Social Influences of College Organizations: The Effects of Conformity on Self Esteem

Kailee Colter, Advisor: Alexandria Intorcio, Department of Psychology, Miami University

MIAMI UNIVERSITY
OXFORD, OH • EST. 1809

Introduction

- Tainaka, Miyoshi, and Mori (2014) studied the relationship between self-esteem and conformity. Their results showed that low-esteem participants are more likely to conform to a group than people with high-esteem (Tainaka 2014).

- Good and Sanchez (2010) studied the relationship between gender conformity and self-esteem through various types of motivation for gender-consistent behavior. The results suggest that although men and women are held to different gender-role expectations, some precipitating factors in gender-role motivation held for both genders (Good & Sanchez, 2010).

- This study examines the relationship between college students' rates of self-esteem and conformity within different organizations on campus.

- The purpose of the current study is to expand on this research and examine how undergraduate conformity and the organizations to which they belong impact their self-esteem.

- The significance of this research includes benefits to further understanding self-esteem within this specific age group (undergraduate college students) as well as possibly discovering significant results in self-esteem variance between genders.

- To add to existing literature, this project will specifically focus on campus involvement at a Midwestern university.

Hypotheses

Researchers hypothesized that:
- There is an overall increase in self-esteem in academic Greek students compared to students in traditional Greek life
- Traditional Greek students will have higher self-esteem than students in noncompeting groups
- In relation to gender and conformity, males will show a larger magnitude of increase in self-esteem than females, regardless of organization membership

Method

Participants

- Participants in this study included (304) Miami University students who are involved in campus organizations
- 212 female (69.7%) and 92 male (30.2%) undergraduate students between 18-23 years old
- 187 first-year students (39.4%), 73 sophomores (15.4%), 27 juniors (5.7%), and 16 seniors (3.4%)

Procedure/Materials

- A Qualtrics survey was distributed via social media and Miami University SONA Systems
- Participants completed a consent form and answered questions about their organization such as the type of organization, leadership roles, and involvement
  - *Sample Question 1*: At your organization's busiest time, how many hours a week are you putting into your group?
  - *Sample Question 2*: Excluding membership dues or fees, how much money would you be willing to spend on merchandise and events for your organization in one semester?
  - *Sample Question 3*: Please spend 90 seconds thinking about a recent event with your organization during which you felt particularly connected to your group. Then, spend two minutes writing about this experience. Be as detailed as possible with your thoughts and feelings about the event and group.
- The survey included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem and conformity measure questions
- Researchers placed participants in high or low categories of conformity to their organization based on their average to the conformity measure questions
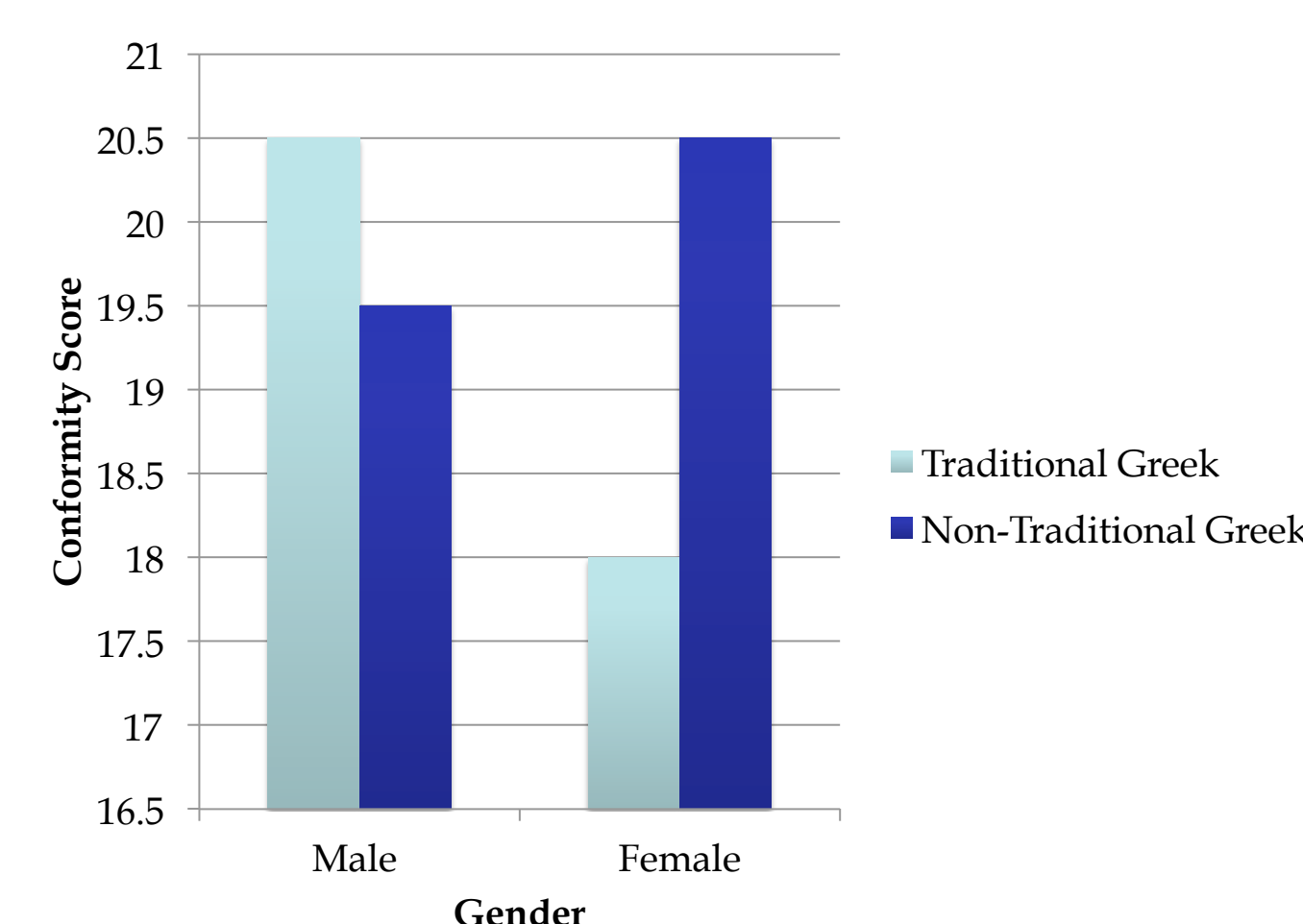
Results

Figure 1. The male and female participants' rates of conformity towards their Traditional Greek or Non-Traditional Greek organization.
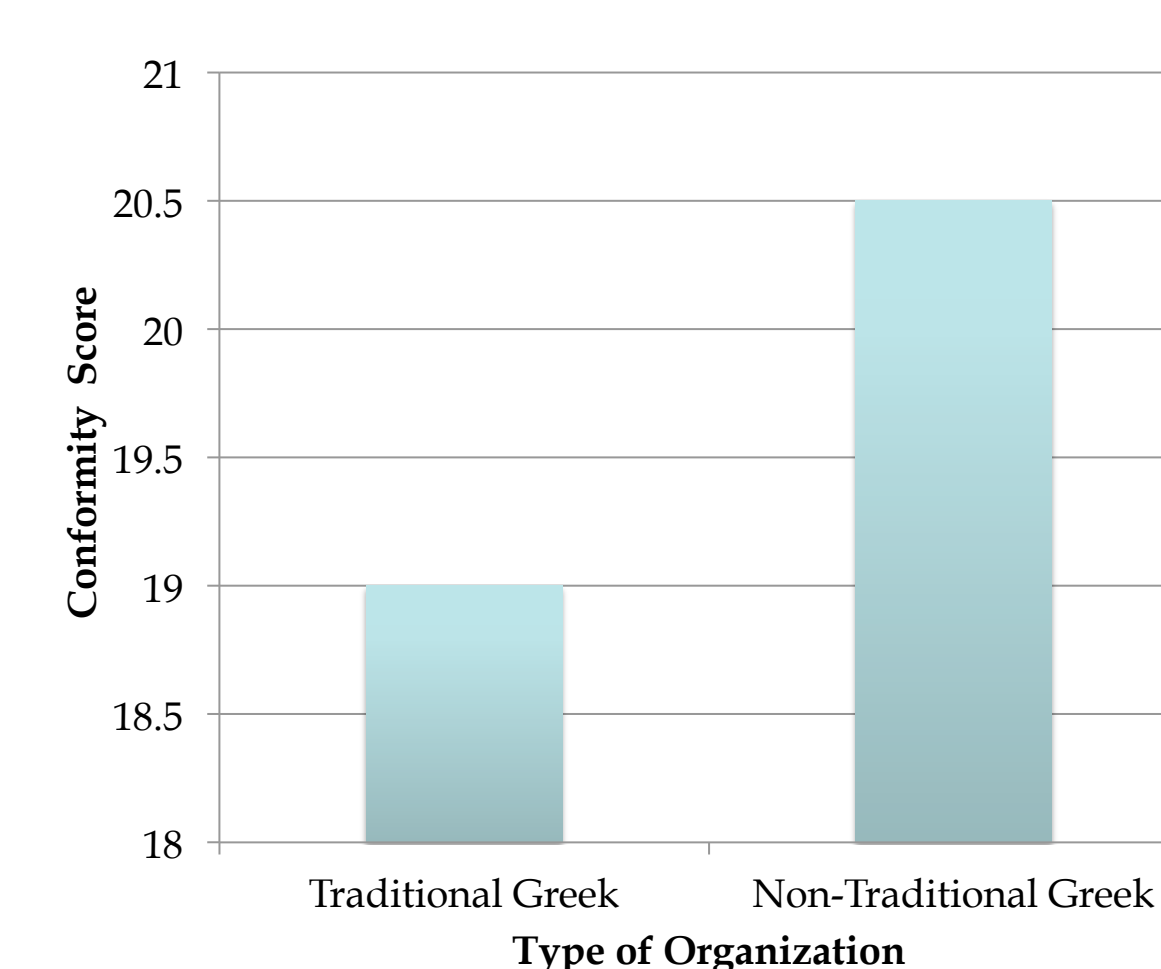
Figure 2. The participants' rates of conformity towards their organization.

Variable	Levels	Mean	T-Statistic
Gender	Male	18.022	-1.577
	Female	19.981	-1.467
Type of Org	Trad	17.301	1.1
	Non-Trad	19.746	1.1

Table 1. The t-test and mean statistics of the participants' rates of self-esteem based on gender (male and female) and the type of their organization (Traditional Greek organization and Non-Traditional Greek organization).
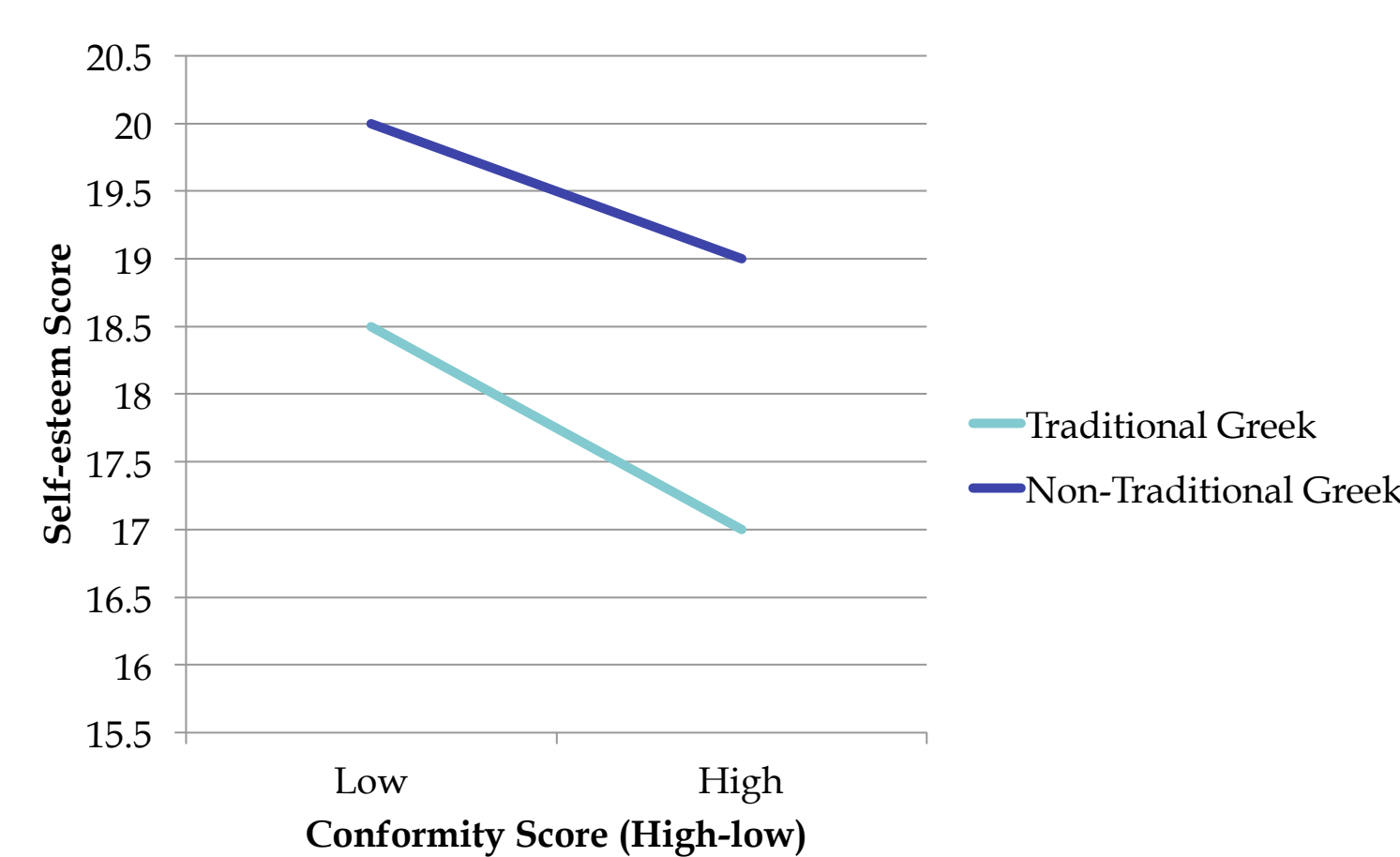

Figure 3. The participants' rates of self-esteem based on their high and low conformity scores and the type of their organization (Traditional Greek organization and Non-Traditional Greek organization).

Results, continued

- Results of the current study showed that:
  - There was a significant effect of gender on the students' rates of conformity, t(304)= -.584, p< .000; showing that males (M=4.0971, SD= 1.163) demonstrate a higher standard deviation in conformity than females (M=4.1603, SD=.878).
  - There was a significant effect of DV self-esteem on IV Traditional Greek organizations during a one-way between subjects ANOVA comparing self-esteem and conformity on different college organizations at the p<.05 level [F(1,496)=28.108, p< .000].
  - Students involved in Traditional Greek organizations did not show any significant differences in conformity compared to students in Non-Traditional Greek organizations.
  - There was a marginally significant effect of the Non-Traditional Greek organizations on the student's rates of self-esteem showing that students in Traditional Greek organizations have decreased self-esteem compared to students in Non-Traditional Greek organizations.

Discussion

- In contrast to past literature, the current study found that:
  - Males did not show higher rates of self-esteem than females; however, males did show higher rates of conformity.
  - Students in Traditional Greek organizations did not overall conform more than students in Non-Traditional Greek organizations.
- Limitations of the study include the lack of diversity of the study's sample (ethnicity and what year in school the students were)
- Future studies could use a more diverse sample as well as use an equal amount of students from each organization
  - Example: future case study testing whether joining college organizations change student's rates of social influence by measuring student's self-esteem before and after joining an organization.

Conclusion

- The current study found that males showed higher rates of conformity to their organization than females. This might suggest that males spend more time and money on their organization than females.
- Contrary to past research, males did not show higher rates of self-esteem than females.
- For these reasons, it is necessary to conduct more research on the social effects of college organizations to further help explain self-esteem and conformity variances in college students.

References

Good, J. J., & Sanchez, D. T. (2010). DOING GENDER FOR DIFFERENT REASONS: WHY GENDER CONFORMITY POSITIVELY AND NEGATIVELY PREDICTS SELF-ESTEEM. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 34*(2), 203-214.

Tainaka, T., Miyoshi, T., & Mori, K. (2014). Conformity of Witnesses with Low Self-Esteem to Their Co-Witnesses. *Psychology, 5*(15), 1695.