Introduction

Rape remains prevalent in all university climates. According to the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct conducted by the Association of American Universities, the overall rate of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since a student enrolled at the school was 13% in 2019 (footnote). Additionally, this percentage has increased since 2015 (footnote2) with the largest increases stemming from undergraduate women. Academics have pointed to multiple sources of this heinous behavior including college partying with alcohol (Lindo, Siminski, and Swensen 2018), liquor violations (Wiersma-Mosley, Jozkowski, and Martinez 2017), and most pertinent, fraternity and sorority life (cite). In the book *Sexual Assault on Campus: The Problem and the Solution*, the authors Carol Bohmer and Andrea Parrot claim that “the men who are most likely to rape in college are fraternity pledges (footnote3).” Furthermore, academic studies using survey data have found that fraternity men were more likely to commit sexual assault than men who did not join a fraternity (Foubert, Newberry, and Tatum 2008), university males rated sexual assault perpetrators as less guilty when the perpetrator was a fraternity member (Seabrook 2019), and sorority women (who interact with fraternity men frequently) were sexually assaulted at four times the rate of non-sorority women (Minow and Einolf 2009). Universities have responded to fraternity-related misconduct with a range of policy initiatives, and in particular, placing moratoriums on fraternity social-life. Each of these moratoriums occurs campus-wide thereby affecting all fraternities simultaneously. And while there is variation by university, each of them prohibits fraternity social gatherings with alcohol. This paper exploits the variation of 39 fraternity moratoriums at 34 four-year universities across the US to estimate a causal effect of fraternity moratoriums on cases of rape.

Background I: What is a fraternity?

In the context of universities, a fraternity is a unit of (traditionally) men who gather for social, academic, or demographic interests (footnote3). Fraternities are typically a ubiquitous presence at four-year universities. According to the US News Reports, some universities have fraternity membership as high as 85%. In addition, family income and education of fraternity members tends to be higher than non-members (Routon and Walker 2014), and economic studies have linked fraternity membership to higher academic performance (Cheng 2018), alcohol consumption (Routon and Walker 2014), and future income (Mara, Davis, and Schmidt 2018). According to the Gallup Purdue Survey

The most notoriously misbehaving fraternities are group of Interfraternity Council (IFC). These fraternities are the most commonly represented fraternity in popular culture, typically shown performing hazing rituals or participating in themed parties. More importantly, IFC fraternities are always (and sometimes exclusively) included in every moratorium in the sample.

To become a member of an IFC fraternity, prospective members generally have to apply (“pledge”) by participating in various activities which include social gatherings and parties with alcohol (“rush week”). Once a fraternity decides to accept a new member, the new member is then responsible for a yearly membership fee and has the decision to live in the fraternity house. The fraternity house is typically close or within a university campus, yet they are not under direct supervision of a university employee (footnote 5). The house structure is a hierarchy, with senior members having authority over younger members. Furthermore, each newly accepted member must endure a year of hazing from their senior brotherhood. Anecdotally, hazing involves senior members forcing the new members to perform house chores, act as a personal assistant for tenured members, and drinking extremely dangerous amounts of alcohol to prove their loyalty (footnote6). However, if a new member endures this process, they benefit from activities with campus sororities (the female counterpart of fraternities) and access to exclusive IFC parties.

Fraternity Moratoriums:

Fraternity moratoriums can be implemented by either the university or the overarching IFC. While a university or IFC can individually suspend or halt activities by individual fraternities, this paper analyzes the effect of a moratorium on all IFC fraternities at the university-level. Each campus-wide moratorium variguidelines, but all of them share the common halt on IFC fraternity parties with alcohol. These parties are important for since they are densely populated and are held at the private fraternity houses. Additionally, they must be registered with the university and the IFC. Therefore, when a moratorium is implemented, fraternities can no longer officially host these parties. Interestingly, there has been debate amongst school officials about whether these moratoriums actually produce counterproductive results: it may be the case that a moratorium leads fraternities to disregard any type of rules or regulations.

Footnote1: of 33 large universities in 2019

Footnote2: of the 21 schools that participated in both the 2015 and the 2019 surveys, results showed a 3% increase for undergraduate women, 2.4% increase for graduate and professional women.

Footnote3: A more crude and colloquial definition is explained through Urban Dictionary’s top definition as “a group of pretentious college boys who pay a ton of money to relive their high school glory days by date-raping girls, childishly excluding others who are different, and bullying their new members in the name of ‘brotherhood’.”

Footnote4:

Footnote5:

Footnote6: One particularly disgusting hazing ritual was explained by a former colleague at San Diego State University. The “vomit omelet” was a hazing ritual in which a new member had to eat an omelet mixed with emesis from other members.

Data

The main analysis uses data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program from the FBI The UCR systematically collects crime data from local police departments and aggregates them to the agency-month level. In particular, it contains information on the total number of rape incidences reported by each department. Each police department was connected to the 35 university areas using the Law Enforcement Agency Identifiers Crosswalk (footnote4).

Each fraternity moratorium was found by searching newspaper articles in addition to discussions with Fraternity and Sorority Life directors at the respective schools. The dates shown in TABLE 1 were either confirmed by a school director or verified in a related news story. Missing dates are in progress of verification.

To further enrich the comparison groups, detailed school covariates are merged to the UCR by university name with the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

(footnote4): To match law enforcement agencies with schools, the data was filtered by local police agencies (not state agencies) and four-year university police departments. Each university police department has a “place code” which is an area that that particular police department covers. However, there are other police departments in these areas that also serve universities, and each of these was attached to the school. On average, only 1 other local police agency was added to each school.

Identification:

This study utilizes the random variation from the implementation of fraternity moratoriums across universities. The main identifying assumption is that universities are not suspending their fraternities because of an increase in rape cases and would have continued on a similar trend excluding the moratorium. Based on discussions with Fraternity and Sorority directors, each of these moratoriums were implemented based on several reasons: a fraternity member death, a report of a sexual assault, or less frequently, misbehavior from racist writing. A fraternity death, while tragic, is a random event based on the typical behavior demonstrated in fraternities. Senior fraternity members consistently haze new members (“pledges”) by instructing their subordinates to perform chores, or more frequently, drink dangerously high volumes of alcohol. Since this behavior is so persistent, regardless of the university policies prohibiting it, a death in a fraternity is an instance where the behavior was “taken too far”. Likewise, while it is true that a report of sexual assault preceding a moratorium would threaten identification, universities (or the IFC council) resort to suspensions typically following a particularly public case of a sexual assault. Considering that rape is largely underreported, a sudden unique case gaining public traction provides evidence for satisfying the identifying assumption.

Given the staggered adoption design of this quasi-experiment, I use a two-way fixed effects model as shown in equation 1.

Next steps:

* Perform the two-way fixed effects model
* Given that each fraternity moratorium has different specifications, use the Clement DD estimator which corrects for heterogenous treatment effects.
* As a robustness check, use the National Incidence Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to look at a subset of the sample. The NIBRS has more micro-level data, with crimes at the daily level and information on the age of the victim. While my sample size will decrease from 35 universities to 16, this check is imperative to actually showing that it is women between ages 17-24 that are accounting for the increase/decrease/no effect.
* Gather information on total fraternity population at each school. This information is available, but extremely difficult to get. The Piazza Center at UPenn collects such information, but their director is extremely difficult to work with. However, this information is vital, as we expect a fraternity moratorium would have larger effects if the proportion of students involved in a fraternity is larger.
* Collect data for which schools are the biggest party schools. There are likely heterogenous effects based on the type of personnel at each of these schools. Some schools have “party school” reputations, and individuals at these schools may behave substantially different.