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Where have the parties gone?

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Where have the parties gone?

 onetwentyseven.blog/2024/04/08/where-are-the-parties/

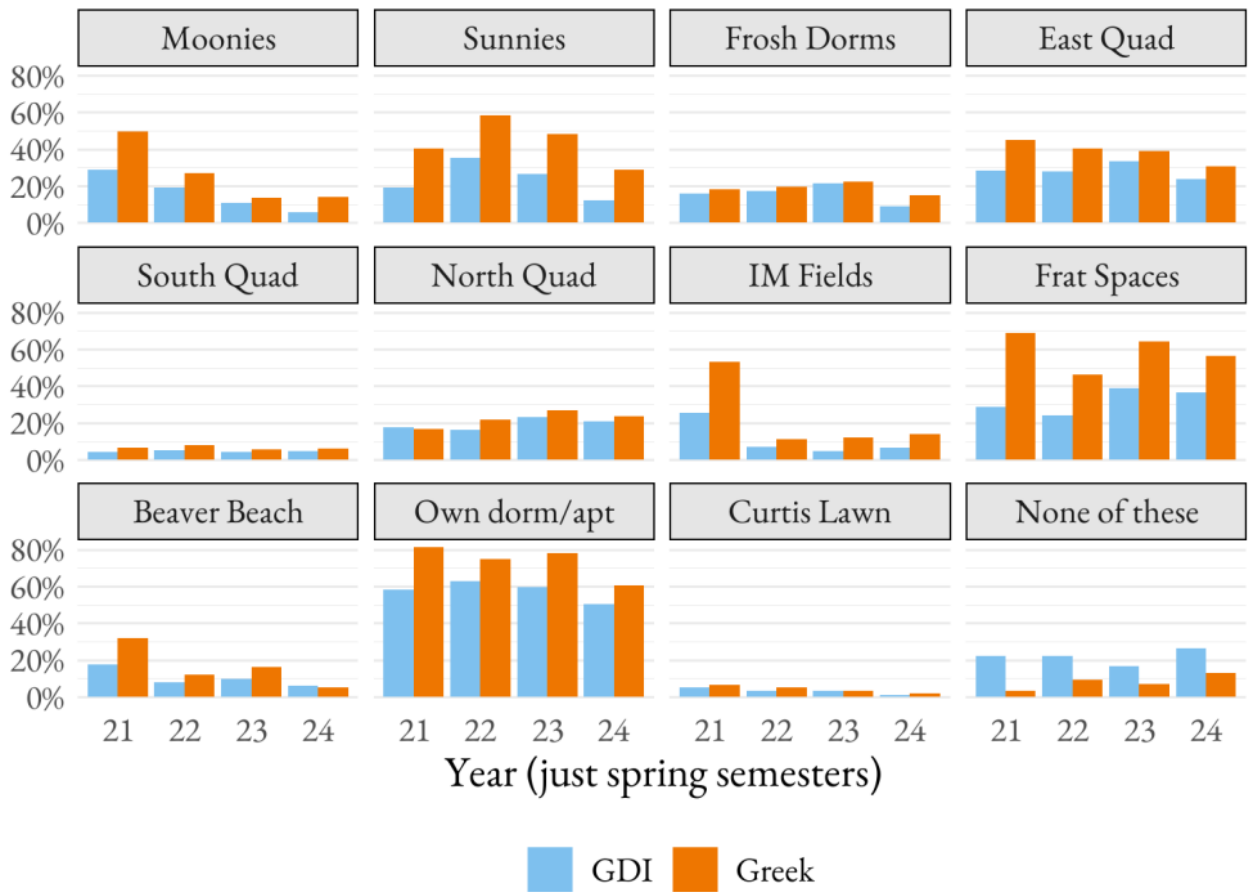
Paul A. Djupe, Data for Political Research

An old rule of policing is that showing up to one area merely serves to push crime to other neighborhoods. I feel like Denison has been doing some of this in recent history, trying to break the stranglehold of the Sunnies or the notorious suites of East, which served to push the murmuration of partygoers to different cramped, sweaty rooms. Denison tried out party tents and then the Moonies, leading at least one senior to wonder what Denison party culture even was anymore. Since we're now safely past the pandemic (which didn't seem to have any effect on drinking rates), we can take a fresh look at where students have been drinking.

One thing seems clear, though, and that's that campus is just as sodden now as it has been. So, where is it happening? For several years, we've been asking students how often their best friend on campus has been binge drinking and where. If they've had a drink in a location, that counts, so this is not capturing typical party locations, but the furthest extent of it. And we can find quite a bit of shifting around in the data. We have these data for the fall too, but I'm just looking at spring semester reports.

I split the data by Greek involvement status because, well, Greeks dominate party culture. So, no great surprise, Greek affiliates drink more and report drinking in more places. The only "location" Greeks do not dominate is "none of the above." [fyi, "GDI" stands for goddamn independent, which is a term from the middle ages when I was an undergrad that I still like].

Shocking New Finding: Greeks Drink More Everywhere



Source: Spring Surveys, 2021-2024.

They may have “independent” in their moniker, but their drinking patterns sure aren’t. Independents track Greek patterns, just at lower levels. As rates go up for Greeks on North Quad, so do they for independents. The Sunnies peaked in 2022 and have since declined a bit for both Greeks and GDIs. IM Fields were popular for a hot second and have since faded.

We’re not just seeing things – reports of the range of drinking locations have dropped. The average report was 3.2 locations in 2021 and was down to 2.2 in 2024.

It’s not exactly easy to divine what that means. But given that survey-derived drinking rates appear to have maintained over this time period, it suggests a much greater concentration in particular party spaces. People are niching in their partying, which could mean that there is less of a campus party culture and more of group-specific cultures.

I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, necessarily. A campus party culture could lead to cultural hegemony and leaving people out, but a campus party culture can be the basis for inclusion and the expansion of all-important weak ties (that article has almost 73,000 citations!). But, hey, if group-specific cultures keep people happy, then who am I to complain. But this is something to keep an eye on. Party culture is a pretty sizable force on college campuses that Administrations have only limited ability to control. Clearly Denison’s attempts to control party

culture foundered and have probably introduced more chaos than anything. It will be interesting to see if party culture stabilizes and whether student drinking ranges expand again or continue to contract.

Paul A. Djupe is a local cyclist who runs the Data for Political Research minor. He started onetwentyseven.blog a few years ago in a bid to subsidize collective action and spread accurate knowledge about campus and what goes on there. He also writes about religion and politics in the US.