

Background on Fraternities

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A fraternity, in the context of universities, is defined as a men’s student organization formed chiefly for social purposes having secret rites and a name consisting of Greek letters. Fraternities are a ubiquitous, and longstanding tradition in the United States. They maintain a presence at 800 universities across the US (Hechinger 2017) with the oldest fraternities forming in the mid 1800s (IFC website).

Fraternities consist of students from families of higher-than-average educational attainment and income; they are predominantly white, and prior research has linked fraternity membership to increases in graduation rates (Routon and Walker 2014), income (Mara, Davis, and Schmidt 2018), and GPA (DeBard and Sacks 2011). However, members spend approximately 2 more hours partying than nonmembers (Routon and Walker 2014), and sorority¹ members, who socialize frequently with fraternity members, have been found to consume alcohol with greater frequency, delay assessments of threat, and have significantly higher rates of drugging victimization than non-sorority members (Lasky et al. 2017; Franklin 2016).

This paper focuses primarily on a group of fraternities known as the Interfraternity Council (IFC), a group of fraternities that consist of over 4 million alumni and more than 380k undergraduate members across the US which, according to their creed, “exist to promote the shared interests and values of our member fraternities: leadership, service, brotherhood and scholarship” (Hechinger 2017). IFC fraternities differ from professional development fraternities in that they exist mainly for social purposes and are typically the largest fraternity presence at a university. More importantly, IFC fraternities are the fraternities subject to moratoriums in the sample.

To become a member of an IFC fraternity, prospective members must apply during recruitment events that take place in the fall or spring semester (or both). Once a chapter and prospective member jointly accept membership, the new member (the “pledge”) must abide by the chapter’s guidelines. Figure ?? shows an example of the overarching rules within the chapter, Sigma Alpha Epsilon—one of the oldest and largest fraternity chapters across the US that has initiated over 336k members (Hechinger 2017). Each member must maintain a GPA over a certain threshold, pay an initiation and semester fee, attend chapter ritual events and meetings, be involved in one additional campus or community organization, and complete service hours. Upon membership, pledges may be invited to live within the fraternity house,² which can reside either on or off campus. However, chapter houses are not managed by university-housing, and hence, fraternities have been found to be the most reliable source of alcohol for first-year undergraduates (Mara, Davis, and Schmidt 2018).

DeBard, Robert, and Casey Sacks. 2011. “Greek Membership: The Relationship with First-Year Academic Performance.” *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 13 (1): 109–26. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.13.1.f>.

Franklin, Cortney A. 2016. “Sorority Affiliation and Sexual Assault Victimization: Assessing Vulnerability Using Path Analysis.” *Violence Against Women* 22 (8): 895–922. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215614971>.

Hechinger, John. 2017. *True Gentlemen: The Broken Pledge of America’s Fraternities*. 1st ed. Hachette Book Group, Inc.

¹A sorority is the female counterpart of fraternities.

²Not all universities have fraternity houses on their campus property, and not all fraternity chapters have houses at every university they are affiliated with.

- Lasky, Nicole V., Bonnie S. Fisher, Caitlin B. Henriksen, and Suzanne C. Swan. 2017. "Binge Drinking, Greek-Life Membership, and First-Year Undergraduates: The 'Perfect Storm' for Drugging Victimization." *Journal of School Violence* 16 (2): 173–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1284470>.
- Mara, Jack, Lewis Davis, and Stephen Schmidt. 2018. "Social Animal House: The Economic and Academic Consequences of Fraternity Membership." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 36 (2): 263–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12249>.
- Routon, P. Wesley, and Jay K. Walker. 2014. "The Impact of Greek Organization Membership on Collegiate Outcomes: Evidence from a National Survey." *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 49 (April): 63–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2014.02.003>.