WEEKEND *RUSH WEEK*

The Many Social Clubs of Yale

// BY HANA TILKSEW

With the dawn of spring semester comes the dawn of Greek life-social club rush. So commence the weeks of registration, mixers, meals, and elimination rounds. Even though rush is all anyone can talk about this month, Yale isn't USC or Bama. Having Greek letters in an Instagram bio isn't the end-all-be-all of a social life. At a "smart people place" like Yale, people even talk about not rushing like it's a badge of honor: "I would never audition to make people like me." "Who wants to pay for friends?" "What do they even do besides partying three days a week?"

But if any Yalie thinks they're above the performativity of auditioning for friends, let them ask themselves if any of the following apply:

- They're in a performing arts group.
- They pretend to like sports/music/movies so they have something to talk about.
- They carefully curate their Instagram aesthetic to impress whoever might happen to look them up.

And anyone who thinks they would never pay for social experiences should ponder whether they fall into any of the following categories:

- They spent $70 to get into that one Harvard-Yale party.
- They're going on a spring break trip they can't actually afford.
- They buy new outfits for every event they intend on posting a picture from.

In reality, social clubs are everywhere on campus, even if they don't come with an official banner. That seminar where half the people never do the reading, and the other half covers for them in class? Trust-based social club. That group of girls who all got played by the same guy, met up to rehash the details, and now get brunch every weekend? Trauma-bonded social club. That one insulated cultural group that gets oddly hostile if an outsider attends their publicly advertised events? Exclusionary social club.

Extrapolating further, the entire Yale machine is a social club. We all went through a multi-round process to get our "bid" when admissions decisions came out. And one day, many of us will pay membership dues to the Yale Clubs of New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or wherever we end up. Why judge the people who are honest enough to actually admit that they're grouping themselves together to make sense of this messy, scary, awful world? We all are.

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Being Seen

// BY FABEHA JAHRA

Rush week always makes campus feel slightly different — not louder, not busier, just more aware of itself. You can see it most clearly in the first years. The way they walk across campus with a little more intention. The way phones are checked a little too often, as if something important might happen at any moment. I don't say this with judgment. I recognize it because I've felt it before — the sense that this week carries meaning beyond what's actually happening. How you're perceived might matter more than usual. That a handful of interactions could somehow shape your entire Yale experience.

From the outside, the pressure is obvious. Conversations feel loaded. Small moments get magnified. A casual interaction becomes something to analyze later with friends. There's a sense that everyone is watching, even when no one really is. What strikes me is how quiet the pressure is. No one is forcing it. No one is explicitly saying this matters. It's self-generated, built out of stories we tell ourselves about belonging, visibility and getting it right. Rush becomes a container for anxieties that were already there, about fitting in, being liked, finding your place.

But what rush really does — what really lasts — isn't the outfits, the invites or the nerves. It's the community that forms in and around it. The friendships that come from shared anticipation, shared disappointment, shared relief. The people you text afterward. The ones you walk home with. The ones who make the week feel survivable, even light.

That's why the pressure can feel so heavy in the moment. It's not about status or outcomes, it's about wanting to land somewhere you feel held. Wanting to find people who feel like home. Rush becomes a stand-in for that desire, even though it's only one of many paths to it. From a distance, it's easier to see the truth: The week matters because of the connections it sparks, not because of how perfectly you navigate it. No one remembers the small missteps. What they remember — what you remember — are the friendships that carry you through the rest of the year.

So yes, rush can feel intense. The pressure feels real. But it's never as serious as it feels. What matters isn't how you're seen in a single week — it's the community you build and the friends you find, inside and outside of social club life, long after the week fades.

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// BY REETI MALHOTRA

PERSONAL ESSAY

The Allure of Greek Life

It is a trite but true declaration that I had no intention of rushing a sorority when I arrived at Yale.

For much of my first-year fall semester, I was blissfully unaware of Greek life at this university. Fraternity names meant little to me, save for when my sophomore friends would send along a "just in case" email invite to get my friends and me through the door. They were places to party — the American answer to still being considered underage at 18 — rather than social organizations boasting brotherhood.

This same unfamiliarity extended to sororities, although it manifested differently. My image of American sorority life was informed exclusively by film and television. I pictured young women living together in a grand house, each of them primmed to perfection: neatly manicured pink nails, luscious Barbie hair, carefully curated outfit ensembles. Their sisterhood was enviable, unbreakable and declaratively lifelong, but their stereotypical concerns — men and marriage and future domesticity — were not my own. They were the epitome of "traditional" femininity — which I, knowingly, did not entirely fulfill.

Rather, I fell into the process of rushing. By which I mean my then-best friends and I, riding the high of the near-ending semester, fell off a table at a frat during its annual Christmas party and took out a row of girls I would later come to call my sisters.

For the next week, I was mortifyingly known as someone who took out a row of sorority girls.

My friends and I vowed to keep our near-calamitous table break an embarrassing secret — an oath none of us, evidently, stuck to.

Soon after The Table Incident, sporadic conversation about the rush process began. I learned what social organization the girls we had collapsed on top of belonged to. I discovered what rushing was, what it would entail, and that nearly every single one of my girl friends was planning to throw themselves headlong into the process. I also realised that I knew very little about Yale's social scene and its various entities, and that I would soon face a decision: to rush, or not to rush. That indeed was the question.

My answer, by now, may be obvious. Come January, I was shivering in my Panhellenic t-shirt as I walked from college to college into basement theaters full of of singing and screaming girls, where I spent four to five minutes in a frenetic, caffeine-fuelled daze forming connections that I hoped would yield a sense of belonging — and a bid.

I was euphoric. I love meeting new people and I love a challenge; rush offered both. The outcome, if I was successful, seemed worthwhile. Membership in a clearly defined community on campus. The ability to branch out and mix with hordes of new people. Merit scholarships and an extensive alumni network. A robust social calendar — which, for someone who had just entered the clubbing scene in Asia before becoming underage again and hated waiting on the steps to enter a townhouse-turned-frat, was incredibly rewarding.

So, I spent a week in a stressed-out-adrenaline-fuelled haze that culminated in a bid from the organization that I am now a part of. I had the time of my life at our annual bid night and proceeded to purchase several more cheetah print items for my closet. I now own two tops, a dress, two scarves, a coat, and a hat.

I met several women, including my beloved big, whom I hope to call my friends for life. I also met several women that I know I will not but admire nevertheless. I got to know people beyond my organization, who became familiar faces in extracurricular and social spaces — whether at the News or on a student film set or during study abroad — and dear friends. I was granted a merit scholarship. I rarely wait on fraternity steps, if ever.

Greek life was by no means the picturesque SEC stereotype I was once acquainted with, nor an easy social landscape to enter. I lay my personhood bare and left my self-esteem on the line as I vied for inclusion.

I'm a sorority girl at Yale and have been for a year, though I never would have thought that would be so. My family and friends back home remain surprised when I tell them. I don't regret it.

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