Peer pressure. It’s all around us in our current 24/7 consumer society. With the never-ending narratives of social media and popular trends, it seems impossible for a college student to stay immune from the grips of follower culture.

With Indiana University topping the party school rankings of major higher education publications like The Princeton Review and Niche Colleges, it’s important to ask how follower culture on a campus known for its vibrant social scene is seen through the eyes of its students.

When asked about what IU’s JB5K Color Run meant that windy Saturday morning in October, many students were unable to answer.

Some believe that events like these are merely the products of a pressure to conform while others think that it represents something greater within our new constantly connected society.

“Having a fun event that can remind us of a more serious topic is what has kept this event around for so many years”, says JB5K Committee Chair Alyssa Butler as participants ran in groups through the clouds of cobalt colored smoke behind her, “A lot of people who do the run, it’s their first 5k or first time they’ve done anything related to rec sports.”

Butler says the race is a way to commemorate the May 2000 death of IU student and Bloomington native Jill Behrman. While Behrman’s disappearance reached national news on shows like...
America’s Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries, Butler states that many aren’t aware of the true story behind the popular run.

“For a lot of people their friends did it, they heard about it on their floor, or just saw a poster on campus.”

Indiana Daily Student Photojournalist Victor Gan had another side of the story to tell after spending his Saturday morning shooting the event while getting drenched in the colorful smog that filled the air. When asked where follower culture is prevalent on campus, Gan stated that he was unsure how to answer.

Gan has shot many of IU’s premier student life events such as Welcome Week’s “CultureFest” and “Traditions & Spirit” and noted similarities between the events of Welcome Week and the Color Run. While both events are driven by a need for inclusion and a fear of missing out amongst students, Gan places an emphasis on looking at what makes these two events different.

“It’s definitely something greater”, says Gan while reflecting on the run, “It brings students together and it also helps to put more fitness,