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The Virtual 'Boo'!

How social media has made us more antisocial

BY MARBELLA MARLO '24

I f you say you've never been "ghosted" on social media, you're lying. It's when response times grow longer, content gets drier, and ultimately all communication comes to a halt. We have all been both the perpetrators and victims of ghosting in some form or another, and the minute we start to normalize the act of ceasing communication with a close friend or romantic partner, maybe it will stop occurring on both ends.

I'll be the first to admit that I would liberally use ghosting as a technique to avoid my vexations with people. The minute I began to feel even slightly annoyed with someone, or could sense the beginning stages of conflict, I would refrain from any deep engagements in conversation and even avoid responding to texts and Snapchats. Social media and the silent culture it manifests allowed me to avoid any confrontation.

Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and iMessage allow people in different spaces to communicate with each other as if they were together. Yet the convenience and expediency of virtual communication has detrimental effects. Since we aren't required to put in much effort in a virtual conversation, our ability to converse has declined as well.

Without being able to truly experience a conversation with another individual, our communication abilities suffer. The full impact of our words, whether positive or negative, aren't always understood on a screen. We tend to inaccurately gauge how the words we choose affect others, and thus fail to choose correctly. By the same token, it's difficult to accurately decipher what others are saying. Tones of voice, expression, and purpose are all lost through texting or through the use of social media to communicate, and we are only left with the residual words or images to speculate the extent of what we really mean.

This large potential for error also distorts people's social media profiles. There is virtually no pressure to get to know one another for our authentic values, fears, or identities when we can present ourselves as anyone we want. Actions like "ghosting" other people or hiding under the blanket of virtual invisibility become more apparent as the repercussions of practically cutting others out of our lives disappear as well.

In October, a combination of internal studies and documents divulged by Facebook researchers proved that many self-harming aspects of today's society, including trends of increased depression, eating-disorders, and even genocide, can be traced to Facebook and Instagram and the dangerous ease at which inaccurate content can reach mass populations.

Facebook and Instagram favored elites, wounded teenagers' mental health, and avoided solving human and sex trafficking, explained the reporter of the "The Facebook Files" Jeff Horowitz, who spoke at the John F. Kennedy Junior Forum this past month. "Tik Tok tends to be for comedic and talent performances; Snapchat is more for direct communication, and Instagram is just all about the body," he said.

The core issue with these apps, Horowitz argued, is that constant exposure to the most popular content leads users to make negative comparisons to their own lives. Facebook, well-aware of its plague on society's general sanity, only made efforts to resolve this issue once Apple threatened to remove both Facebook and Instagram from the App Store. As Horowitz suggested, these large corporations aren't looking out for the millions of customers they reach each day. They really only care about themselves, and how to further lure their users' addiction.

Social media is convenient. It's fun, exciting, and constantly stimulating, but it's arguably the biggest crutch our generation will have to face in the challenge to understand each other. If we keep "ghosting" each other whenever we suspect discomfort, or curate social media profiles and appearances to represent something we're not, the value of human connection will not only rely on false pretenses, but will also fail to save us if and when technology cannot.

Marbella Marlo '24 (mmarlo@college.harvard. edu) leaves read-receipts on iMessage.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

A Week, A Call, A Week, A Week, A Talk

Students with mental health issues face a long wait for help

BY MICHAEL KIELSTRA '22

15% of Harvard undergraduates have been diagnosed with a mental health issue, according to a 2018 HUHS survey cited in the July 2020 Report of the Task Force on Managing Student Mental Health. 11% were in treatment, and 46% (including over half of all women) had "concerns" about potential undiagnosed issues that they may have been experiencing.

Students struggling with their mental health have a number of support options. Many of these options run by peers or academic support personnel instead of licensed therapists, and hence cannot make certain recommendations. In some peer support groups this is expressly forbidden: Indigo Peer Counseling and Harvard Eating Concerns Hotline and Outreach (ECHO) are "non-directive" to the point that a student describing symptoms and asking if they matched with a particular mental disorder would not receive a yes or no answer. Such groups, along with the Academic Resource Center (ARC) and similar organizations, exist to support students, not to diagnose them, and are very aware of the risks of practicing psychology without proper education. Those who need more significant help, therefore, often have few places to turn but Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

This adds up to a high demand for mental health services, which strains CAMHS. According to the 2020 report, they increased their professional staff by around 40% since 2015, to a total of 47 clinicians. This has required careful planning. In 2018, after Cambridge police roughly arrested a Black Harvard student and the student advocate groups that arose in response called for greater efforts to hire Black and Brown mental health workers, Chief of CAMHS Barbara Lewis said that such

efforts would simply not be within budget. Even the new 24/7 CAMHS Cares telephone helpline, which one might expect to be a cost-cutting measure, was in fact funded by a donation from the parent of a College student.

The result is an organization which has developed a reputation, among students, for moving slowly. One junior told the *Independent* that "my friends aren't even wanting to go anymore because it [the wait] is so long and they have had to look for outside help." (To avoid publicizing who is and isn't in treatment for mental health conditions, students' names were omitted from this piece.) She also noted that her clinician was leaving CAMHS, which led her to believe that she would have to "start this process all over again."

Another student, who waited 1-2 weeks for their first appointment, pointed out that "I got an appointment really early because I had signed up for it in the beginning of August before school started. I know people who didn't and have to wait a much longer time." The *Independent*'s survey on CAMHS wait time satisfaction garnered few responses, but all of them were negative.

This is not to say that CAMHS is impenetrable. In 2019, according to the

task force report, the wait time for an initial phone consultation was under a week. However, these calls last only about twenty minutes, and it often takes much longer than a week to get a full appointment. In general, CAMHS seems to excel at helping students who are already mostly doing fine and just need a little extra support: they have a full calendar of workshops every academic year, and their urgent care appointments, advertised as a space for "reducing immediate distress and increasing problem-solving" and specifically "not 'drop-in appointments' nor… therapy appointments," can be requested for the same day.
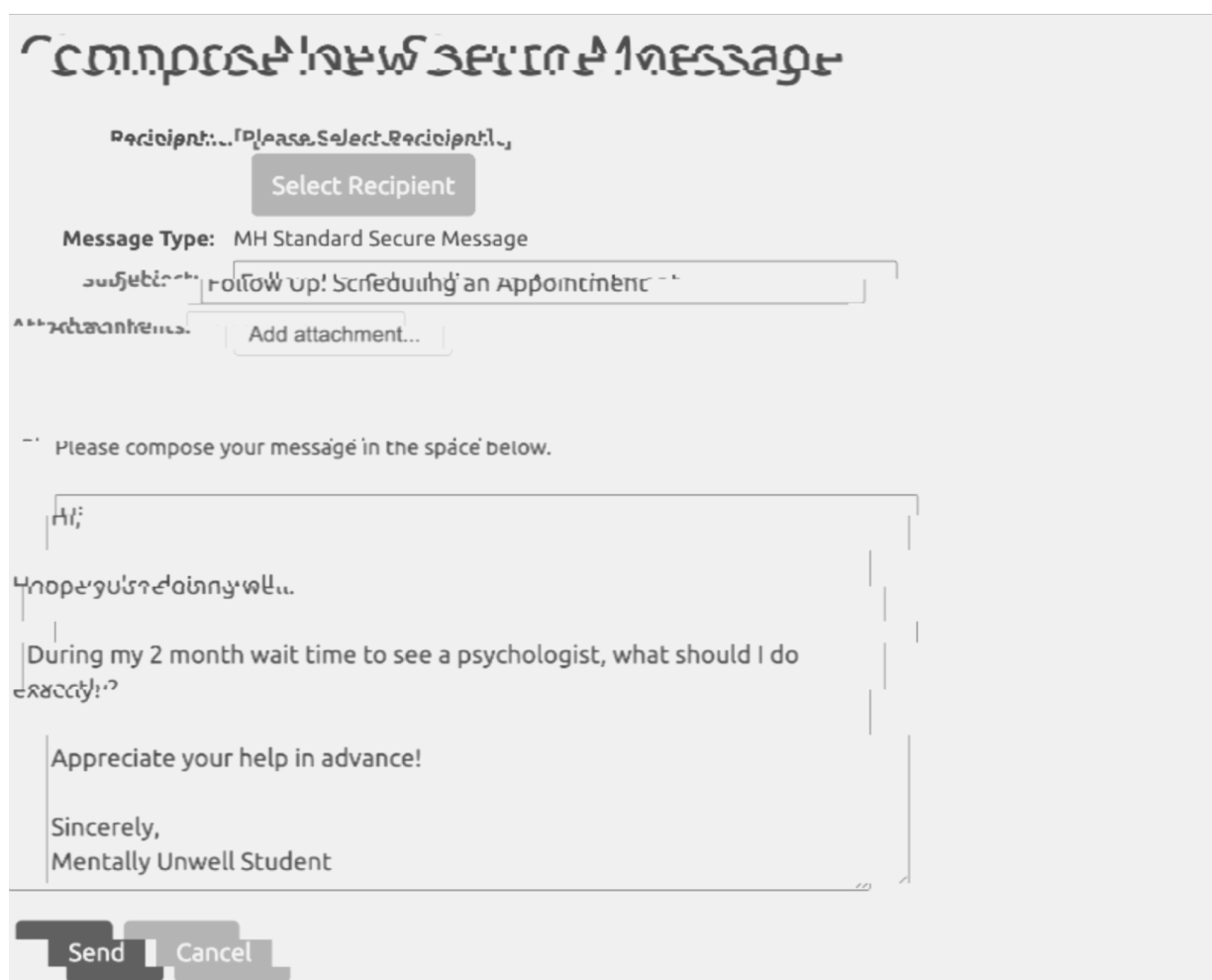
It would be easy, at this point, to dismiss CAMHS as too little too late, an insult to the students who need serious help. A more fair assessment would be that they simply do not have the resources to do everything they want to. Historically, they have not been shy about pushing for more: when HUHS closed its overnight care beds in 2015, the money saved was put towards CAMHS expansion. Students can only hope that some of this year's $283 million budget surplus will go to them. Until then, they will just have to wait.

Lewis did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) would like to point out that all you need to live safely in the COVID era is CAMHS: Cleaning And Masking; Hand Sanitizer.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

Early in the evening on Halloween, hundreds of Harvard students got an email with their "match." More than a month prior, each of them filled out a survey with a variety of very odd questions: *"Would you be okay with your partner making more money than you?", "How dominant or submissive would you say you are?", or "Are there any races/ethnicities that you would prefer not to be matched with?"*

This idea is not a new one. Started in 2017, the Stanford Marriage Pact combines computer science, psychology, statistics, and pseudoscience to match undergraduates through a proprietary system designed to analyze answers, generate compatibility scores, and help the user "lock down a life partner." Though it started as a school project, the creators have run the survey every year on different college campuses, including Yale, Tufts, Northwestern, and Duke. The Stanford Marriage Pact claims to have made almost 81,000 matches across the 62 campuses it has reached and also claims to be responsible for at least one wedding. However, inexplicably missing from its list of target colleges is Harvard.

The Harvard Marriage Pact, masquerading as a branch of the Stanford Marriage Pact, collected thousands of data points linked to every person filling out the survey, then seemed to simply disappear into thin air. After the Harvard Marriage Pact poster hit nearly every lamppost on campus, hundreds of unsuspecting undergraduates completed their survey. Then their website was taken down, no emails were responded to, and the Stanford Marriage Pact asserted to inquiring Harvard students that they were not remotely affiliated with the Harvard group.

"No bitch, we're not a scam," read the email students received from the Harvard Marriage Pact. "After the stupid Stanford Marriage Pact threatened to sue us for allegedly 'impersonating them,' we decided to go incognito while designing our super elite algorithm to match everyone who signed up." The Stanford Marriage Pact did not respond to a request for comment on this claim.

The students behind the Harvard Marriage Pact—two MIT students—now have a repository of Harvard students' data. Questions from their survey included: *How gay is the student body at Harvard? What do our sex lives*

look like—how kinky would we say we are? Really, how many people are conscious enough of their biases to tell a stranger that they'd prefer not to be matched with someone of a different race? Do we mind if our partners make more money than us?* There were also some odd psychological questions—*Would you run a red light if there was nobody around? Do you think you're smarter than the average Harvard student?*

Someone out there has a gold mine of Harvard students' information and, perhaps more importantly, the students handed it over without a second thought. In a world where the data and information industry in America is worth more than $40 billion yearly, does it really matter anymore who has access to data? This question has been at the forefront of many people's minds ever since society became enthralled by social media and all platforms alike.

"Remember Harvard Marriage Pact?"

Two MIT students gathered personal data of hundreds of Harvard students – but does that matter?

BY DANIEL ENNIS '25

Companies like Snap, Meta, and Twitter make

Dear Tom,

Your optimal Marriage Pact match is:

Amanda Singer
asinger@yourcampus.edu

Your match is in the 99th percentile of all other matches.

Drop them a line. In case you're looking for convo starters, we've got your back. For starters you were highly compatible on your **moral values, affinity for drama, desire for adventure** among other things.

billions by selling data to corporations such as advertisers, data analytics groups, and consulting groups.

Newer technology like 23andMe presents an even more convoluted question: millions around the world have, willingly and of their own accord, handed over their entire genome to a private company. The vast majority of them never read the privacy policy—in fact, research suggests only 9% of Americans have ever read a privacy policy. In exchange for seeing pretty maps colored in where my DNA says they're from, their literal genetic code can

be sold to other companies (though not on an "individual level," according to their privacy policy). Is this really so much different from what the Marriage Pact did? Perhaps more importantly, does it even matter? Could 23and-Me's customers be harmed from the sale of their information?

After their aforementioned rebranding, the Harvard Marriage Pact relaunched as exexex.io—a new dating website. The goal of exexex.io is to match the user with their "ex's ex's exes"—figuring they'd be pretty compatible in an "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" type of way. After filling out their "tell be about yourself you little freak" form—which asks for only the user's phone number, instagram handle, name, and a short bio—the user (in theory) can be matched with others after providing more information. Interestingly, their new website does not have a publicly accessible privacy policy posted on the main page of their website. Effectively, this means any information handed over to them is subject to whatever they would like to do with it.

Some look at the Harvard Marriage Pact as a fun experiment. One person went on a date with their match, another received a direct message from theirs and simply ignored it, another was matched with his current boyfriend, and another never 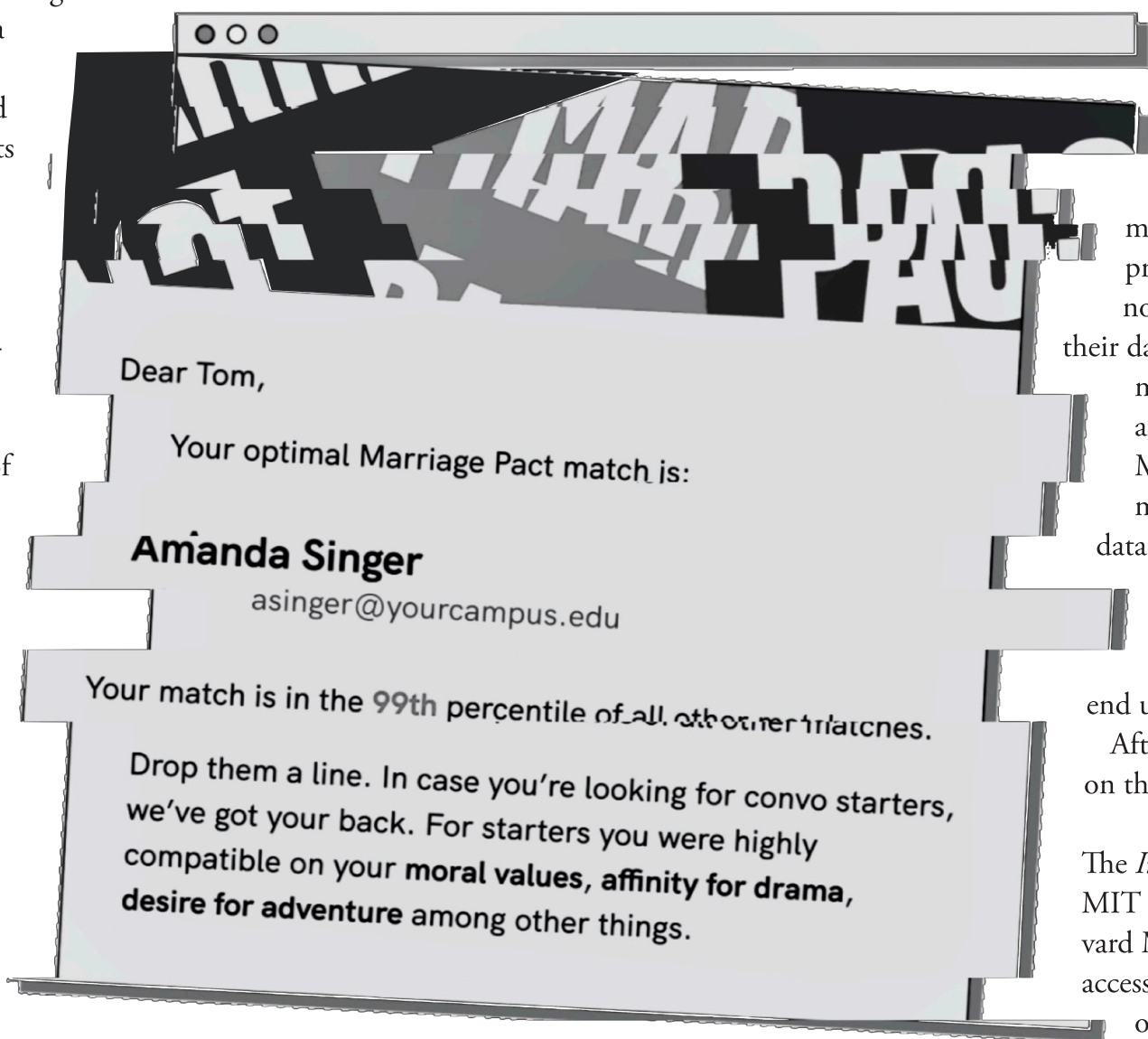came into contact with their match. Everyone has their own morality when it comes to the privacy of their data. Some have no worries about where and how their data is used, while others are mortified any time a website asks for their real name. Two MIT students—and maybe more—now have a plethora of data on Harvard students, with little to no legal restrictions on what they can do with it. We can only hope it doesn't end up being abused. After all, once you put something on the internet, it never goes away.

The *Independent* reached out to the MIT students who run the Harvard Marriage Pact with the goal of accessing the privacy policy on the original website, which would lend insight into exactly what the group claimed they had the right to do with the data. However, the student did not provide a comment.

Daniel Ennis '25 (djennis@college.harvard.edu) is also one of the suckers that got bamboozled by a couple of MIT geeks.

Original Graphic from MarriagePact.com

Q&A with Harvard TikTokers

The viral app's growing influence on our social media use and personal lives

BY CAROLINE HAO '25

TikTok, an app for creating and sharing short videos, has blown up over the past few years. Currently, it has over 1 billion users worldwide and has been downloaded more than 200 million times in the United States. The Independent spoke with four Harvard TikTokers who have amassed large followings on the platform: Brad Wolf '24 (@thebigbradwolf), Soleil Golden '24 (@toxicthotsyndrome), Ethan Kelly '25 (@ethanckelly), and Abigail Mack '25 (@a_vmack).

Do you remember your first viral video on TikTok? And can you tell me a bit about it?

Wolf: The first video I started getting a lot of followers from was one of me singing on a bus. I was on a choir field trip.

Golden: I actually started out as a Criminal Minds fan account. I watched a ton of it over quarantine and was so interested in it because I'm studying cognitive neuroscience right now. My first viral video was a scene of Aaron Hotchner ripping this guy to shreds in court. He profiled him and was like, "the color of your socks is charcoal gray." And he described how he got to that conclusion. I just thought it was so fascinating. So I recorded that scene and my reaction, and it got over a million likes.

Kelly: My first viral video was during a fire drill, and I decided to make a TikTok while everyone was evacuating. And people thought it was funny because I was making content in somewhat of a serious setting.

Mack: I posted my Common App essay. I read aloud the introduction, and that video has over 20 million views now.

Did you become popular overnight, or was it more of a gradual process? And did getting into Harvard change that?

Wolf: I'd say it was like a step function. There were certain moments that pushed me farther and farther each time. There was one video where I went from, like, 75k followers to 200k overnight. And I was blowing up right before I got into Harvard, so it was never really the focus of my videos.

Golden: I actually didn't become more famous after I got into Harvard because my account was a fan account. But as soon as I mentioned in casual passing that I was going to Harvard in the fall, everyone and their mother was like "stats video," "tell me what extracurriculars you did," and "tell me how much money your parents make." That's one thing that is so weird about the Internet—the level of familiarity people think they have with you. They'll talk to you and treat you like you're one of their best friends when you don't know who they are. So that's something I had to get used to.

Kelly: I rose to 600k within the first six months, and it's plateaued. And yeah, I think Harvard has made me more popular. I've gained, like, 40k followers since I've been here, which is about a ninth of my total following. The name definitely helps, I think.

Mack: I went viral pretty much overnight. I went from having around 10k followers to 100k followers the next day, and it just kept growing from there.

How do you think TikTok is shaping our social media use?

Wolf: My thought is that TikTok is good at capitalizing on the fact that people in our generation have a pretty short attention span. So this is where my statistics knowledge comes in. On TikTok, their algorithm gets a larger sample size because you're going through so many videos, whereas on YouTube, they just never get the sampling rate that TikTok does.

Golden: TikTok has destroyed my attention span. I used to be able to sit through 40-minute episodes of Criminal Minds and not have to be doing something else. But something about the 15-second video, scrolling and scrolling. It just gives you that sort of stimulation that you need.

Kelly: I think TikTok is becoming, like, a dominating social media force. It definitely is a very influential one. Other forms of social media are much more calculated. And this one is just much more casual.

Mack: TikTok really tends to dominate pop culture. And the trends have been moving faster than they moved ever before.

What has been the role of TikTok in your life here at Harvard?

Wolf: I don't make as many videos anymore, and my content is really sporadic and all over the place.

Golden: I kind of treat TikTok like a personal diary, where I just record little things that I do every day. Just my routine, like how I study and stuff like that.

Kelly: I think it's just a hobby of mine. It's a way for me to express my feelings about different things on campus or experiences I've had in college, share them, and see the public reception on that.

Mack: I like to create lifestyle videos and day-in-my-life videos. Just documenting my life and kind of pulling back the curtain on Harvard a little bit.

Do you have any commentary on Tiktok, social media, and Harvard?

Wolf: I don't think having a lot of followers equates to the fame that people think it does. Like, there's a difference between just obtaining a lot of followers over time and actually creating a brand for yourself. Because I have plenty of followers, but I don't get recognized on the street or anything. That's just because I haven't done a good job of really managing myself and branding myself. Like, if I could go back in time, I probably would've done a better job on that. But for me, it was just about sharing my art and having fun doing it.

Golden: I have met some of my best friends through that app. I've met people that go here through TikTok. And people have recognized me at school from TikTok. I think it's just a great way to connect with people your age or people with similar interests.

Kelly: I've had a good time using the app, and I still do. It's nice to get recognized sometimes by people. I think it's overall been a positive experience, at least specifically to Harvard, but also, it can be a very short lived experience. And you're actively working to ensure it isn't short lived every time you use the app.

Mack: The interactions here of moving in and knowing that most people know who I am was a weird thing to grapple with. When I first went viral, my friends who I already knew were like, "you were on my For You page," and "I read your BuzzFeed article," which was cool. But I don't think it really hit me until I moved in just how many people had seen my videos and then tied me to that. But I feel like I know a lot more people than I would have if I didn't already have that bit of a leg up in recognition. Everyone's just been really kind and it's only sparked friendships as opposed to having turned people off.

Caroline Hao '25 (carolinehao@college.harvard.edu) has discovered some of her favorite bands through TikTok.
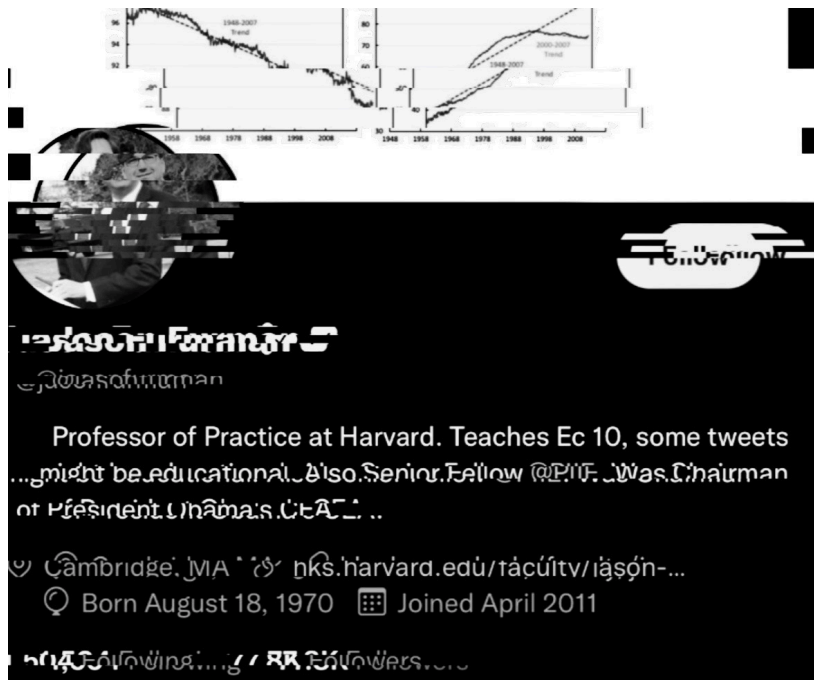
Original photos from Instagram.

Boomers or Zoomers?

Investigating Harvard professors' social media usage

BY ARIEL BECK '25

Have you ever gotten nearly 13,000 likes on a tweet? No? Me neither. Believe it or not, some of Harvard's most beloved professors have. Indeed, Economics Professor Jason Furman's most popular tweet has received 13.2k likes and 2.4k retweets—even more likes than Justin Timberlake earns.

"I try to generally stick to things where I bring a certain amount of expertise to the topic and have something to contribute," Furman says. He began his Twitter journey when he was encouraged to start a page during his time as the Chair of the Council of Economics at the White House. Today, he continues to use it for professional purposes, posting commentary on current economic and political issues such as President Joe Biden's Build Back Better Plan, US unemployment levels, and vaccination and tax policies. He engages with a much smaller audience on Instagram and Facebook to share aspects of his personal life.

Professor of Cultural Anthropology Erin Routon is also an active participant in social media. She began using Myspace and Facebook as an undergraduate student to stay in touch with friends and family, and is currently active on Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, and LinkedIn, which she uses at least once a day. "I like to share my own and others' publications, research projects, and poignant reflections on political issues relative to immigration and incarceration," Routon says. "Twitter has been an ideal place for me to connect with scholars at other universities, particularly those who work in similar realms of research."

Routon and Furman concur that the social media platform aids their professional development. Using Twitter is like "sitting in a seminar, only it's going on 24/7, and like a seminar, people propose amazing ideas that you may never have thought of," Furman shares. "I love that I can reach such a range of people from the very top officials in government to high school students."

Twitter has allowed him to focus on his field of study, economic policy. "Part of my goal is making changes in public policy," he says. "I believe that if people understand better, you will have better outcomes—it's not just about asserting things but explaining things."

But Twitter has its shortcomings. "I dislike the viciousness and the dunking on people," Furman comments. Agreeing, Routon says that the only way Twitter "substantively detracts from my work is when the content is actively harmful, thus, at times, affecting my mental health." This harmful content ranges from racists comments to homophobic and misogynistic remarks.

However, social media provides a space to get inspired and inspire others. Routon seeks to expose herself to conversations and debates that she might have not otherwise encountered. "This helps me in trying to become a better teacher, which I consider to be a continuous project," she says.

Both professors have assumed the responsibility of teaching others through social networking. "I don't want to just share my opinions," Furman shares. "I want to help frame the questions and help people better understand the issues." Routon also acknowledges the importance of using her network to display her work. "As a researcher as well as an instructor, I get to share my research with others."

And how does a professor use social media for fun? Furman spends his leisure time exploring accounts centered on classical literature, science fiction, and the Red Sox. On TikTok, Routon follows many creators: "I appreciate all of these people for their critical social insight and funny content."

While social media has increasingly taken over our everyday lives, personal connection remains of the utmost importance. Dean of Students Rakesh Khurana uses a variety of media platforms to communicate with the Harvard community. His popular Instagram page shares photos of his encounters with students

and employees almost everyday. "He sees his Instagram account as a fun and engaging way to highlight the vibrancy of life on campus," says Rachael Dane, Director of Media Relations. But "while social media makes it easy to share information, he much prefers meeting people in person," she adds. Although social media can help build a sense of community, in-person connections are hard to replicate—and are generally preferred by students and faculty alike after over a year of virtual learning.

As social media can be both a recreational platform and a detrimental space, Routon and Furman suggest students focus on using social media to their productive advantage. Many Harvard students are media-savvy, but perhaps they could be more media-conscious. "Trying to take stock of how a particular site is serving you, in your goals, as well as how it consistently affects your mental well-being, is important," comments Routon. She advises students to do this by "differentiating the ways in which particular spaces are productive."

Students can also use social media as a space for intellectual stimulation. "Make sure to follow people you disagree with, follow people that disagree with each other," Furman encourages. "Follow people who you can't quite predict what they are going to think about every topic."

Evidently, our professors have large digital footprints—but they seem to use social media constructively and not as a waste of time. Maybe Harvard students can learn a thing or two from them outside the classroom.

Ariel Beck '25 (arielbeck@college.harvard.edu) is studying her professors' social media strategies.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

Screenshots

BY ARSH DHILLON '23

Counter/Point: Tech Ethics

BY RYAN GOLEMME '23 & MICHAEL KIELSTRA '22

Point: Tech Ethics are needed now more than ever.
By Ryan Golemme '23

When I took CS50 in the Fall of 2020, there was a tacked-on ethics lesson in the final week as a part of the new Embedded EthiCS program, after we had learned all of the actual coding. It was two people flatly talking over Zoom, and though the whole thing was rather ho-hum, it was nevertheless a step in the right direction in educating people on the ethics of technology.

Some may exaggerate the effects of the internet on its users, but there's no denying that there are lasting issues with the design and use of many current computer technologies. The recent Facebook expose highlighted the platform's tendency towards spreading divisive content. The algorithms of Youtube often arbitrarily favor some videos over others, clickbait at best and controversy and creepy pregnant Elsa videos at worst. Online mobbing is almost cyclical, where people are accustomed to tagging employers and launching unconfirmed accusations that spread like wildfire. Just this week, Harvard students fell for a scam romantic matching website that got them to reveal their personal opinions and sexual preferences, all as a prank organized by MIT students.

Neither designers nor users are behaving well on some of the largest sites that affect much of daily life. Since computing and the internet are only becoming more central to life, and Harvard's prestige and resources give it a wide influence, it makes sense for them to take the lead in imagining and inspiring improvements in tech ethics.

On the design end, CS students can both learn how to design the fastest and most efficient algorithms, but also have stronger emphasis on the practical consequences of how and what things get amplified in doing so. Increased focus on data collection can help people think of better ways to balance usefulness while still respecting the dignity and privacy of users. The initial run of the program also focused on other aspects like universal user-design and discriminatory biases in machine learning that can help amend long standing social injustices. The program focuses on relevant and impactful areas of CS design, and pilot hiccups do not diminish their importance.

In fact, tech ethics lessons would benefit all students, not only CS concentrators. Proper conduct online, from not spreading unconfirmed statements, stepping back from joining outrage mobs, and a healthy skepticism towards giving information to unconfirmed websites would equip everyone for better using the internet.

Every instruction of ethics has some difficulties in teaching values without being heavy-handed or making students defensive, and it is true that many students and concentrations have their own pet ethical issues they would love to become mandatory. However, the expansion of computer and online technology has facilitated rapid and dramatic transformations in human living, infrastructure, and culture, and it looks to only intensify as machine learning expands. Though Harvard has largely abandoned mandating a core curriculum, expanding its Embedded EthiCS program would benefit designers and users as the digital revolution continues to transform the world.

Ryan Golemme '23 (ryangolemme@college.harvard.edu) a certified Discord dweller, is a writer for the Independent.

Counterpoint: Computer Scientists Aren't That Scary
By Michael Kielstra '22

I regularly meet people who are scared of computers. It isn't that they've given up on ever understanding them, although I meet people like that, too. They are viscerally scared that, if they do the wrong thing, the entire system will blow up in their face. As a response, they memorize exact sequences of steps to carry out very specific certain operations and call IT if anything goes wrong. They do not understand how their equipment works, and their response to any unexpected behavior is to freeze and tremble. Into this category of people I would insert whoever came up with Embedded EthiCS, a program envisioned by Harvard philosophers and computer scientists in which one lecture in participating CS classes is given over to the discussion of an ethical case study related to the material.

There is nothing wrong with Embedded EthiCS insofar as there is nothing wrong with the idea that everyone should learn ethics. My issue is with the other parts of the program's name: the embedding, and the CS.

The first problem is smaller. Embedding ethical considerations in otherwise CS-focused courses will probably not help students actually be more ethical in the moment. While ethics-in-CS training is sufficiently new that there is not much research done about it, we can easily look at a similar case of people trying to teach potential abusers to do better. A recent study (Dobbin and Kalev, 2019) found that sexual harassment training, such as the Title IX videos that we watch before every semester, did nothing overall to stop sexual harassment, and, in fact, made men more likely to blame victims. Telling people that their behavior is wrong, especially if there is no meaningful follow-up, makes them defensive, not open to change. A large, public classroom is the wrong environment in which to teach life lessons.

The more serious issue with Embedded EthiCS is that it is restricted to CS. This sends a very dangerous message to students of all concentrations. CS concentrators learn that they must be taught ethics; non-CS concentrators, that they need not be. There is only one possible conclusion to draw from this: that the program's administrators believe that computer scientists can do enough damage if they behave unethically that they must have their worst excesses reined in, while historians, chemists, and poets alike are weak and feeble compared to the terrible, overwhelming power of the algorithm. CS concentrators wind up with the weight of the world on their shoulders, and non-CS concentrators, already uncomfortable in a university -- and a student body -- that adores the tech industry and the money it brings in, are slighted once again.

It is good to behave ethically, and it is good to study ethics so that one may know how best to respond to difficult ethical situations. However, forcing the study of ethics on anyone helps nobody, and forcing it only on a selected few helps even fewer. The fears that led to the Embedded EthiCS program are, in the wake first of the Snowden revelations and then the backlash against Big Tech, tragically easy to understand. As always, though, understanding a wrong enables us only to forgive, not to condone.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) tries to be ethical.

Graphics by Arsh Dhillon '23

Technique: A Review

The Harvard Ballet Company's triumphant return to stage

BY MADDIE PROCTOR '25 AND CALVIN OSBORNE '25

It's not your typical Thursday at the Harvard Dance Center. Audience members swarm the double-doors, grateful for any respite from the chilly November night, and they are more than delighted to witness the first in-person performance of the Harvard Ballet Company in over a year. Jackets are shed, seats taken, and phones turned off. All eyes are focused on the stage ahead.

As the music swells, an iPhone screen lights up, not in the audience but on the stage. A dancer scrolls furiously through her phone, while the screen above her streams a feed of almost-too-perfect Instagram posts—airbrushed snapshots of pink tulle and slicked-back ballerina buns. Thus begins Act One, "Identities." It explores the relationship between technology and identity, making use of actual cell phones and pre-recorded segments to portray how people can find themselves lost, stumbling across the stage due to social-media-induced malaise.

Act Two, "Interconnections," investigates how technology is deeply integrated within our own lives. Dances in this act innovatively use lights, both through colored backgrounds and box lighter that emulate phone screens. Act Three, "Innovations," pushes the boundaries of ballet to explore what room there is for the art to evolve. Here, the robot finally emerged, a virtual dance between Harvard alumni Dr. Merritt Moore and her robotic arm Baryshnibot (nicknamed Botman and Robin), as well as a virtual day-in-the-life and a concluding company moment that highlighted the dancers of the night.

Technique is not solely a performance. It is a social commentary on the effects of technology and social media on the individual and society as a whole. The show is peppered with special effects (notably, a robot) which, paired with the technical ability and emotion of the dancers, offer a balanced take on the pros and cons of life in the technological age.

While the performers were incredible throughout the show, there were times when the choreography of *Technique* was too on-the-nose. After the third appearance of the cell phone in a dance, the exploration into social media seemed to have been exhausted. It was wonderful to see dancers from different campuses being highlighted in a virtual setting, but their appearances could have been emphasized by a stronger interaction with the physical dancers—something done exceptionally well in the parting wave of the dance "... skipped that step" between these two realms of performers on the stage.

What stood out most from the night were the acts that explored social media with nuance and creativity. The dance "and when we come face to face" featured the dancers on pointe, paired together with slow, lucid movements that evoked the intimacy of being, namely, "face to face." Meanwhile, "sugar plum fAIry" was a progressive modern dance juxtaposing a pair of ballet and break dancers as they weaved back and forth in competing pas de deux; and "Diablo Rojo" was one of the largest pieces that invigorated its audience through a latin dance, with performers whirling back-and-forth across the stage. In its best moments, Technique captured the nuance of how different feelings—intimacy, passion, dread, excitement—interact as we all return back from the virtual world of COVID.

At the end of the night, this performance was most significant for its dancers. Sophie O'Melia '25 described dancing as if she was "floating," as it is "a way to express myself without actually saying words." She dances for those moments where "you can hear a pin drop and it all feels fake, but in the best way."

Another performer from the show, Sophia Barakett '25, describes ballet as an "art form that asks a lot of you, even if it doesn't love you back all the time." After facing the disruptions of COVID-19 on her ballet training, she now can fully enjoy the art of in-person performance. "For a full year during COVID, I was training in my little apartment with my roommate because we had to do classes on Zoom, which was terrible," Barakett says. "When you're doing that every day for a year, with almost no light at the end of the tunnel, to finally have that reward of performing is really exciting." For these dancers who have devoted hours upon hours of their lives perfecting their craft, there is something incredibly beautiful about seeing them all return back to the stage again.

Maddie Proctor '25 (maddieproctor@college.harvard.edu) [tagline].
Calvin Osborne '25 (cosborne@college.harvard.edu) is only flexible when he needs to be.

Pictured: Payton Thompson '25
Original Photo by Daniel Huang '25

Texts, Threats, and Transparency

## How the Ivy League Bomb Threats Affected Students

BY MADDIE PROCTOR '25

You're a First-Year at Yale. It's a typical Friday afternoon. In between classes, you and a few friends decide to stop at Payne Whitney Gym for a quick workout. None of you are checking your school emails. Why would you? Most of the emails you receive are just fodder anyway.

Suddenly, you see a text in your group chat. A bomb threat? Before you know it, your friends on Old Campus are sending you videos of huge crowds out on the green, evacuating from dorms and academic buildings. You aren't allowed to return to your dorm, so you pack up your gym bag and head to a secondary location where you will wait for four or five hours before the threat is cleared. You aren't sure whether to take the threat seriously, but you decide to err on the side of caution. Maybe being at an Ivy League school makes you a target.

That was the experience of Matthew Lee, a member of Yale's Class of 2025 on November 5th, when the University received multiple bomb threats. Several law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, responded to the threats, and students were immediately evacuated. Eventually, the all-clear was given, but not before inciting a large amount of panic and confusion in the student body. Yale was the first in a series of multiple Ivy League schools that faced bomb threats that week.

Without clear updates on the situation, students were left to speculate as to the nature of the threats. "There were a lot of different rumors floating around," said Lee. He recalled that some students were very worried by the threats, particularly because Yale was the first school to be targeted. Others seemed to think it could have been "a pledge ritual for one of the frats or social houses on campus," he said.

Two days later, on the afternoon of Sunday, November 7th, three more Ivies received similar threats. Cornell announced multiple evacuations, followed by Columbia, which received the threats via Twitter posts, and Brown. Major news sources started to speculate as to whether or not these threats were connected, but there is no clear answer yet.
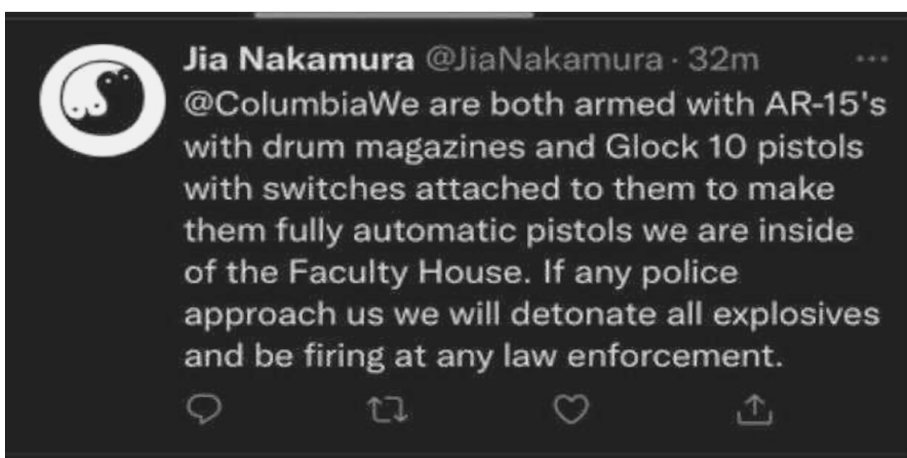
Students at Brown received a text message through the Brown Alert system that read: "Brown Alert: Brown and Providence Police are investigating multiple buildings on campus involving a bomb threat. All Main Green buildings, Rock/Hay, List, Lyman." Students were evacuated promptly, and updates were given throughout the situation until it was cleared. Brown University student Amanda Tabet '23 remembered sitting in her dorm room when she first learned of the threats and was not satisfied with the level of communication. "It was clear you had to evacuate the specific buildings, but they never really specified what proximity we should be relative to those specific areas," she said. "Also, I don't know how often people check those texts."

Most of the Brown students Tabet knows were not too disturbed by the threats. "Generally, people didn't really take it seriously because the way it was presented to us wasn't that serious," she said. One of her friends even wanted to go to one of the buildings from which students were being evacuated, but decided not to, only to avoid potential closures.

Tabet's concerns regarding the lack of communication from administration at Brown were consistent with the sentiments of other Ivy League students, including those whose schools did not report any received threats.

A student at the University of Pennsylvania, who asked to remain anonymous for fears of retaliation by the administration, said he heard of a bomb threat not through Penn but through a Facebook group. While Penn did not report any threats as Yale, Cornell, Columbia and Brown had done, the post seemed to spark rumors around his friends.

"I never received any official communication or email acknowledging the situation," the student said, only an article from the Daily Pennsylvanian (DP) discussing threats at other institutions. "Maybe Penn didn't receive a bomb threat," the Penn student admitted, but "given the fact that this is going on, specifically at multiple Ivy League institutions, it is enough for people to need to be informed directly. We don't all read the DP."

Students at Harvard have also not received any communication from University administration regarding the situation. It remains to be seen whether Harvard and its peer institutions will clarify the muddled information and improve their lack of communication. In the words of the Penn student, "You [the administration] are obviously aware of these threats, so why did you see them and decide it wasn't something the student body needed to know about?"

Maddie Proctor '25 (maddieproctor@college.harvard.edu) is tired of being left out of the loop.

Original Images found on Twitter

Does the UC even exist?

According to the IRS...

BY MCGAVOCK COOPER '24

"They need to get a lawyer. They need to get a lawyer and they need to get an accountant." That dramatic advice for the UC comes from Ivor Zimmerman '23 and Joy Lin '23, after they discovered some peculiarities in the Council's files during research for their Undergraduate Council (UC) presidential campaign. These peculiarities have sparked a government scandal that cuts deeper than the typical cover-up or conspiracy—the UC doesn't exist, at least on paper. Since 2008, the Council has not fulfilled constitutionally-required tax filings, raising questions about its future.

As article I Section 12.1 of the UC's constitution and bylaws states, "the Council shall be registered with the Commonwealth of Massachussetts as a nonprofit corporation." So when Zimmerman and Lin learned from a former treasurer that the UC hadn't filed for nonprofit status in a while, there was cause for concern. Sure enough, when they checked the IRS database, the UC was nowhere to be found. Zimmerman felt this was "kind of weird, considering how much money they handle, which can be half a million or more per year." Further digging discovered that the council had filed for 501(c)(3) status back in 1983; while they had been previously registered as a nonprofit, they aren't anymore.
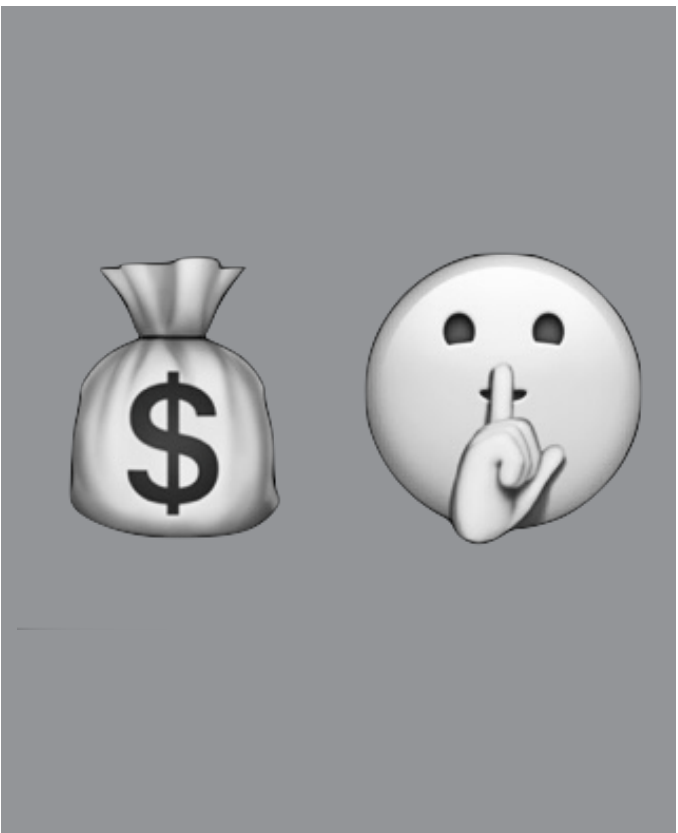
Zimmerman and Lin said they then discovered the UC's federal employer identification number (FEIN) in a corporate database, indicating that the UC had been registering and filing annually as a nonprofit corporation with the state of Massachusetts. However, they stopped filing in 2008, according to the UC's Business Entity Summary in the Massachusets state database. So now the UC is unfiled in the IRS, Non-profit, and corporate databases. Lin suspects that this break in filing was caused by election controversy and a change in DSO (Dean of Student Organizations) leadership that year, and the council hasn't fixed the problem since. So now, on paper, the UC is unfiled and unofficial.

Unfortunately for the council, they may never get a chance to fix this issue. Article I Section 12.4 states that, "If the corporation dissolves without a legal successor, then its residual assets shall be distributed among the house committees and the First-Year Class Committee." But while their own constitution demands that they now dissolve, current UC members feel that is unnecessary.

UC representative Travis Johnson was under the impression that the Council didn't need to file taxes. "We're an official student organization, so I think Harvard College does all of that," he said. The past administration's official position was essentially the same; "The UC is not officially registered as anything with the state government. The UC is an organization that falls under Harvard College and the school's status as tax-exempt. As a result, the UC has tax-exempt status." This position is technically "true" as the UC exists today, but still remains a direct violation of their constitution, and more importantly downgrades the power of our student government. Like *The Crimson*, the UC is officially an independent student group, meaning they have more control and autonomy but thus forgo the umbrella of the College; they have to do their own taxes. So while the UC could legally exist under the College's legal umbrella, they would have to become a dependent student group, defeating the point of an independent student government in the first place. The past administration's position violates their own constitution and undermines the Council's power to serve students. Even if the Council is legal in the eyes of the State government, it is not adequately fulfilling its responsibilities to Harvard.

If the UC does dissolve, they would be constitutionally required to distribute its fund of $500,000 to the House Committees (HoCos). This means that each House could stand to receive tens of thousands of dollars. Lowell HoCo representative Jonathan Zhang '23 believes this money would be put to better use than it is now. "I honestly think that the money best serves the house committee," he said. "For example, Lowell was able to host Glowell recently which was a huge success and was a much better allocation of money than the UC expenditures on quarter-zips and retreats." The HoCo are local, closer to the communities they are trying to serve.

Zhang described the possibilities that funding could create for the Houses, while also acknowledging they couldn't do it all alone. "Last year during COVID, Lowell Hoco created a small and large grant program and we have funded clubs for their social events as well," he said. "While there are issues like laundry subsidies that should be dealt with not on an individual level of the houses, the job that the HoCos do has a much more tangible impact on community building."

UC President-Elect Michael Cheng '23 thinks this issue is ultimately irrelevant, as "the UC won't exist for long anyways." Michael believes this filing fumble is one of the negative consequences of the UC's current size and complexity, and wants to "bring transparency and simplicity to the clubs finances." To do so, he plans to have a constitutional convention involving professors and students to replace the old constitution with one that is more accessible and legally sound.

Will the UC as we know it survive? Michael's planned convention and reform will decide the Council's fate, as he listens to what the student body wants. With 60% of students voting for an "anti-UC" presidential candidate, it sounds like they want change.

McGavock Cooper '24 (mcgavockcooper@college.harvard.edu) is a Staff Writer for the *Independent.*
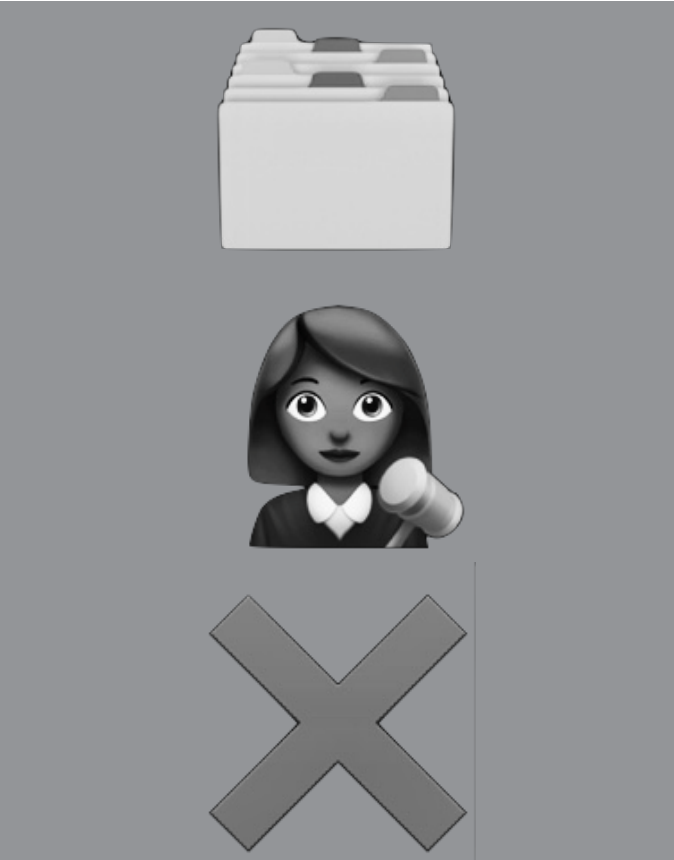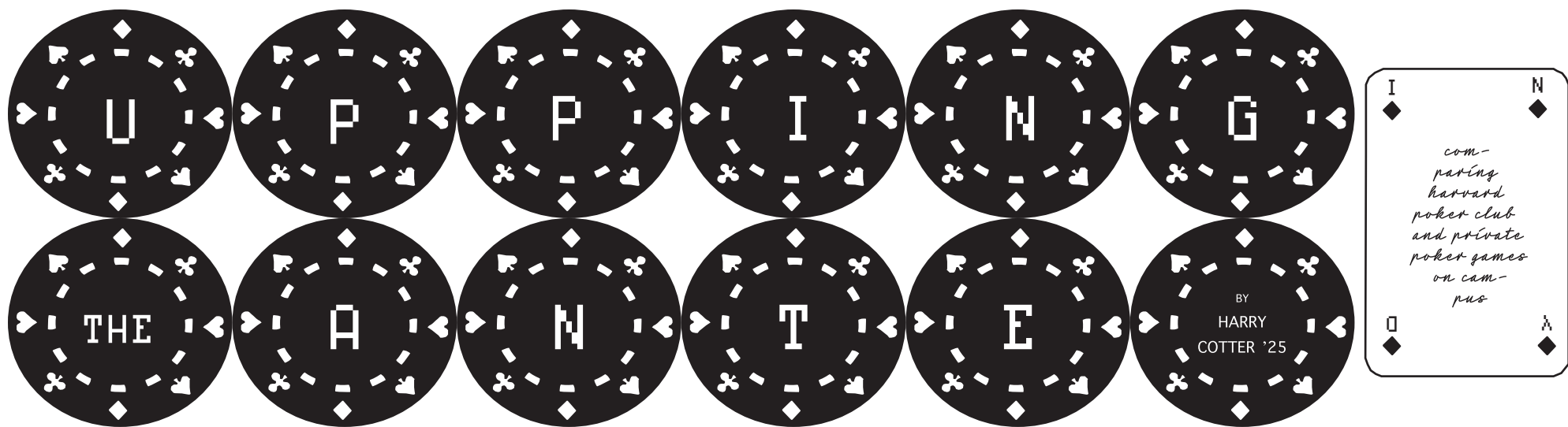
Poker can conjure one of two images for people: the risky, all-in gambler placing blind faith in the cards, or the analytical genius that carefully assesses risk and makes sure not to get in over their head. The Harvard Poker Club encourages the second kind of player, stripping away financial stressors and hosting games for all to enjoy. There are, however, players with the experience, money, or both that crave higher-stakes competition and organize their own private games on campus. Such players interviewed in this article have had their names changed for anonymity (if you're a poker fan, you may recognize some of the pseudonyms!).

The Harvard Poker Club is not here to take your money. Charlie Welch '24, a social chair on the club's executive board, said "the point of Harvard Poker Club isn't to be playing for huge sums of money each week. You shouldn't be buying into anything. That would break the philosophy of the club." The club does not require buy-ins for any of its events, handing out small prizes to the winners in the form of gift cards.

Welch drew a distinction between poker, which relies on complex statistical reasoning, and other forms of gambling. "We focus on poker because in a casino you have a whole array of games where you could lose money, but in a poker game you can just enjoy a card game based in math and strategy," he said. The club hosts workshops that specifically highlight different strategies and mathematical analyses new players can learn and utilize.

HPC accommodates players of all skill levels by setting up games for beginner, intermediate, and advanced players. "I had never played poker ten months ago. In the last ten months, I've gone from never playing to playing every week, meeting tons of friends, and getting on the executive board. On a personal level, the club was very welcoming," Welch said.

Money plays a very different role for HPC than for traditional poker players. Since the club never does buy-ins, the leadership must find sponsors that can help cover the cost of larger events and prize pools. This past Sunday was the first round of a tournament organized by the club and sponsored by Citadel, a large finance company. About 150 people signed up for the competition, which advertised a $2,000 prize pool.

Participants in the competition actually had the opportunity to attach their resume to the entrance form for Citadel to see. "Citadel itself has a large poker culture within the organization. They believe that the quantitative reasoning behind poker can also be used in finance," Welch said. Citadel also shows similar support for sports analytics and finance student organizations.

Corporate sponsorships don't find their way into the games attended by Johnny Bonomo '24 and Ike Badziakouski '25. They play outside of the Harvard Poker Club and put real money on the line, with Bonomo excelling in online tournaments and Badziakouski participating in high-stakes private games on campus.

Bonomo explained that tournaments have a greater ceiling for gains than cash games played with a small group. "I've won $4,500 in a tournament off of a $30 buy-in. In cash games, I've seen people walk away with $1,000 off of a $200 buy-in," he said. Bonomo and Badziakouski both confirmed that a $200 to $400 buy-in is not at all uncommon for private poker games at Harvard.

Badziakouski has gotten to see the full array of Harvard's poker players in private games. While he acknowledged that almost all players at the $200+ buy-in level have played lots of poker, he also emphasized that having plenty of disposable cash allows certain players to make questionable decisions in-game. "Skill and experience varies a lot. Some of the guys are definitely playing for fun, and to do that you have to be pretty wealthy. Some guy called it 'the price of fun,'" Badziakouski said. He explained that he's seen players lose up to $600 in one night.

Not all wealthy players will lay out their considerable means for all to see, but it definitely happens. "I sat down and there was a guy next to me with a $120k watch on. Do you know what a Patek Philippe is?" Badziakouski said.

All three players interviewed acknowledged the risks of gambling addiction, though they explained that activities like sports betting generally pose a greater risk than poker. "Some of the guys I know from sports betting have definitely shown more straight gambling behavior," Badziakouski said. Welch emphasized the importance of looking out for people you care about. "A good friend steps in when they see their friend falling into any kind of addiction," he said.

Commonalities of both sides of the poker scene were the social and intellectual aspects of the game. "It's a very social thing in both types of games. You do meet a lot more people in the poker club because it reaches a much broader audience," Badziakouski said. Welch explained that poker is similar to chess regarding the analytical skills required. Bonomo identified the emotional intelligence that is also developed through playing poker. "You've got to be able to make tough decisions when you have to. The main skill I had to develop was being able to let go, give up, and not lose too much money," he said.

Ultimately, the Harvard Poker Club and the private games on campus illustrate equally central parts of Harvard's identity. The club is the inclusive, accessible side that seeks to avoid risk and welcome all. The private games are the selective, daunting side that expects either considerable skill or a large enough bankroll to survive.

Harvard's entire image intertwines these seemingly incompatible attitudes. The college invites all to apply, regardless of test scores or difficult circumstances that have limited achievement. However, it also subjects applicants to a wildly rigorous admissions process that, while accepting many of the most talented students in the world, makes allowances for certain wealthy, well-connected individuals. Special considerations don't have the same ethical and logical strength for the elite as they do for the disadvantaged, but they are a reality. With the conflicting narratives at Harvard in mind, it only makes sense to wish the Harvard Poker Club the best and hope that more people take advantage of the opportunity the club provides to learn a fun game without having to worry about potentially prohibitive costs. Welch feels very optimistic about HPC's future growth:

"The more people you have, the larger and more exciting your events can be. It's a snowball effect where with more interest you get more sponsors, which builds more interest. We want to get as many people involved as possible, get people to appreciate the strategic elements of poker, and have a lot of fun." The Harvard Poker Club shares meeting and event information on most social media if you're interested in learning more about poker. If you're trying to find a private game, you're unfortunately on your own.

Harry Cotter '25 (harrycotter@college.harvard.edu) doesn't know how to play poker but thinks that having a Patek Philippe would be pretty cool.

Graphic by Arsh Dhillon '23

Five-Digit Number

PETER LASKIN '23

ACROSS

1 Suffragist Carrie Chapman
5 Carne _____
10 With 68-Across, HUDS seafood purveyor
14 Last member of the Yahi people
15 Food from a bar
16 What shouldn't go before a horse
17 USB stick
19 Continent with many stans
20 Mate mate?
21 Nimble
23 Currency in part of 19-Across
24 Wolfhound's warning
25 Note-taking device
27 Single-celled organism
30 Sounds of hesitation
31 Also
32 Quick eye movement
37 Centrist
43 Valuable sea snail
44 Coffee container
45 Stanford-to-Harvard dir.
46 Clouded (up)
49 What the name "Quasimodo" might do, if you know Quasimodo
55 Cult classic starring Weird Al Yankovic
56 Paleozoic or Victorian
57 Go a _____ minute (move fast)
58 Performing an action
61 Break into, digitally
63 Significant oath on the playground
65 Encouraging start?
66 First name in cosmetics
67 Miss, in Marseille
68 See 10-Across
69 Loved ones
70 Mathematical holiday celebrated 2/7

DOWN

1 Urban area
2 Athlete, author, and activist Arthur
3 Supreme Court justice Marshall
4 Musical tone quality
5 Home position for the leftmost fingers
6 Biblical wife of Abram
7 Verb that sounds like its result
8 Documentarian Attenborough
9 30 singer
10 H.E.R. and SZA's label
11 Hebrew Bible and Sleep, allegedly
12 Like the Sahara vis-a-vis the Amazon
13 Sheet music holder
18 Feature of a bee's stinger
22 Ooze, as confidence
26 Auto-tune pioneer
27 Cash dispenser
28 "L'état, c'est ___" — Louis XIV
29 On the waves
33 "You've got mail" ISP
34 Money managing exec.
35 Milk unit: abbr.
36 [I'm still here]
38 G-rated curse
39 Corner-shaped support
40 Place to catch flies
41 Were present?
42 RPG with orcs and elves
45 Puts into law
47 Birth control devices
48 "_____ what you got"
49 It might involve physical therapy
50 Furious
51 Human or ostrich
52 Who a Beethoven piece was fur
53 _____ hand (helped out)
54 LeBron James or Anthony Davis
59 Simba's sweetheart
60 Earl's follower?
62 Follower with Kit or Krazy
64 Proposer's hoped-for response

WE BELONG TO NO ONE BUT OURSELVES