Frat Daddies and Sorostitutes: How TotalFratMove.com and Greek Identity Influence Greek Students’ Rape Myth Acceptance

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Abstract
College students in social Greek organizations are at greater risk of sexual assault than other college students. The present study examined how readership of the online news site TotalFratMove.com (TFM), through a survey questionnaire, which often includes coverage of stereotypical fraternity culture, may impact rape myth acceptance. Results revealed that the more frequently Greeks read TFM, the more likely they were to be accepting of rape myths when also taking into account the strength of their Greek social identity. Challenging stereotypes of the “frat daddy” and “sorostitute” may indirectly challenge behaviors and attitudes associated with rape myth acceptance otherwise perpetuated by Greek culture.

Public Health Significance Statement: This study suggests that the more frequently Greek-affiliated college students read the popular website TFM, the more likely they were to have rape myth supportive attitudes when they also felt like being Greek was an integral part of their identity.

Keywords
Greek life, rape myths, rape culture, social identity

College men in social fraternities are more likely than other college male students to be “hypermasculine” or adopt “hostile masculinity,” which emphasizes sexual conquest of women as an important aspect of “doing gender” or performing masculinity (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). These values may originate prior to entering college; however, men with these values are often attracted to all-male groups such as social fraternities where their hypermasculine views will go unchallenged (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). Performing masculinity in such a way is also associated with sexual aggression toward women and perpetuation of common rape myth scripts, which can lead to risky sexual behaviors and may account for the fact that fraternity men are 3 times as likely to commit sexual assault than other college men (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005).

Adopting common rape myths, such as believing women are to blame for their victimization, may be explained through sexual scripting and may also help explain why sorority women are more likely to be victims of sexually assault than non-Greek women (Brosi, Foubert, Bannon, & Yandell, 2011; Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss, & Wechsler, 2004). The fact that fraternity men and sorority women often date one another may also explain why sorority women are more at risk of being victims of sexual assault “given that 90% of women know their perpetrators and that more than 40% of the stalkers known to women on campus are current or former boyfriends” (Moynihan, Ban- yard, Arnold, & Eckstein, 2011, p. 704). This is strengthened by additional research that indicates that sorority women who date fraternity men, which is fairly common in Greek culture, are at greater risk for dating violence than other college women (Moynihan et al., 2011; Nurius, Norris, Dimeff, & Graham, 1996). In a culture that looks down upon those members who speak against Greek life, it can then be difficult for sorority women to speak out again their male perpetrators if they are fraternity men. Even more concerning, research has found that simply living in a sorority house significantly increases the likelihood of experiencing sexual assault while intoxicated (Moynihan et al., 2011). This provides a lack of a “safe space,” even in their own homes, for sorority women to feel protected.

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from falling victim to sexual assault. This may be due to the fact that sorority houses, while dwellings for the members, also serve as locations for large parties (frequented by fraternity members). It is thus important to acknowledge this group of women to begin understanding what makes them targets of sexual assault, and if their own Greek culture, through its member-driven media, plays a part in their victimization.

Sexual scripts are learned cognitive models that people use to guide their sexual interactions, learned from culturally available messages, such as the media, about sexual encounters (Frits & Kitzinger, 2001). Exposure to common sexual scripts, such as rape myth scripts, will often influence a person’s perceptions of how certain sexual situations are most likely to happen to the self and others (Wright & Arroyo, 2013).

“The Campus Sexual Assault Study” conducted for the U.S. Justice Department revealed that approximately one in five college women will experience sexual assault at some point during their college enrollment (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). With some colleges reporting numbers as high as 99% of the undergraduate population as active members of Greek organizations (U.S. News & World Report, 2013), the issue of sexual assault on college campuses has wide reach, particularly for those students active in social Greek organizations.

Peer networks in college are seen as an important factor in students’ sexual script development. Students look to peer groups, such as fraternities and sororities, to form their social identity. Social identity theory helps explain how individuals develop their own self-concept based on their membership in particular social groups and helps explain the outcomes of some behaviors (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Once someone becomes a part of a group, such as a social fraternity, they are motivated to achieve positive social identity and maintain favor within the group (Turner & Oakes, 1986). This will lead members of groups, particularly all-male groups, to have similar attitudes and behavior to what they perceive other members in their groups also have.

Students, both non-Greeks, but particularly fraternity members, often overestimate the amount and frequency of casual “hookups” among their peers (Stinson, 2010). When media perpetuates this “hookup culture” and casual sex expectations, students may develop unrealistic ideas about normal and healthy sexual behavior and create miscommunication between those engaging in sexual activity as to whether or not the sex was consensual (Stinson, 2010). This unrealistic ideal has the potential to not only affect attitudes regarding sex but also behaviors, as these concepts from hookup culture wind their way into college students’ sexual scripts, which in turn may influence their rape myth acceptance. The purpose of this study was therefore to understand how gender, readership of TotalFratMove.com (TFM), an online news site that often reinforces stereotypical fraternity culture and arguably common rape myths, and Greek social identity impact sorority and fraternity members’ rape myth acceptance.

**Literature Review**

**TFM**

TFM is a news and entertainment website that caters to Greek audiences and specifically male fraternity members. The website is authored and maintained by current fraternity members and alumni and launched on June 1, 2010, by two former fraternity members Ryan Young and Madison Wickham (Shontell, 2014). They were inspired by acronyms and resulting websites such as Texts from Last Night that received substantial attention from college students and thus created TFM (Shontell, 2014). Total-SororityMove.com (herein known as TSM) was then also created as TFM’s sister site and is maintained primarily by and for college sorority women. Both TFM and TSM operate on many platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, smartphone apps, as well as on the web. Both sites have sections devoted to columns, news, photos, videos, and contests (Total Fraternity Move, 2015; Total Sorority Move, 2015).

TFM founders admitted that, in the beginning, they followed people online who “fit the part” and were not just “any fraternity man” but were the “southern, stereotypical fraternity” males who were most likely to share the site with their friends (Shontell, 2014). They also noted that raunchy comedy was a big part of the TFM brand as a whole and justified this raunchy humor as appealing to their fraternity male target audience (Shontell, 2014).

Two issues written about frequently on these TFM and TSM sites are about rape and sexual assault. However, the way in which these two websites frame stories on rape and sexual assault are arguably different. For example, in the early years of TFM, a oneliner was inferred by many readers to be a joke regarding nonconsensual sex and read: “Had to buy plan B the next day because neither of us remembered the details of everything that went down after the bar. At least she let me use her dad’s credit card. TFM” (Shontell, 2014; Total Fraternity Move, 2015). However, TSM has begun to speak out in their news articles against sexual assault. It is then possible that readership of these sites could result in varied attitudes toward rape myth acceptance, particularly if the information is perceived as reliable and credible, and the sites are common sources of information for these individuals as well as influence Greek’s social identity and sexual scripts in a negative and dangerous way. Also, due to the fact that TFM is geared toward fraternity men, it can be hypothesized that fraternity men will be more likely to read TFM than sorority women, as sorority women have their own site, TSM, in which they can gain information, particularly information that may be less misogynistic. These predictions influenced the study’s first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Fraternity men read Total Frat Move more frequently than do sorority women.

**Social Identity**

Fraternity and sorority membership can play a significant role in Greek-affiliated college students’ social identities. Social
identity provides a framework to help explain and understand intergroup phenomena (Amiot & Aubin, 2013) and has been defined as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his or her knowledge of membership to a social group (or groups) together with the value and the emotional significance attached to it” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Social identity is often rooted in and influenced by intergroup behaviors (Tajfel, 1981). Based on the tenets of social identity theory, this study hypothesizes that fraternity men and sorority women will have similar levels of Greek identity based on the assumption that Greek life from a social identity perspective is more similar than different across genders.

Hypothesis 2: Fraternity men and sorority women will have the same level of Greek identity.

Group membership may lead to social influences in three steps (Morton & Duck, 2000). First is when social identity is considered salient, individuals orient themselves according to their group memberships (Morton & Duck, 2000). Sites such as TFM and TSM help to make Greek identity salient to fraternity and sorority members like never before. Now members of different sororities across the country can log on and see how being Greek is portrayed, at least on the site, and the orient themselves around these images, which are more often than not stereotypical and satirical in nature.

Second is when those same individuals are motivated to learn the norms and stereotypical characteristics of the group and do this by observing and making comparisons with relevant others (Morton & Duck, 2000). Greek men and women may seek out media such as TFM and TSM to not only feel connected to the Greek community but to keep up with the latest Greek fashion trends and recruitment tips. Members of a fraternity at one school may see the same fraternity at another school acting a particular way and compare not only themselves but their chapter as a whole against other chapters to see if they are “better” than the other. The ranking system is frequently imposed on both different sororities on one campus and on the same sororities on different campuses. It is often seen as important in Greek culture to be considered “top tier” and has a successful sorority in terms of recruitment numbers as well as on a more superficial level such as looks. TFM promotes these comparisons and each year holds a contest to find the “hottest” sorority in the country often pitting one sorority against another and in some cases one chapter against another (Total Fraternity Move, 2015). This objectification of sorority women by fraternity-driven websites such as TFM could potentially influence these men’s views acceptance of rape myths as well as their overall opinion of women.

The third step is when the norms observed become internalized such that subsequent behaviors then reflect the individual’s identity as a member of the group (Morton & Duck, 2000). Media may be used to help understand group norms, which, in turn, become a part of an individual’s social identity (Appiah, Knobloch-Westerwick, & Alter, 2013). These sexual scripts and rape myth scripts that are potentially perpetuated on media platforms, such as TFM, may foster an atmosphere where fraternity men begin to normalize these behaviors and incorporate them into their social identity and interpretations as to what constitutes being a man.

Media may also have the power in some situations to impact social identity in different ways. An individual’s self-esteem and social identity are both impacted by experiences as well as perceptions of the group(s) to which they belong (Appiah et al., 2013). A group can reinforce or weaken a person’s positive social identity through both internal and external elements (Appiah et al., 2013). The media can be considered an external element what can produce messages or images that can impact an individual’s social identity, either positively or negatively (Appiah et al., 2013). Producing messages that impact, either positively or negatively, an individual’s social identity can be done through the way the media depicts the group(s) to which the individual is a member of (Appiah et al., 2013). The way TFM and/or TSM potentially positively depicts Greek life and social identity attached to either fraternity or sorority membership could strengthen both readers’ social identity and self-esteem. Fraternity and sorority members then return to these sites to seek their news because it reinforces their positive social identity.

Roccas, Klar, and Liviation (2006) examined group attachment and group glorification as two forms of social identity. Group glorification involves seeing the in-group, such as a fraternity or sorority, in a very favorable light and then denying criticisms toward that group. TSM and TFM may paint Greek life in a more positive light in comparison to other news and entertainment sites creating group glorification, which has been found to predict lower group-based guilt as well as less acknowledgment of the group’s responsibility in conflict (Amiot & Aubin, 2013). In response to criticisms that fraternity men may be more likely to support rape scripts and have higher levels of rape myth acceptance, fraternity men may feel less guilt or be more reluctant to acknowledge their responsibility in the issue due to their protected status as a member of a large group. However, group attachment refers to “commitment and inclusion in the group in the self-concept” (Amiot & Aubin, 2013, p. 565). Strong group attachment may, in contrast to group glorification, predict higher levels of group-based guilt and more feelings of reasonability toward a group’s wrongdoing (Amiot & Aubin, 2013). Whether TFM and/or TSM promotes group glorification or group attachment is a question that still has yet to be answered. This research provides support for the prediction that the more fraternity men and sorority women read content on one of these sites the greater their Greek identity will be.

Hypothesis 3: The more read fraternity men and sorority women read TFM, the greater will be their Greek identity.

Repeated exposure to messages regarding sexual assault and rape in articles in TFM or TSM may impact fraternity men’s and sorority women’s own sexual scripts, later influencing their attitudes and behaviors as individuals and as a group.
Scripting Theory

Scripting theory provides a framework for understanding how behavior and attitudes are guided by sexual scripts and essentially believes that sexuality is not innate but learned through repeated exposure to messages that contain particular scripts (Berntson, Hoffman, & Luff, 2014; Markle, 2008). These scripts are then internalized on three levels: the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural. Moreover, these scripts can be used to help examine the impact of gender, class, race, religion, and even the college social environment, such as Greek life, in which many emerging adults are immersed in (Berntson et al., 2014; Markle, 2008).

Scripting theory relies heavily on an understanding not just of how scripts are processed and interpreted but also script formation and the different sexual scripts that exist within society. Sexual scripts can be defined as “socially constructed expectations for human behavior” (Wright & Arroyo, 2013, p. 620). Sexual scripts tell people what is and is not appropriate and give some indication as to the outcomes of certain behaviors. In regard to individuals’ sexual behavior, sexual script essentially provides individuals with guidelines for shaping which partners, sexual behaviors, or social interactions are desirable, appropriate, or neither (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011). The media can promote certain sexual scripts based not only on their content but the way that content is framed. Both TFM and TSM frame their stories on sexual assault and rape differently, which could impact sexual script development in both fraternity men and sorority women. Certain stories and articles could potentially perpetuate rape myth acceptance as well as rape scripts, which is problematic if Greek-affiliated readers then internalize and act on these rape scripts in their own sexual encounters.

Rape Myth Acceptance and Rape Scripts

Rape myth acceptance influences not only influence sexual script development, which in turn determine sexual attitudes and behaviors, but can potentially work in conjunction to support rape (Ryan, 2011). Rape myths help foster a climate where rape victims can be blamed for their victimization (Ryan, 2011). There are four key rape myths: women lie about being raped, women asked to be raped, women enjoy rape, and husbands or boyfriend can’t rape wives or girlfriends (Ryan, 2011). Rape myth acceptance occurs when these ideas are accepted and believed to be true.

Rape scripts typically include an assailant using physical violence with the victim resisting and experiencing negative psychological consequences as a result of the encounter (Krahé, Bieneck, & Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007; Ryan, 2011). Rape scripts are “beliefs about the nature of rape, the roles of the sexes in rape, boundaries of vulnerability of rape,” as well as the disposition of the rape victims themselves (Ryan, 2011, p. 775). A “real” rape script is often seen as the most typical where an unknown assailant uses physical violence or force (Ryan, 2011). A real rape script is problematic because a real rape script overshadows the possibility of another kind of rape script where the victim is familiar with her assailant. A rape script perpetuates a female sexual script where rape cannot occur from boyfriends, friends, or acquaintances, thus inhibiting healthy female sexual socialization (Ryan, 2011). Given the commonality of rape myths in the general populace, there is reason to believe (and evidence to suggest) that rape myths are prevalent in news media (Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandello, 2008). News and media can reinforce or challenge rape scripts and rape myth acceptance, often by the way in which the topics are framed.

Hypothesis 4: The greater their Greek identity, the more likely fraternity men and sorority women will be accepting of rape myths.

Hypothesis 5: The more fraternity men and sorority women read TFM, the more they will be accepting of rape myths.

Based on the relevant literature examining TFM and TSM, social identity theory, sexual scripting, and rape myth acceptance, a research question was then posed to examine the interaction between the multiple factors that could potentially help explain the relationship between reading TFM and rape myth acceptance.

Research Question 1: How does Greek identity play a role in the relationship between frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance?

Method

Participants

Participants were 284 college undergraduate students (145 females, 139 males) between the ages of 18 and 24 who were members of social Greek organizations at a large, southwestern university. The vast majority reported their race as White/Caucasian (N = 223, 78.5%), with six of these participants also indicating that they were of Hispanic/Latino(a) ethnicity. Twenty-six participants (9.2%) reported themselves exclusively as Hispanic/Latino(a); four participants selected Black/African American, and two participants selected Asian/Asian American. Twenty-seven participants did not report their race or ethnicity.

Participants ranged in the number of years they had been active members of their respective Greek organization, with 17.3% having been with the organization less than a year, 15.8% for 1 year, 22.5% for 2 years, 28.2% for 3 years, and 16.2% for 4 or more years. \(\chi^2\) analysis revealed that length of membership did not differ by gender, \(\chi^2(5, N = 284) = 5.24, p = .39\).

Procedures

All participants completed a 15–20 min survey questionnaire that included questions about demographic variables, news
media consumption (including TFM), social identity attitudes related to Greek membership, and rape myth acceptance. Most participants (N = 200) were recruited to complete the study’s survey questionnaire online through an online study registration system at the researchers’ university. Male participation in the online survey, however, was lacking compared to female participation, and therefore, the researchers recruited an additional 84 male participants to complete the survey via a paper-and-pencil questionnaire at two separate fraternity chapter meetings.

Participants recruited through the online study registration system received required or extra course credit for participation. Participants self-selected to participate in this survey from several studies offered as part of their research requirement or extra credit. The fraternity men recruited in person at their weekly chapter meeting volunteered to participate and did not receive any course credit incentive for participation.

All procedures were approved by the university’s institutional review board.

**Measures**

**Rape myth acceptance.** Rape myth acceptance was assessed by using an interval level 15-item measure consisting of statements intended to measure acceptance of rape myth arranged in a 6-point Likert-type format with response options from (1) strongly agree to (6) strongly disagree. The scale was a modification of Burt’s (1980) instrument, which has served as the standard for measuring rape myth acceptance in the field, as well as the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale (Lottes, 1991), which was adapted from Burt’s (1980) scale. The original scale was also adopted into the Handbook of Sexually–Related Measures (2011) which serves as a reference for scholars in the field of sex research. Sample items included “If a girl doesn’t physically fight back, she can’t really say it was rape” and “If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.” A Cronbach’s α of .91 revealed internal consistency with the items to create a summed and averaged scale for rape myth acceptance. An independent samples t-test revealed that males were generally more accepting of rape myths (M = 2.95, standard deviation [SD] = .78) than were females (M = 2.39, SD = 0.86), t(281) = 5.74, p < .001.

**Greek identity.** Greek identity was assessed through an interval level 12-item 6-point Likert-type format with response options from (1) strongly agree to (6) strongly disagree constructed specifically for this study. The questions assessed how closely fraternity and sorority members identified themselves as Greek and how strongly it related to their overall social identity. Sidanius, van Laar, Levin, and Sinclair (2004) measured social identity partly through the concept of a sense of belonging. Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, and Williams (1986) also used sense of belonging to measure social identity through her example of “I am a person who feels strong ties with the… group” (p. 276), and based on their this component of their measurement of social identity, four questions were created for this study to measure Greek identity through a sense of belonging: “I feel close to other members of Greek life,” “My sorority sisters/fraternity brothers are like my family,” “I feel close to other members of Greek life,” and the negatively worded item “most of my friends are not Greek.” Sense of belonging was used to measure Greek identity as fraternities and sororities are social groups and often based on belonging or “sameness.”

Intent was used to measure social identity in Bagozzi and Kyu-Hyun (2002), and they used the statement and asked participants to indicate “the degree to which you might intend to eat lunch with the group of friends you indicated above sometime during the next two weeks” (p. 237). Intent was necessary to measure in terms of Greek identity because of the events and philanthropic efforts that are integral to fraternity or sorority membership. As a result, three questions used intent to measure Greek identity: “I will donate money to my sorority or fraternity after I graduate,” “when I graduate, I plan to participate in Greek alumni events,” and “I hope my children choose to become Greek if/when they go to college.” These statements specifically measured future intent in order to get at the idea that being Greek is something that is not just a part of a member’s identity for 4 years but as a part of their identity that is much more long lasting.

**Social identity acceptance.** Morton and Duck (2000) used affect as a component of group identification, by asking how happy participants were with being in the gay community. Similarly, this study measured affect as a component of Greek identity through three statements: “I enjoy being Greek,” the negatively worded “I am not proud of being Greek,” and “I enjoy participating in events for my fraternity/sorority.” Enjoyment of being Greek and participating in Greek activities helps ensure continued membership. As fraternity and sorority members are able to deactivate and essentially remove themselves from the group at any point, measuring affect helps indicate longer lasting Greek identity.

Lastly, awareness was used as a component to measure Greek identity. Hooper (1976) and Morton and Duck (2000) used awareness to measure social identity and social identification. Hooper (1976) provided an example of a statement indicating participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “It is important to you to think of yourself as [group name placed here]” (p. 156). A similar, but negatively worded, statement was posed in this study, stating “Being Greek is not very important to me.” Morton and Duck (2000) provided the example through the question “how much do you see yourself as belonging to the gay community?” (p. 445). This study measured awareness through a second statement “I consider being Greek part of my identity.”

In terms of reliability, the scale is loosely adapted from Morton and Duck (2000) and Brown et al. (1986) which had Cronbach’s zs of .83 and .71.

The 12 items were first examined for internal validity by conducting a principal components analysis with a varimax
rotation. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of .92 and a p value of less than .001 for the Barlett’s test of sphericity indicated that the data were appropriate for factoring. The principle component analysis (PCA) revealed two components that had eigenvalues greater than 1 and that explained 52.72% and 8.60% of the total variance, respectively. Three of the items factored equally on both factors, and the other 9 items factored on only one, indicating that the items could be explained by one factor. A Cronbach’s α of .91 for all 12 items confirmed that the items could be summed and averaged to create a scale of Greek identity. Participants generally reported having strong Greek identity ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.81$).

**Frequency of TFM readership.** Frequency of TFM readership was assessed by asking participants to indicate from a list of various news and entertainment sites (of which TFM was one of the options) whether they had accessed the site (0) not at all, (1) at least once in the past month, (2) at least once in the past week, or (3) multiple times in the past week. The responses for TFM readership specifically were then extracted to create a measure from 0 to 4 for current frequency of readership of TFM ($M = 1.23, SD = 1.30$).

**Results**

Hypothesis 1 proposed that fraternity men would read TFM more frequency than would sorority women. An independent samples t-test revealed that fraternity men did report reading TFM more frequently ($M = 1.38, SD = 1.36$) than did sorority women ($M = 1.08, SD = 1.24$), $t(282) = 1.98, p = .049$. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that fraternity men and sorority women would report similar levels of Greek identity. An independent samples t-test revealed that fraternity men generally reported similar Greek identity ($M = 4.87, SD = 0.78$) as did sorority women ($M = 4.77, SD = 0.84$), $t(282) = 1.03, p = .28$. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 then proposed that the more frequently fraternity men and sorority women read TFM, the stronger would be their Greek identity. A univariate analysis with gender also entered indicated that the more frequently Greeks read TFM, the stronger was their Greek identity, $F(1, 281) = 11.37, p < .01$. Hypothesis 3 was supported. Gender was again not a significant predictor of Greek identity, $F(1, 281) = .49, p = .48$.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the stronger the participants’ Greek identity, the more likely they would report being accepting of rape myths. A univariate analysis with gender entered indicated that the strength of Greek identity did significantly predict rape myth acceptance, $F(1, 280) = 7.18, p < .01$. Hypothesis 4 was supported. Gender was also again a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance, $F(1, 280) = 31.38, p < .001$.

Hypothesis 5 then proposed that the more frequently Greeks read TFM, the more likely they would report being accepting of rape myths. A univariate analysis with gender entered indicated that the strength of Greek identity did not predict rape myth acceptance, $F(1, 280) = 3.00, p = .08$. Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Gender remained a significant predictor, $F(1, 280) = 30.31, p < .001$.

Research Question 1 then asked to what extent does Greek identity play a role in the relationship between frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance. A simple mediation model analysis was conducted, using Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS SPSS macro, to test the paths between frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance with Greek identity as a mediator and gender as a control variable. PROCESS uses bootstrapping to test the statistical significance of the mediated paths (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to better approximate the sampling distribution of the paths of the product of the independent and mediator variable and the mediator and the dependent variables to construct confidence intervals (CIs) for each direct and indirect effect. Rape myth acceptance was entered as the dependent variable with Greek identity as the mediating variable, frequency of reading TFM as the independent variable, and gender as a covariate.

The total effect of TFM readership ($X$) on rape myth acceptance ($Y$; $β = .07, t = 1.73, p = .08, 95\% CI [−.0090, .1393]$) was not significant, and the direct effect ($c$) of $X$ on $Y$ ($β = .05, t = 1.25, p = .21, 95\% CI [−.0274, .1225]$) was also not significant. The indirect effect of $X$ on $Y$ through the mediator of Greek social identity was, however, significant ($β = .02, t = 1.73, p = .08, 95\% CI [.0025, .0404]$), such that the relationship between greater frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance was fully mediated by Greek identity. See Figure 1 for each of the paths of the model and their corresponding coefficients.

Gender was a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance in the total effect model ($β = −.54, t = −5.51, p < .001, 95\% CI [−.7351, −.3479]$), while frequency of TFM readership was not ($β = .07, t = 1.73, p = .08, 95\% CI [−.0090, .1393]$), indicating that the mediation model may work differently for fraternity men and sorority women. Therefore, an additional mediation model analysis was conducted with gender added as a moderator on the path between frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance.

The conditional direct effect of $X$ on $Y$ for fraternity men ($c^0; β = .10, t = 1.98, p = .05, 95\% CI [.0005, .2057]$) was significant, but the conditional direct effect of $X$ on $Y$ for sorority women ($c^0; β = −.01, t = −.25, p = .80, 95\% CI [−.1211, .0940]$) was not significant. The indirect effect through Greek identity as a mediator again revealed significant mediation for all participants ($β = .02, 95\% CI [.0018, .0391]$), implying perhaps that the relationship between frequency of reading TFM and rape myth acceptance was fully mediated by Greek identity for sorority women but only partially mediated for fraternity men. However, the interaction of frequency of reading TFM and gender was not a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance ($β = −.11, t = −1.56, p = .12, 95\% CI [−.2642, .0309]$), which indicates that simply being male or female does not fully predict how participants will be influenced by TFM readership.
Rape Myth of the proactive messages represented and presented on TSM campuses across the nation. Taking a deeper look into some together to take a stand against sexual assault on different Greek community, particularly sorority women, have come aligning themselves with the larger sorority population. Future research on other sororities across the nation to ensure that they are "female friendly" and promote positive representations of women. Also, as sorority members it stands to reason that they as is centered on topics that pertain more to men than to women. Also, as sorority members it stands to reason that they would seek out TSM more than TFM, especially for information on other sororities across the nature to ensure that they are aligning themselves with the larger sorority population. Future research on TSM is needed to better understand how this site could potentially foster a sense of female community and perpetration, of which sorority women and fraternity men are, respectively, at higher risk of experiencing than the general college student population.

This study found evidence that fraternity men read TFM more often than sorority women. With sorority women having their own version of TFM, called TSM, it is not surprising that these women might seek out or prefer TSM to TFM as a source of news and entertainment. TSM could be considered more "female friendly" and promote positive representations of Greek women in a way that TFM does not. TFM contains content that could be considered misogynistic to some as well as is centered on topics that pertain more to men than to women. Also, as sorority members it stands to reason that they would seek out TSM more than TFM, especially for information on other sororities across the nature to ensure that they are aligning themselves with the larger sorority population. Future research on TSM is needed to better understand how this site could potentially foster a sense of female community and perhaps counter some of the negative stereotypes of women on TFM. Recent articles have celebrated how members of the Greek community, particularly sorority women, have come together to take a stand against sexual assault on different campuses across the nation. Taking a deeper look into some of the proactive messages represented and presented on TSM could help inform researchers on what effect these messages are having on sorority women.

This study also found that sorority women and fraternity men had similar levels of Greek identity. With research on or measuring Greek social identity being practically nonexistent, the researchers can only hypothesize why this might be the case due to fact that there could potentially be more similarities than differences between fraternity and sorority membership in terms of duties, events, and group characteristics such as race, background, socioeconomic status, and geographical location. Our study found evidence that supported this notion of homogeneity between members of fraternities and sororities in terms of basic demographics.

It was also found that the more frequently both fraternity men and sorority women read TFM, the stronger was their Greek identity. Gender was not a significant predictor of Greek identity in this instance and that may be due to the fact that both TFM and TSM are owned and operated by the same company, and while their topics and stances vary some, essentially, they provide similar content that is arguably very supportive of Greek life and frequently not only promotes Greek affiliation but situates it as better than being non-Greek. Repeated exposure of these messages then could potentially reinforce and strengthen Greek identity for both fraternity men and sorority women alike.

The strength of Greek identity significantly predicted rape myth acceptance. Both fraternity men and sorority women were more likely to be accepting of rape myths if they felt that Greek life was an important part of their identity. Gender was a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance, which supports past research that indicates that men typically are more accepting of rape myths than women. It is, however, concerning that sorority women, who are at high risk of being victims of sexual assault, would be more accepting of rape myths the more "Greek" with which they associated themselves. This may speak to the nature of Greek culture and should be explored further in future research.

Lastly, this study found that reading TFM more frequently did not on its own indicate greater acceptance of rape myths, but it did so by way of stronger Greek identity. This is not surprising as many factors, other than simply reading one website would contribute to how accepting anyone is of rape myths. While media may play a part in perpetuating and reinforcing rape myth acceptance, individual differences and sociocultural factors also can contribute to why some are more accepting of these myths than others. While reading TFM alone does not completely indicate higher rape myth acceptance, those who had higher levels of Greek identity were much more accepting of rape myths than those who had lower levels of Greek identity. This interaction sheds light on several misconceptions about the Greek community, particularly fraternity men, often perpetuated by nonmembers and media but also perpetuated by members of the Greek community. With Greek identity mediating the relationship between reading TFM and rape myth acceptance, an argument can be made that only when Greek students really “buy into” the stereotypical Greek life

**Figure 1.** A simple mediation model with Greek identity as a mediator of the effect of frequency of readership of TotalFratMove.com on rape myth acceptance (with gender entered as a control variable).

**Discussion**

The present study was conducted to examine how frequency of readership of a news source that often perpetrates stereotypical fraternity culture may play a role in Greek college students’ rape myth acceptance, while also taking into account gender and Greek social identity. Results revealed that frequency of TFM was generally predictive of rape myth acceptance when participants also reported high levels of Greek identity. The findings of the study provide important contributions to our understanding of how news and entertainment sources may influence sexual attitudes such as rape myth acceptance, which are often predictors of sexual assault incidence and perpetration, of which sorority women and fraternity men are, respectively, at higher risk of experiencing than the general college student population.

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experience that they are more likely to be accepting of rape myths (and arguably sexual assault perpetration). This requires a deeper look into Greek life as more than simply an organization in which individuals participate but as a way of life that is frequently passed down from generation to generation.

Media literacy could help mitigate some of the negative effects of reading TFM. This study found that fraternity men had higher levels of Greek identity earlier in their years of membership; it stands to reason that younger fraternity members, particularly freshman- and sophomore-level students could benefit the most from media literacy efforts. When these fraternity men read TFM, which advertises itself as often being satirical in nature, and accept the material at face value, they not only misunderstand the intentions of particular articles but could believe that this is truly how other fraternity men feel. While TFM shouldn’t perpetuate rape myth acceptance through its articles, whether satirical or not, it is imperative that fraternity men realize that not only is opinion not fact but that a particular opinion that may reinforce (whether explicitly or implicitly) rape myths may not be shared by all members of the Greek community.

Campaigns to teach Greeks, specifically fraternity men, about how to prevent sexual assault and end the perpetuation of rape myths could also help mitigate the negative effects of media such as TFM. However, due to the close-knit nature of Greek life, campaigns for Greeks by Greeks could be most successful. This research suggested that Greeks overall have high levels of Greek identity. This means that the majority of fraternity men and sorority men associated their membership in Greek life as an important part of their identity. Social identity theory then could be used to support the idea that members of this group would be more likely to seek and take advice from members within their own community.

The Greek community, both fraternity and sorority members, also needs to step up to actively fight against stereotypes imposed upon them. By fighting stereotypes that fraternity men are “rapists” and that sorority women are “sororstitutes,” fraternity men and sorority women may be less likely to accept and perpetuate these stereotypes and perhaps be less accepting of rape myths.

An important limitation to acknowledge is the geographical location of the study. As the study was conducted at a large, southwestern university, results may not be as generalizable to Greek life at smaller universities or those located outside the South. The South has a long history of being the birthplace of fraternities and sororities, and large universities in this area may have a more active Greek life than universities outside the South. Also, legacy status, or having family members such as brothers, sisters, parents, and even grandparents being a member of one’s sorority of fraternity, is also very prominent in this part of the country as compared to others. This may have contributed to why Greek identify levels were high, as the participants were located in an area that has a large Greek presence and vast alumni networks. Those members of Greek life in other geographical locations may feel less Greek because their particular university may not value Greek membership status as highly as those in the South.

Conclusion

In sum, this study was conducted to examine how frequency of readership of a news source that often perpetrates stereotypical fraternity culture may play a role in Greek college students’ rape myth acceptance, while also taking into account gender and Greek social identity. Results indicated that frequency of TFM was generally predictive of rape myth acceptance when participants also reported high levels of Greek identity. It illuminates the need for richer understanding of how to better protect women, in this case, sorority women, from sexual assault perpetration, particularly from fraternity men, who, as a whole, tend to have a higher likelihood of committing sexual assault.

The study also shed light on the idea that Greek culture itself, not just the men within it, can perpetuate gender stereotypes that can increase rape myth acceptance for both sorority women and fraternity men through media. Sites such as TFM frequented by fraternity men that perpetuate rape myths and the objectification of sorority women should be of concern to those within the Greek community who are standing up against sexual assault. Women interested in entering the Greek community need to be aware of the risks their membership poses to them, and future research should search for ways to help better inform current members of Greek life about this issue and help search for ways to put an end to the sexual assault of not only sorority women and to make Greek life a positive and safe environment for those wishing to become a part of this community.

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