CULTURE

The gay Ivy's top gays

// BY MADISEN FINCH

Yale is known for being the gay Ivy. This nickname appears as early as 1987, when Julie V. Iovine '77 claimed that at least a quarter of people on campus were, at the very least, not straight. This moniker was one that I did not expect to include queer women. But after speaking to the four women that created WLWixers, I believe I might have been proven wrong.

The constraints of Yale's identity as a gay Ivy has been discussed across numerous publications after Iovine's original article in The Wall Street Journal. A Rolling Stone article in 2001 claimed that "queer students don't even show up for protests; they're too busy fitting in and hooking up." From a Yale Daily News article from 2014, it seems that the experience of gay men on campus, "comes at the expense of other LGBTQ groups at Yale. The 'G' looms so large over Yale's sexual landscape that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer students are often overlooked." Nearly a decade later, The New Journal published a piece discussing the now defunct Sappho group that was once a hub for queer women on Yale's campus.

In part because of the gap that was formed when Sappho disappeared, four first years founded the WLWixers — a group of women-loving women, who mix.

I walked into Trumbull's dining hall with one of the group's founders, Michaela Snyder-Braasch '29, and we immediately sat down with Adelaide Hayden '29 — who goes by Addie. The ease of the familiarity between Michaela and Addie, and other members of the group who trickled in, was immediately apparent. I got the impression that this was a group of women who truly cared about one another.

Riley Yang '29 — dubbed RY '29, Yale's Top Gay, on the anonymous social media platform Fizz — walked in with Bella Gainey '29. The latter, while not one of the original four founders, has reportedly had just as much of an impact on the group. Delilah Sonnenshein '29, a News staff member, was the final of the four founders to get to our cramped table, and she was welcomed in with hugs and excitement. Before I had even started the interview I was privy to a flurry of laughs, inside jokes and references to shared stories.

Originally inspired by the First Year Formal and its implicit requirement to set up suitemates with dates, the four "started making a little list, for the people we still had to set up because we were kind of cross referencing," Riley said. Soon, "the list went to 20 names," and it made more sense to mix them together. As evidenced by this article, and by the fact they nearly doubled their guest list for their second gathering, it grew beyond just that first mixer.

The rest of campus party culture is "very heteronormative," as Addie framed it. "It all feels like it's surrounded by a bunch of men." The WLWixers offer an inclusive alternative.

Their first email, sent by the "Top Gay" herself, reads "I know what you are." So, too, do the WLWixers know what they are. "Lesbianism is inherently community," Riley begins before being cut off by the group's laughter. "The community already exists, this is just a way of bringing it together," Riley explains.

As for their notoriety and their ability to include more queer women in the mixers, they have shifted focus from matchmaking to friendship and attempted to tone down the publicity. A now-deleted Instagram account included videos of one of the mixers, but the group removed the post after deciding it jeopardized the sanctity of the community the four founders created. They aren't certain, however, when the next best time to host a mixer will be or if the opportunity will present itself at all.

The mission of WLWixers was to successfully set up dates for First Year Formal, and to create a community. At the completion of these goals, "We don't have to stick to a strict regimen," Delilah explained. "It can become a more casual thing."

"It's nice to have a space with no men," Addie said, taking a modern interpretation of Yale's gay Ivy reputation. I happen to agree, and even though there are no official plans for more mixers, I am excited to see what comes next.

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CULTURE

Is anything not a complaint?

// BY ESMERALDA VASQUEZ-FERNANDEZ

I find myself saying, "I am good. Just a little stressed, but it'll all work out" almost automatically after someone asks, "How are you doing?" Thus is the struggle of balancing being honest about how I feel — which is, typically, stressed — with a desire to assert my capabilities.

Time and time again, I hear my peers stress about internships, clubs and job applications. These stressors have tangible implications on their life, in theory at least. "If I don't get into this club, I will never be able to get into consulting" is a sentence I vividly remember hearing at the Extracurricular Bazaar back in August. Now, I am not trying to discredit the tangible applications these organizations have on their lives. Being involved in Yale clubs and career opportunities probably does have a positive correlation with securing a high earning job.

My complaint about the complaining culture at Yale — yes, I am complaining, too — is that often such culture is rooted in more of a habit for being negative than a real indication of a problem that needs fixing or addressing.

A quarter the way through the calendar year, I am reflecting on my goals. One of them is to limit my complaining and negative talk both internally and in social settings. The American Brain Foundation notes that, "those who have very high negativity bias are prone to experience very high anxiety." I am not a psychologist, but I agree that the correlation with the nature of being negative and seeing fault in everything contributes to higher anxiety. If the focus is only on the negative, then even an almost magical place like Yale can be clouded by uncertainty and distress. There are always things in the world to worry about, but it is often the small resolvable problems that cause the most stress. NewsWeek notes that people tend to panic over small things but stay calm in a real-life crisis.

People complain about all types of things. It is natural for stressed out college students to want to vent at any given opportunity. I mean I know that half of my calls back home consist of expressing uncertainty. There is nothing wrong with talking about feelings, and I do think that, in a lot of ways, complaining makes people feel better because they feel validated and understood by those around them, like Psychology Today suggests. Early on in my relationship with a class friend, one of the easiest conversations to reach for is dogging on a discussion post. My concern about this complaining culture is that people leave dinner and coffee outings more depleted than they arrived. Sometimes I feel like if I am not complaining about every issue that clouds my mind, then I must not be working hard or involved enough around campus. I can't help but think that if I am not in a constant rush of adrenaline to get work done I must be taking it easier.

Oftentimes, this effort to bond or communicate my involvement can accomplish the opposite. In fact, I find myself most inspired by and attracted to those who are productive without making complaints and stress their entire personality.

Of course, negative talk isn't just about people's outlooks on their own lives. A lot of people find comfort in reinforcing their self-perception by offering their unsolicited opinion of others, especially when it comes to judging and gossiping.

Intentional or not, people often project their own insecurities onto near strangers by speaking negatively about them. This is something that should be left well behind, but it's college, and sometimes this high school habit hasn't dwindled in weekly or daily conversations.

A certain amount of complaining can be healthy. I do feel better after giving my older sister a call to talk about the slew of inconveniences currently barraging me. But I also know that almost all of my accomplishments have been rooted in my desire to change, evolve and grow. The flaws and habits I have found have come from deep reflection and failures, but hardly any good, besides momentary relief, has come from complaining about small things and putting others down.

Three months into 2026, I have re-committed myself to not letting small things hold so much mental power. In complaining, I find momentary relief, but the real change in my life comes from my continuous effort in shifting my focus to be more positive and working on my personal, academic and economic goals.

But then again, I am complaining about complaining.

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WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

STARTING A JAM BAND WITH YOUR FRIENDS