OPINION

STAFF COLUMNIST

VIOLET CHIN

This year, Harvard wins

This November, Yale students will crowd and congregate: raising posters, chanting, singing and cheering. Students are fired up. The rivalry is age old. The enemy is known. But, unfortunately, I am not describing The Game; I'm describing the semester.

The Yale-Harvard game comes at the heels of a semester that has been shaped by student activism. With the launch of "Democratize Yale" in September, the lipstick protests in October, and the town hall just a week before The Game this November, students have taken up the fight against a plethora of policies that our University has perpetrated. Some folks may find issues with the undemocratic elections in the Yale Corporation. Others may push

> FOR ME, IT HAS BEEN HARD TO FEEL EXACTLY PROUD OF YALE.

Yale to exit negotiations with the Trump administration. Though whichever issues may resonate with you, the fact remains: we are now called to cheer for our school. Because of course, despite all of these problems, we are still better than Harvard.

See, this November, I find myself thinking about the Yale-Harvard game as something beyond football. The battle feels bigger. Perhaps it is a sense of heightened ego that may arise from the constant reminder of our "Ivy League" status. Perhaps it is the centuries-old rivalry. Perhaps it's the mythos: the red and blue, the all-American sport, the tailgates where generations of Yalies and Harvardians once stood. But I think this year in particular has cast a new light on the rivalry. As the Department of Justice's accusations illuminate the institutional priorities of each school, the battle takes place beyond the field and into the feelings. What could be a simple comparison of school spirit is boiled down to a deeper question: is our pride fake? And what does it mean to have spirit for a place like Yale?

To answer this, we can first look towards Yale. When the Department of Justice accused the Yale School of Medicine of disadvantaging white and Asian applicants, Yale quickly engaged in settlement talks this summer. And yet, even amongst calls from state and local representatives and the broader Yale community, the University has not stated that they will fight back.

Harvard, on the other hand, has taken a different approach. When the Department of Justice sued Harvard in February for allegedly refusing to comply with investigations into their admissions practices regarding race, Harvard fought the suit, getting the case dismissed in court. Later, in March, the DOJ sued Harvard again, alleging that the university did not protect Jewish students from antisemitism, with the case threatening research grants and pushing for changes to institutional policy. Yet, again, Harvard fought, and in August, the case was dismissed.

Now, Harvard's and Yale's situations are not nearly the same. Harvard faced lawsuits, while Yale faces an investigation — perhaps there is an argument to be made that the two warrant different responses. And Harvard is far from perfect. Notably, their graduate students union has been on strike since late October. Yet, I do believe that the Trump administration's accusations have particularly highlighted the two universities' institutional priorities or lack thereof. And thus, as a student, it's easy to feel that Yale is not standing up for higher education. It is easy to look over to Harvard and their recent successes, and feel a sense of anger towards Yale. And so it's hard to muster up the school spirit that moments like "The Game" demand.

For me, it has been hard to feel exactly proud of Yale.

See, there is this sad, sinking feeling that I get; if it wasn't "Yale" in name, if it didn't have the Ivy League history, the prestige and the glamor, maybe I would feel ashamed to go here. After all, we like to think of ourselves on the right side of history, and I do truly believe that that side means fighting Trump in a time when higher education is under attack.

So maybe this year Harvard wins. Considering the relative lack of football fervor among both schools' populations, The Game is, after all, mostly about school spirit.

But don't think I've switched allegiances just yet. See, I believe what I have for Yale is more powerful than spirit or pride. This November, I feel a sense of radical hope that can only come from trust in the larger continuum of Yale. I have hope that the students will continue to push back against the potential settlement and fight for a more democratized Yale. I have trust that the faculty and alumni organizers will continue to leverage their collective power and secure the "bright college years" of generations to come. And I have faith that Yale is somehow marching forward, despite setbacks along the way.

This feeling might not be the stuff of football games or tailgates, but it's another type of win. Let's call it the long game.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

SULLIVAN HO

Harvard sucks — just kidding!

Harvard is overflowing with useless students.

"I work on Eigenmode analysis!" "I'm calculating Reynolds numbers for non-Newtonian fluids!" "My lab is formalizing the Church-Turing thesis!"

Like, come on, guys. You can't just wave your hands around and shout "fast Fourier transforms!" like it's some sort of Pokemon power-up and expect us to believe you. We know you're making it all up. And don't even try it with the "b-b-but I'm gonna get a job!" Great stuff buddy. I'm proud of you. If you smush enough elliptic curve cryptography into your brain, maybe someday some analyst at Googthropic will pay you a bajillion bucks to barf it all over some God-forsaken backend.

Okay. I'm done.

Truth is, I can't keep this act up for long. I only poke fun because, like all bullies, I'm insecure. About what, you might ask? It's time for a confession: I'm... a humanities major.

Whatever you're about to say, trust me, I've heard it. From rude Harvard students, it's expected, but I've even heard it from my own Bulldog kinsmen, too. Why do you think I'm double-majoring in economics? It's so I can have some shred of dignity to cling to when the storms of derision and waves of unemployment accusations crash against me.

But I don't think I'm alone. This weekend, no matter if you're a bulldog or a lobsterback, you'll be on the butt end of some sort of joke deriding your major, your career prospects or, more likely, your school. Why are Yalies' and Harvies' jokes so cutting? It's like I said: all bullies are insecure.

It's no secret that the one thing unifying both of our schools is throat-constricting, soul-entombing imposter syndrome. The acceptance letter might as well say, "Congrats — you're in! Are you ready to doubt that fact for the next four years?" But what's less recognized are the harmful ways we release that pressure once we're on campus: through jokes and not the nice ones.

Some jokes are funny because they contradict something we all know to be true. It's funny to say L-Dub is the best dorm because — well — it's L-Dub. It's funny to suggest that applied math is an unemployable major because we all know they'll have their fair share of offers. But why do middle schoolers laugh when some poor kid gets rejected by his crush? Why do we laugh when someone we dislike trips in front of everyone sitting on Beinecke Plaza? In the words of Thomas Hobbes, laughter here arises from "the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves." We laugh in these moments out of self-assurance. When we laugh, we elevate ourselves and denigrate the person we laugh at.

It's important to remember who we find ourselves in company with when we utilize the "only joking" justification. The "mean girl" in popular culture is instantly identified by her masterful deployment of a "just joking!" remark. Similarly, the extremist political pundit adores the joke excuse, with recent figures even going so far as to escape lawsuits with it when their claims are questioned. When we banter, are we really so different from these condemnable archetypes?

> WHY ARE YALIES' AND HARVIES' JOKES SO CUTTING? IT'S LIKE I SAID: ALL BULLIES ARE INSECURE.

What, then, are we saying when we make fun of someone's major? "Your chosen path of study is fake. You are unskilled." What do we mean to say when we scorn someone else's school? "My university is tangibly superior to yours, and I want to flaunt it." We delight in this transitory victory, in a temporary escape from that crushing feeling of inferiority. Jokes are how we vocalize our rudest thoughts, our deadliest jabs. And everyone lets us get away with it — after all, I'm just being funny.

This Yale-Harvard weekend, we have a choice: what type of campus are we going to be? Do we verbalize our cruelest thoughts and then write them off with an excuse? Or do we pride ourselves on being a little more welcoming than that?

Maybe — just maybe — we can leave those useless bioengineering majors alone.

SULLIVAN HO *was rejected from Harvard in the 2025 application cycle. Clearly, he's still getting over it. He can be reached at sullivan.ho@yale.edu.*

GUEST COLUMNIST

JIM SCIUTTO

Plan a little less, risk a little more

As Yalies, new and old, we are hyper-conditioned for intricate planning. We take it as gospel that success follows only deep thought and careful execution. And it is true that none of us would have walked through the gates of Old Campus without them.

So don't be taken aback when I share this additional piece of career advice: don't plan, and don't schedule, and don't agonize, at least not all the time, every time. Instead, for a change, make sure to take risks and explore. You won't regret it.

In more than three decades as a journalist — and a few years as a diplomat — I certainly did my share of planning. And as a parent myself, I don't want to panic your own by implying I'm telling you to drop everything and follow your favorite band. Do Gen-Zers still do that? However, I do want to encourage you — when the time is right — to be willing to drop those well-

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formed plans entirely.

To be clear, I never dropped everything to follow my favorite band — I wasn't nearly cool enough. But I did, at several points in my college and professional career, take risks and make changes. Far more often than not, I was very happy I did.

In college, they were small steps. I entered Yale as I had left high school: as a debater and public speaker. I was going to be a trial lawyer some day, so it made sense for me to join the Yale Political Union and the parliamentary debate team and test my skills against the College's best. By sophomore year, I had won some debates and made some very good friends, but I had also met a few too many unhappy lawyers, so I decided to widen my aperture.

To explore a diversion into news, I wrote my first piece for the Yale Daily News late sophomore year and, wondering if I had given up sports too early in high school, I went out for the rugby team. The YDN would end up inspiring a career. And rugby became a decades-long hobby, guaranteeing me a new set of friends in every country I lived in — from Hong Kong to Tokyo, Islamabad, London and Washington, D.C.

After college, I still wasn't sure what I wanted to be, short of knowing I wanted to live and work overseas. So I took a risk and applied for what felt like every fellowship on the planet, hoping one would pay my way abroad. Many said no. Fulbright said yes — to Hong Kong — a gift that ended up seeding a career as a foreign correspondent. Fact is, I would have said yes to just about any country on any continent under any circumstances.

Post-9/11, as a newbie at ABC News, I took a job as Japan correspondent hoping that the simple fact of living overseas might convince my bosses to send me to cover a war. A few weeks after arriving in Tokyo, I was off to Kabul and stayed to cover the Middle East for ten years.

Once you learn you can thrive in uncertain circumstances, change becomes less frightening. A few years later, when the new United States Ambassador to China offered me the job as his chief of staff, I didn't say he was crazy. I asked colleagues I trusted if I could return to news, and most said yes. I asked my wife if she'd uproot her own career and our two young children to Beijing for a few years — she said yes as well. For that risk, I got a fascinating two years inside the most consequential superpower relationship of our time.

I won't share a laundry list of my supposedly brilliant gambles here. I can assure you some risks didn't pay off. I very nearly took a job with Yahoo News right before the dot-com crash. And I probably should not have turned down the chance to cover the 2008 presidential election for a few extra years abroad. However, I do know that only by occasionally straying from my original plan did I find my way to some of my best career opportunities and most fulfilling life experiences – first here at Yale and then, as it would turn out for me, quite literally around the world.

As members of this exclusive club we call Yale, we certainly benefited from planning and will continue to. Our world requires it — and at a younger and younger age it seems. However, straying from those orchestrated pathways is both fulfilling and necessary. Allow the Yale campus to be your start. Try something you've never tried or are convinced you'd never be good at. Take a course or two that makes no sense for your post-college resume. Get a summer job in an unusual place doing unusual things. And when you're out in the professional world, keep your eyes open for a door opening where you don't expect it, or might not even look. In so many ways, you will be richer for it.

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