21.07	Personal Journal	All of Parents Weekend-Dinr	Bar Downtown	Folder B 09/10	Ds400050/005	yes
1 hour	10.23.07	Participant observation	Flag Football Tournament	football fields	Folder D 13	Ds400053	yes
1 hour	10.30.07	Participant observation	Haunted House	Crescent Hall	Folder D 14	DS400055	yes
	10.30.07	Personal Journal	Haunted House		Folder B 11	DS400054	y
1 hour 13	10.31.07	In-depth Interview	Maggie	House- Attic	Folder A 8	DS400057	yes
20 mins	10.31.07	Observation	Halloween Dinner	house	Folder D 15/16	DS400058/59	Yes
30 mins	10.31.07	Participant observation	Downtown Halloween	Downtown	Folder D 15/16	DS400058/59	Yes
	11.1.07	Artifact Collection	Parents Weekend T-shirt- Ni	Text Message on Phone			X
1 hour 7	11.7.07	In-depth Interview	Nichole-Follow up questions,	Ramsey Center	Folder A 09	DS400061	yes
48 minutes	11.14.07	In-depth Interview	Amy Dating	House	Folder A 10	DS400063	y
	11.14.07	Personal Journal	Reflections Amy		Folder B 12	DS400064	yes
2.5 hours	11.14.07	Participant observation	Dinner at Nicholes	Downtown	Folder D 17	DS400077	yes
2 hours	11.14.07	Focus Group	Nichole and roommates (Loli)	Downtown	Folder A 9/10	DS400066/007	y
	11.15.07	Personal Journal	Talking with advisors		Folder B 13	DS400074	y
8 1/2 hours 6:	11.31.07	Participant observation	Formal	Nichole's house,	Folder D	DS400080,81,	y
	11.31.07	Personal Journal	Formal/Meeting with Diane		Folder B 14	DS400083	y
	12.05.07	In-depth Interview	Sammy Walsh		Folder A 9	DS400087	y
2 hr	1.24.08	In-depth Interview	Sarah		Folder A 8	DS400092/93	y
2 hr	2.28.08	In-depth Interview	Chloe		Folder A 8/9	DS400097/98	
	2.29.08	Participant observation	Date Night	bar downtown			
2 hr	3.23.08	In-depth Interview	Sophia				y
	4.11.08	Member Check	Chole	downtown			
April		Member Check	Sophia, chole, amy, mary ka	e-mailed script and received feedback			
May		Member Check	All participants	e-mailed comments/checked references			



APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### General Interview Guide

**Research Question One:** How do sorority women view gender as defined by the Greek social culture?

*General lead off questions:*

Tell me about a time you went out on the town...

Take me through the routine of your typical day....

Tell me about your participation in sorority events....

*General interview topics to probe:*

Body Work

Probe:

What worn, How choose outfit, Hair style, Make-up, Expectations: where they come from

Relationships

Probe:

Where, How meet people, Importance of relationships, Criteria for choosing mate, Gendered expectations of dating

General expectations

Probe:

Parties, Dances, Volunteering, School, Dress, Fraternities

**Research Question Two:** How do sorority women understand the construction of self in relation to gender expectations found within social spaces?

*General lead off questions:*

Tell me about how you see yourself in relation to your sorority sisters....

Tell me about your favorite activities in which you participate...

Tell me about some of the relationships you have had while in college....

*General interview topics to probe:*

Self

Probe:

Construction of self, Self-worth, Self-positionality, Expectations

**Research Question Three:** How do women “perform” gender within sorority social spaces?

*General lead off questions:*

Tell me about how you prepare to go out on the town....

Tell me about mixing with fraternities....

*General interview topics to probe:*

Body Work, Clothing, Fashions, Styles

Probe:

What worn, How choose outfit, Hair style, Make-up, Expectations: where they come from

Behaviors

Probe:

Appropriateness, Language, Manners

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled "Discourses of Femininity: Negotiations and constructions of self as sorority women" which is being conducted by Lisbeth Berbary in [REDACTED] under the direction of Dr. Diane M. Samdahl in [REDACTED]. My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

I am aware that the purpose of this study is to understand the ways in which sorority women negotiate the different societal messages concerning what it means to be a woman. I will not benefit directly from this research. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to sit for up to 4 interviews lasting from one to two hours. I may also be asked to involve the researcher in my day to day activities allowing her to conduct a participant observation. If I participate in such a participant observation, I will be willing to answer researcher questions both during and after the observation in order to improve her understanding of my activities. Depending on my desire for involvement in this study, my participation will last from 1 day to 10 weeks and can vary from participation in one 2-hour interview to participation in numerous un-timed encounters with the researcher. No discomforts or stresses are expected during this interview or participant observation process. There are no significant risks to participation in the study. If my reflection on experiences leads to any type of emotional upset, the researcher is prepared to give me contact information for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the [REDACTED].

I give permission for my collected stories/observations to be used by Lisbeth Berbary for presentation and publication purposes as long as my name is kept confidential. The only people who will know that I am the research subject are members of the research team. Information provided by me will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law. An exception to confidentiality involves information revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse which must be reported as required by law or if the researcher is required to provide information by a judge. Individually identifying information, such as my name, will not be published in connection with this study. All results and all tape recordings from this study will be disguised by a fake name and this name will be used on all of the research records. All recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Audio /video recordings will be destroyed by December 18, 2010 date.

There is a possibility that pictures I have taken for the photo-elicited interview could be used in research and educational settings, public presentations, publications, and in web sites. Since this may lead to recognition of me as a study participant, the researchers are requesting that I specify how the pictures can be used. If I would like the opportunity to review copies of the photos, I can contact the researcher at the telephone number or email address below.

Photographs of me or photographs I have taken can be used:		
At conferences presentations and meetings with researchers:(Initial one):	Yes	No
In classrooms and educational settings. (Initial one):	Yes	No

On the Internet in multimedia publications and websites (Initial one):		
	Yes	No

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at [REDACTED] or by e-mail at [REDACTED]. My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of questions to my satisfaction, that I understand the procedures described above, and that I consent to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Lisbeth A. Berbary

Name of Researcher

Phone: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
Signature

9.10.07  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED] Research Center*

**[REDACTED]**  
Institutional Review Board  
Approved: 6-29-07  
Expires: 6-28-08

YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D: CONVENTIONAL COLOR CODING

### CONVENTIONAL CODING SYSTEM

**Step One:** Coded 14 interviews for "ladylike" and "femininity" using N6 as an organizing tool.

**Step Two:** Line numbered and printed out 125 pages of data quotes coded in step one. Color coded each set of quotes to match the interview as way to backtrack (see below).

700 Amy: Yeah semi-formal is another thing. Get a date. Date nights are  
 701 obviously, you just wear like more like downtowny type clothes,  
 702 semi-formal is somewhere in between formal and date night.  
 703 ++++++  
 704 ++++++  
 705 +++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: DS400033InterviewwithKate  
 706 \* No Description  
 707 ++++++  
 708 ++++++  
 709 [DS400033InterviewwithKate : 57 - 62 ]  
 710 I: Okay, do you have an example of a Rushie Rhyme?  
 711 Kate: I can tell you mine, she's the best of them, she's Erin  
 712 Kellermen...I mean my little sister, she'll punch your boob in, she's Margaret  
 713 Steuben. People often make up things that are funnier, like a little  
 714 inappropriate, so people remember them. Like people tend to remember  
 715 ones that are kind of a little off.

**Interview Coding Examples**

Amy 0031

Kate 0033

Maggie 0057

**Step Three:** Cut out interview coded quotes and place by hand into piles based on a priori and emergent themes. Each quote was color coded with interview color and category color (see below A). Any quotes that needed to be placed in more than one category were hand copied and color coded to show interview code, line number in original, original location, and any alternative locations (see below B).

**Color Coding for Categories**

Discipline <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; vertical-align: middle;"></span> <span style="border: 1px solid purple; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">D</span>	Family Reference/Southern Values <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; vertical-align: middle;"></span>
Dissemination of Expectations <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; vertical-align: middle;"></span>	Othered, not typical, diverse <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; vertical-align: middle;"></span>
Reputation <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; vertical-align: middle;"></span>	Performance <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; vertical-align: middle;"></span>
Gender Reference <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; vertical-align: middle;"></span>	Mixing with Boys <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: green; vertical-align: middle;"></span>
Recognition of Negatives <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; vertical-align: middle;"></span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">D</span>	Frats <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; vertical-align: middle;"></span>

<b>Interview Code</b>		3938	everybody knows you. There's not as much as a need as having to every
<b>Location where slip will be found</b>	A	3939	time you walk into a room that your putting a good positive face out
<b>Location of original</b>		3940	there and not something that's going to make them snap. You know you
<b>Alternative Location</b>		3941	want them to not snap judge you you want them to be like oh she looks
		3942	nice I want to get to know her instead of skank or she's frashy, or she
		3943	wasn't raised very nicely or whatever
		3944	

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

0057 You know you want them to not snap judge you, you want to  
 3940 to be like oh she looks nice I want to get to know her instead  
 line # skank or she's frashy or she wasn't raised very nicely.

**Step Four:** After coding I reviewed categories, re-organized and finalized based on the amount of data "support" and the importance of the category/data to research questions.

APPENDIX E: ANALYTIC LIST



Interview # Line #

# CONVENTIONAL CODING - ROUND ONE

**Discipline (OVERT)**  
08-62 New member meetings and you have to go to these meetings like once a week and they teach them all about the sorority

**Dissemination of Expectations**  
31-643 "Try to keep it classy; nothing too promiscuous" (COVERT)

**Reputation**  
41-1124 "Our reputation is everything."  
OVERT + COVERT

**Family Reference "Southern Values"**  
63-5622 "It's just kind of growing up in the Southern, Christian conservative family."  
61-5190 "Being Greek takes extra money which leads to more middle class people which would lead to maybe manners and things like that being of higher priority in your household."

**Gender Reference**  
Girls/Guys are ... Good means ... Ladylike means ...

61-5204 "I think anything can come out of a guy, and it really shouldn't surprise you."  
57-4572 "If you're falling down drunk you're expecting to have a girl go and say, get up, get up, but for guys it's more like, what an idiot."  
46-3371 "Don't be a whore, that's not ladylike."

**Othered, Not typical, Diverse**  
63-5689 "There's just such a diverse population here that you can't really classify people."  
57-4421 "WE try not to be superficial."  
46-3389 "I feel like they stereotype us pretty, pretty negatively."

**DRINKING-DATING**  
46-3523 "All of the sorority girls have Nike running shorts. If you see someone in that then they are probably in a sorority. Rainbows are huge, like everyone has rainbows if not multiple pairs. Oversized t-shirts have become popular lately."

**Performance** DRESS STEREOTYPES BEHAVIOR

**MIXING WITH BOYS** DATING SEX  
61-4886 "I literally have turned around to a guy and been like 'I have a boyfriend' and it's like they give up ... then you can see them on next prey."  
63-5724 "It was always a common rule to always make sure the guy opens the beer in front of you."  
TECHNIQUES - RAPE - ROOFIES - Protect their little

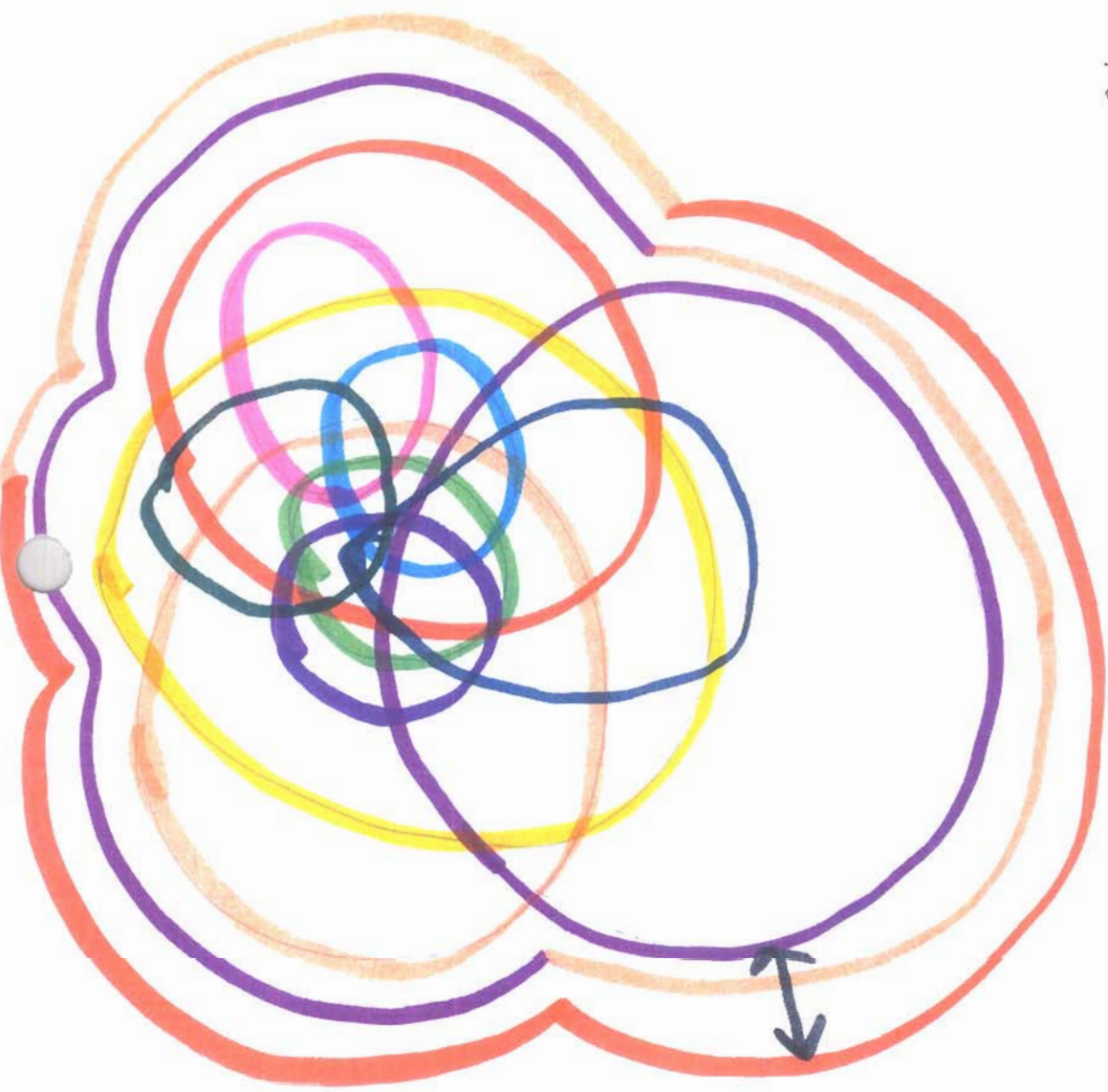
**FRATS**  
08-363 "Like if you're gonna, if you want to party you'd go to a fraternity house."

**Recognition of negatives**  
57-4337 "You know they're judging you, you're being snapped judged and sometimes things are awkward."

## Steps to Above Conventional Categorical Coding

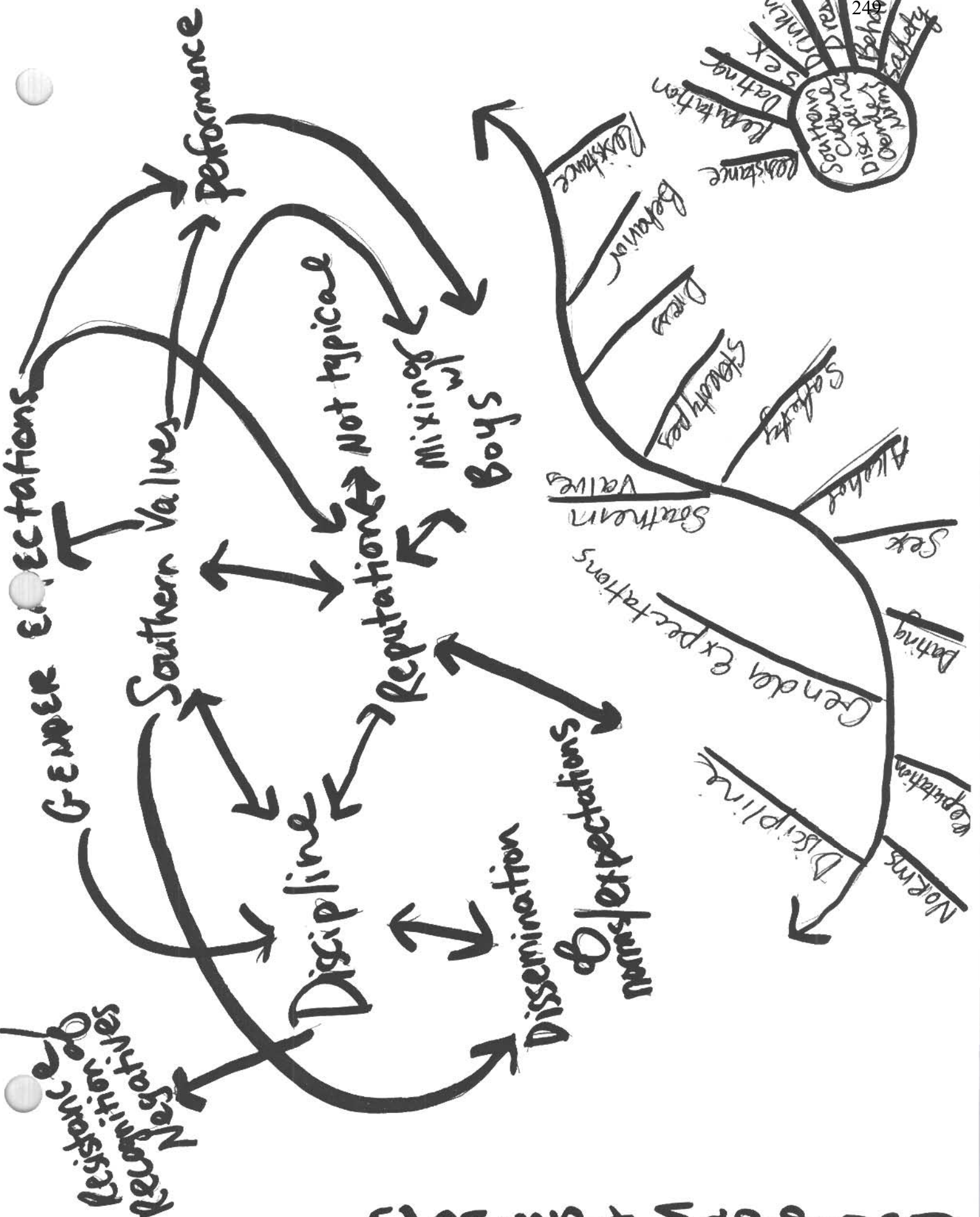
- Step 1: Coded over 14 interviews for "Ladylike" and "femininity" using N6 software
- Step 2: Line numbered and printed out 125 pages of quotes coded in step 1. Quotes from each interview were discretely color coded in order to develop a method of backtracking. (See next page for details)
- Step 3: All quotes were cut out and placed by hand into piles based on a priori post-structural feminist theories and emergent themes. Quotes that necessitated dual inclusion, that is inclusion in more than one category, were hand copied and color/number labeled so that interview number, line number, original location, and alternative locations were traceable. (See next page for details). Based on my literature review I was already interested in issues of discipline, normative expectations, gendered expectations, and gendered performances. Since these same a priori theories also directed my interview questions, these topics easily became data-supported analysis categories. Themes that I had not set out to explore but that repeated themselves across interview responses became those "emergent" categories. These "emergent" categories were related to issues of safety, mixing with boys, claims of being non-typical or "othered" as sorority, connections to family and southern upbringing, and recognition of negative aspects of sorority/Greek life.
- Step 4: The above categories were created, broken up, re-created, and finalized based on the amount of "support" evidenced by data quotes.

APPENDIX F: RHIZOMATIC CONNECTIONS OF THEMES



Discipline █  
 Dissemination of norms/expectations █  
 Reputation █  
 Performance █  
 Mixing with boys █

█ Not typical/othered/stereotyped  
█ Gender references  
█ Recognition of negative aspects  
█ Family/Southern values  
█ Frats



APPENDIX G: COMPOSITE CHARACTERS

~~Thony~~ Thony → Yaach

- already in
- loud - swears
- flag football
- not into looks
- loves to dance
- grew up in GA
- family from Korea + Vietnam
- 1st generation Sunday
- parents don't get it
- brother frat boy

Maggie | Kate | Amy

Sophomore

Margaret | Mary Kate

- fashionable <sup>gets into</sup>
  - into jewelry + labes
  - from dairy farm
  - sing + in pageant
  - from North
- ↑  
tells how she was changed  
older sister came south + became sorority

Sola | Nichole | Johanna

Junior

~~Brittany~~ Brittney

- senior
- boyfriend
- not involved
- from GA
- starts to question her role in sorority
- virgin - close 2 parents
- Jewish

Chole | Kate | Mary Kate | Amy  
Maggie

Junior

~~Margaret~~ Margaret | Kate | Nick

- high school experience
- legacy
- Nashville
- loves sorority
- reputation
- ~~happy~~ goes crazy - ~~happy~~
- older brother - nothing like
- Mary Kate | ~~Brittney~~
- Jenna
- not gender

Freshman

**YARAH**

Yarah, a sophomore Zeta Chi, enters the crowded room. She has straight brownish black hair down to the middle of her back that is pulled into a side part and braided down her neck, big brown eyes with long eyelashes, thick red lips, white teeth, and clear white skin with rosy cheeks. She is about 5'8 and has recently put on weight to become a size 10, which she comments on often so that "she says it before someone else does." Her mother is from Korea and her father is, as her friends joke, "Pakizillan," since he is both Pakistani and Brazilian. She can speak English and Korean fluently. She grew up in Atlanta and attended public school, an experience about which her private school friends often joke. She is an international business major with a minor in advertising and hopes to return to Korea to work with the UN. While her parents knew nothing of the Greek system, her older brother, called Kyle by his English-speaking friends, joined a fraternity at USouthern just two years before and had a heavy hand in talking Yarah into rushing. Now as a sophomore living in the house, Yarah gets to see the insider view of rush that one misses out on as a freshman. As she enters, she is carrying a poster and of course is wearing a light blue sun dress, blue David Yurman earrings, and rainbow flip-flops (66-323, 66-233).

Leda

Mary Kate

Chloe

Sophia

Maggie

Ameg

Celeste

Kate

Leda

## MARGARET

Margaret, wearing a light brown t-shirt, designer jeans, wallaby Clarks, and pearl earrings, enters the light blue and white living room. Although the room is normally spotless, this past week it has been taken over by Margaret's "away to college" items. The couches, ottoman, and floor are spotted with bags of shoes, hampers of clean towels, clothes on hangers, suitcases, bedding, and toiletries.

Margaret stands in the middle of the room, lets out a sigh and in her head begins to go over what she might be forgetting.

Margaret has straight blonde hair, big blue eyes with long black eyelashes, freckles, white teeth, and thin pink lips that curl when she smiles showing her tan gums and making her look like a little kid. She is about 5'10, a size 4, and is used to getting the attention of guys although she is not into being girly and has never been one for fashion. Although her family is Episcopalian, she attended a private "hard core" Christian school, and if given a bid will be a third generation Geta Chi. She tells her mom she loves the idea of being part of the sorority and hopes that these next years in Zeta Chi will be "the best of her life" as her mother has promised.

Margaret

AMS

Summer



MARY KATE

The camera then focuses on **Mary Kate**, a junior Zeta Chi, as she walks towards the cast iron railing that lines the entrance to the side door of the building.

Mary Kate has straight bleached blonde hair cut into a chin length bob with wispy bangs, big brown eyes lined with blue/black eyeliner which she wears at all times. (41-360) She has clear, fake-tanned skin with thin pink lips, white teeth, and light brown freckles. She is about 5'4 and is a size 12 which she hates because she can't borrow her friends clothes (46-1482)-- even though she wouldn't be caught dead in most of them anyway. (66-516) Coming a long way from her upbringing on a small dairy farm in upstate New York, Mary Kate has taken to sorority fashion with flying colors and despite being a bit larger than the other girls, is now known as one of the more fashion savvy of her pledge class. (77-23) With purpose, she has today chosen to wear dark skinny jeans, a long gray shirt, pearls, (66-451) and a very cute short pink jacket with a ruffle collar and big black buttons. As an education major she should be more interested in her upcoming student teaching, but with her transformation from Northern geek to Southern chic, her true love has become fashion and fashion photography. Her parents a bit weary of the new and improved Mary Kate still remain impressed with her acceptance to Zeta Chi since she is the first in her family to become Greek. Mary Kate also gloats, although secretly, about her acceptance to Zeta Chi since as a "discovery," someone the sorority doesn't know anything about before recruitment, she can be sure that Greek ties didn't pave her way. She got in on her own merits. (41-908)

Nicole

Johanna  
Maggie

Lola

Erin

Sophia

Mary Kate

CHRISTINE

Christine, a senior Zeta Chi, storms into the bar. She has wavy brown hair down to her shoulders, which she usually wears in side barrettes, small green eyes with no eyelashes, a prominent, yet elegant nose, thick pink lips, white teeth, and one small blemish which she complains is her worst breakout ever. Although she doesn't wear much make-up and classifies herself as a tomboy, she will never leave the house without at least her eyeliner and some type of earrings, preferably her pearls. She is about 5'2 with a thin athletic build that she has no trouble maintaining through her participation in every sorority intramural sport available. However, this year's been different. She has found herself spending less time participating in the sorority sport brackets and has instead taken to exercising with her boyfriend, Stuart, and her friends from her premed classes. This has caused some trouble with her Zeta Chi friends since as she spends more time with her boyfriend and friends from class, she no longer has the desire to pay dues just to participate in sorority events that she really has no interest or reason to attend. (66-2018)

Her fading participation in Zeta Chi does not upset her parents since they were upset from the start that she joined Zeta Chi over the Jewish sorority on campus. While they never came out and said it to her, Christine knows her parent's insistence that she pay half her Zeta Chi dues was a way to show their disapproval. Still, rather than have this deter her, Christine, being the strong-headed girl she is, ignored her parent's lack of enthusiasm and has been working part-time to pay her dues. (57-933)

Sammy  
 Amy, Sophia  
 Maggie  
 Mary Kate  
 chbe

KATE  
 Lola

APPENDIX H: INTEGRATED THEMATIC SCRIPT

coding (see below). The following is an example of how the entire script was constructed taking bits and pieces of description, sorority rules/regulations/expectations, terms/language, processes, experiences, and participant opinions found within field notes, interviews, and my personal journals.

Color Coded Visual (based on codes from Appendix E):

Non-contextualized/Discrete



Contextualized/Overlapping



Coded Overlapping Script Example:

Girl #1

Speaking of bringing something different, did you hear that Mary Kate didn't pass dress check? Apparently her boobs were popping out and they didn't feel it was appropriate for Rush--not to mention it was silk and they always advise against wearing silk. (41-409, 33-438, 33-443, 66-189, 66-197, 66-228, 66-273)

Yarah

Yeah I heard that, but you know some people can't help it if they are just bigger. I mean the same dress might look totally different on them. Like I have big boobs and it is hard to find dresses that are cute and cover me.

Girl #1

Well, even so I think it's necessary because there are people who will wear inappropriate things and like that one person can mess up someone's perception of our entire sorority. (41-420, 66-348)

Yarah

Yeah I guess you're right, I mean it could be worse. I heard that Delta Beta makes them all wear a certain style and color dress as and makes them all get their nails done a certain way. (33-445, 66-147)

Girl #1

Well we better get downstairs. Another group of PNMs are on their way. This time I have to be harder on the girls. Last group I heard Mary Kate talking about how we usually hang out with your brother's fraternity. How many times did we all go over things we can and can't talk about? She knows we can't mention what fraternity we hang out with the most. If I don't watch her she'll be telling every girl that "she'll see them tomorrow!" They'll have us for dirty rushing! That's all we need. (33-181, 41-883)

Yarah shakes her head in disapproval. Though she is exhausted from the past 10 days she slowly gets up and makes a point to get her energy back and her game face on. She moves towards the stairway ready to float around the chatty crowded room making sure no Zeta Chi's are breaking rush conversation rules or insinuating that girls will be voted to come back tomorrow. (33-136) She wonders if this next party will be Margaret's group. After all they are grouped alphabetically and her last name begins with a D. (33-111 to 185)