

The Disorientation Guide to Final Clubs by Max Drummey

A final club is a specific type of single-gendered exclusive social group made up of Harvard students. There are eight male final clubs at Harvard: The A.D., The Delphic, The Fly, The Fox, The Owl, The Porcellian, The Phoenix and The Spee. Each of these clubs owns a piece of property in Harvard Square that is appraised in the millions of dollars. Additionally, there are five female clubs: The Bee, The Isis, Pleiades, The Seneca, and Sabliere. Of these, only the Bee possesses property in the square. Though most of this article will focus on male final clubs, it is important to note that the proliferation of female final clubs does not adequately address the injustices of the male final club system.

Though similar to fraternities, final clubs are different in several key respects. First, final clubs do not house club members. Second, final clubs are not affiliated with larger, national organizations. Lastly, Harvard University no longer recognizes final clubs as official campus groups, although this is only a recent development. Up until 1984, Harvard not only recognized but financially supported final clubs from the time of their inception, in that year the college gave the clubs an ultimatum: go co-ed or go private. The clubs unanimously chose to preserve their exclusively male membership.

Final clubs have a long history at Harvard, the oldest of them dating back to the 18th century. Over the course of each club's history, it has developed a network of graduates whose continued involvement in club practices and patronage toward club members shows these institutions to be much more than social organizations. The nepotism of club graduates has turned on campus social groups into far-reaching and powerful financial and business networks, both unabashedly partial and of their nature discriminatory.

By not allowing women into their clubs, final club members and their governing boards of graduates ("grad-boards") create unfairly gendered networks and social spaces alike. The atmosphere at final clubs is undeniably a hetero-normative and male-dominated one. This environment fosters not only sexism and homophobia but also, and much more troublingly, sexual assault. Though Harvard will not release figures revealing where on campus sexual assault occurs, in 2002 Assistant Dean of the College Karen E. Avery '87 told female first-years to be aware of "potential dangers that have been reported in regard to final clubs." Many women will not attend final club parties without groups of friends because of the intimidating environment they find inside. Large groups of women flocking to clubs together, though, by no means solve the problems they face inside.

Final clubs are sexist, self-serving and elitist institutions. And though hardly as discriminatory as they once were, it should come as no surprise that final clubs membership is largely heterosexual, affluent, and white. Not to mention of a single sex.

However, neither female final clubs nor co-ed ones are an adequate solution. Female final clubs are likewise exclusive and discriminatory. Co-ed clubs are likely to be as elitist as final clubs. They too would be more than just social clubs. Harvard's growing fraternity

and sorority scene begets many of the same problems. At other schools, students are provided with more neutral spaces on campus to congregate. Harvard has thus far failed to provide its students with such an alternative. However, this hardly means that there is nothing to do but go to final clubs. On the contrary, these clubs are just one facet of Harvard's social scene. And one should add that the only way to stop final clubs is to stop supporting them. Going to and joining final clubs means to tolerate the sexism, elitism, and nepotism that they facilitate. For the socially conscious Harvard student, these are institutions not only to avoid but to expose for what they are and for the unjust practices they perpetuate.

Facts on Final Clubs

FINAL CLUBS: The A.D., Delphic, Fly, Fox, Owl, Phoenix, Porcellian, Spee

Finals Clubs are male social clubs. Women cannot be members.

Men join the clubs through a selection process called “punching,” usually in their sophomore year. One Spee punch event was comprised of taking a bus to Wellesley College to play football, drinking vodka on the bus and looking at porn.

The clubs have a long history of affiliation with Harvard. Though they are privately owned, their records are kept in the Harvard archives, and until 1984, Harvard was including membership in yearbooks, and paying for their heat and phone services.

In 1984, the clubs privatized under pressure from Harvard, because they violate the school's non-discrimination policy.

They are now governed by “grad boards,” groups of club alumni who own the property.

The graduate inter-club council meets with Harvard administrators at least once a year.

Final clubs are privately owned, but sit in the middle of Harvard's campus.

They are comprised solely of Harvard men, and at least 10 % of Harvard males will belong to them at some point.

Studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice have shown that all-male social spaces are high risk environments for sexual assault.

Harvard administrators have warned students about sexual assault and Final Clubs. Dean Karen Avery said to the Crimson that she hoped to “raise freshman awareness to some of the potential dangers that have been reported in regard to final clubs,” including date rape drugs and sexual assault.

Some Final Clubs activities have included the Owl's demeaning “Catholic School-Girl Night,” and videotaping Harvard students' breasts, and filming women performing

fellatio and kissing each other in front of the camera.

The combined property values of the eight clubs is \$ 15,537,900.

The scheduled date of completion for Harvard's new student center in Allston will be 2019.

If you or anyone you know has experienced sexual assault, please contact the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response at 617-495-9100 or email osapr@fas.harvard.edu.