

## QSS Honors Program Experience 2020-2021

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“Sorority Rush: An Examination of Body Image and Social Wellbeing Among Dartmouth Students”

### **What I Did/What I Learned:**

My thesis was an observational, longitudinal study of body image and disordered eating attitudes among sophomore females at Dartmouth, who were either participating in sorority rush or choosing to remain unaffiliated. In particular, I assessed change on previously validated measures of disordered eating attitudes and causal mechanisms (social comparison, thin-ideal internalization, and perceived peer pressure) using difference-in-differences models. My results found that women who are selecting into the Rush process began with higher risk factors for disordered eating compared to their peers who are not rushing, but that the rush process itself does not exacerbate these pre-existing differences. In other words, this study suggests that Rush and Greek Life membership do not cause the differences in rates of disordered eating between sorority women and unaffiliated women that were observed in the prior research.

### **Why I Did it:**

There are a few reasons why I chose to write a thesis. First, I think it's a valuable exercise to implement the skills that, up until this point, you have accumulated in discrete courses. The thesis is a true culminating experience where you get to showcase your knowledge and skills from your four years at Dartmouth. Second, it is a learning experience in and of itself. It pushes you to hone your writing skills, manage your time wisely, learn to ask for help when you need it without prompting, and think more critically about the academic articles you have read throughout college. In my opinion, it is the best thing you can do for your learning and scholarship, regardless of whether you are doing it to publish your work at the end of the experience. Finally, I personally wanted to test out whether research in this area was something I was interested in pursuing after college and a thesis was the best way for me to get a sense of whether it was something I enjoyed doing.

### **Advice for Future Thesis Students:**

There are so many important takeaways from this process, so feel free to shoot me an email by clicking on my hyperlinked name if you want so more takeaways. You can find the most important takeaways below.

- A method for keeping track of your sources and your notes on them is essential for staying organized, so the earlier you can get yourself organized on this front, the better! **Zotero** was a great resource for me, especially because it has a chrome extension that can adjust to your citation style of need, it automatically inserts your in-text references and works cited into Word, and it allows you to take really detailed notes within the desktop app. Overall, it helped me write a better literature review and saved a ton of time.
- For most of you, this is the biggest project you will have completed to date and that can feel overwhelming at times when you list out everything that needs to get done to get you

from point A to point Z. One trick for not letting that daunting thought prevent you from getting started is making a weekly to-do list. Setting up frequent meetings with your advisor (to the extent they have time) is a great way to hold you accountable to completing your weekly to-do list and provides a chance to discuss or problem solve any roadblocks you may be facing.

- On that note, it is just as important to budget time for breaks away from your thesis as it is to budget time to conduct research. Sometimes a little space for your thoughts to take shape and congeal can do wonders for your writing, so do not feel like you must always be actively writing or looking at it. Your other classes, friends, and experiences at Dartmouth are also important.
- Finally, regardless of how well you plan your time and thesis writing during the year, the final presentation and first draft in Spring will probably sneak up on you. It is smart to keep this in mind when you are picking your courses for the Spring, so you don't feel too divided between prioritizing thesis work or coursework. You will perform better in both if you are mindful of the time required for each.