

**Degrees of Intoxication:
drug use, biopower, and the acquisition of knowledge
at Swarthmore College**

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Abstract

The use of psychoactive substances are ubiquitous in the daily lives of students. Sugar, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, pharmaceuticals, and a variety of others are both commonly seen and discussed on college campuses. Discourse about these substances is often highly moralizing, examining them as aids to pleasure; however, these substances are integral to the daily work of college students, and effect their consciousness as they acquire knowledge.

This thesis examines drug use at Swarthmore College not as an attempt to gain pleasure, but as a manifestation of biopower. Through semi-structured interviews, discourse analysis of mixed media, and the inevitable participant observation that accompanies daily life at Swarthmore, this project outlines the drugs students use, their motivations for doing so, and how they conceptualize the effect of drugs on their bodies. It also examines these habits within the broader context of meaning associated with being an elite college student: how patterns of drug use engage with other facets of students daily lives.

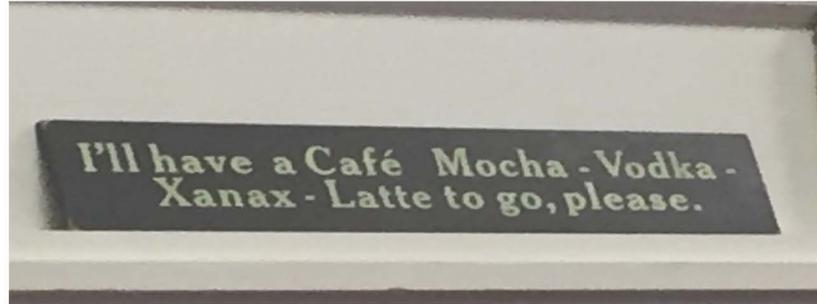
Ultimately, this thesis argues that biopower is essential for understanding drug use at Swarthmore. Students use drugs not only to feel good, but also to address daily pressures in an attempt to conform to community standards. These behaviors become incorporated into larger *habitus* which affect how students conduct the labor of “learning” while at Swarthmore, and likely carry on into their daily lives after they graduate. This may have profound implications for understanding elite workplaces not only as institutions composed of graduates of environments like Swarthmore, but also as sites with similar pressures, rules, and community standards that may engender similar behavior.

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Introduction:

“I’ll have a café mocha-vodka-xanax-latte to go, please!”



The sign above hangs above the counter at Vicky’s Place diner, a small mom-and-pop breakfast restaurant bordering the campus of Swarthmore College. I first noticed it in the spring of 2014 while getting breakfast with some friends. It registered just enough for one of us to make a casual joke about it: “They serve those here? That’s how I want to start my day!” I did not think about it again until nearly two years later, when—eating breakfast with my dad and trying to come up with a topic for my senior thesis proposal—seeing the sign again, and reflect on my initial reaction to it, raised an entirely new set of questions for me. Why was the idea of getting coffee, chocolate, vodka, and a prescription anxiety medication known to react poorly with alcohol normalized and even relatable to me as an undergraduate college student? More importantly, why would there be humor in the idea of starting my working day with a cocktail of these substances? How do coffee and sugar, substances generally associated with productivity, come to be grouped with Vodka, which is generally associated with binge-drinking, and Xanax, which is a treatment for depression?

While this sign pokes fun both at specialty coffee and at other chemicals workers consume in the U.S., all of the substances listed are used by college students regularly. At elite institutions where daily life is structured around productivity, this drug use also becomes centered around productivity. While the use of “proletarian hunger killers” (Mintz 1966) such as sugar, caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol are well established as staples of working life, students in these settings also employ prescription pharmaceuticals, marijuana, and hallucinogens alongside drugs more typically associated with work. Therefore, despite being the subject of ridicule, the idea of a “Café Mocha-Vodka-Xanax-Latte” was relatable to me because I was surrounded by people using these substances for work; it was desirable because it delivered them all in one place.

Research Questions

This thesis is dedicated to exploring the tension between the absurdity and relatability of the Café Mocha-Vodka-Xanax-Latte. How does this concept capture the nature of the range of psychoactive drugs students use as aids to doing work? How do students develop these behaviors? What degree of agency do students have in the chemical regulation of their bodies? And more importantly, as the nonsensical nature of this “super latte” suggests, to what extent is consumption of these substances by students considered deviant, and what might be potential implications of using a range of substances to do academic work?

Literature Review

In order to understand how, why, and to what effect students use drugs, it is first necessary to understand the systems structuring their daily lives. To do so, this project will draw on Pierre Bourdieu to examine drug use by college students at highly competitive schools as *habitus*, or “structuring structured structures[1]” that both mediate how individuals see and interact with the world around them, as well as defining and signaling membership in a larger community (Bourdieu 1992). Many of these practices and ideologies represent the broader influence of a “Spirit of Capitalism”, privileging productivity morally, culturally, and socially (Weber 1958; Weber and Kalberg 2011).

At highly selective colleges, the body, and particularly the brain and mind, are critical sites where the struggle for productivity is waged. In addition to determining how students perceive their surroundings, they also are the tools employed in the daily schoolwork of college students, as well as a major source of investment, where individuals store the skills, habits, and ideological frameworks learned in college. One of my informants described his mind as his “mental machine”, which he could use external substances, among other things, to manipulate at will. Another described her brain as the “medium through which she interfaces with her surroundings.” Harvard psychologist and philosopher William James provides a framework for integrating these two approaches: “...our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without

suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation"(James, 1902; 388).¹ For my informants and for James, consciousness is neither normative nor consistent: it exists on a spectrum, and is subject to influence by a range of forces. Psychoactive drugs compose a diverse toolbox of approaches for *regulating consciousness*, which are adopted and ingrained into students' larger habitus.

To achieve success at highly competitive universities, students have to jump through a variety of hoops on a daily basis. Doing homework, participating in extracurriculars, receiving awards, expanding social networks, getting good grades, meeting prerequisites, getting summer internships, and working campus jobs are all examples of activities that students might not find meaningful in and of themselves, but contribute to an end of getting a well-paying job or acceptance into a prestigious graduate program. This is the *game* of college, and while often they may lack intrinsic motivation, students must follow the rules in order to obtain what they see as eventual happiness (Blum 2016). The incorporation of chemical use to modulate how one exists in the world helps students respond to the domination of their social worlds by these capitalist ethos, by modulating them to meet to community standards and expectations around production.

The use of drugs to cope with the stress of nonconformity has been well documented. William Dressler developed a model of *cultural consonance*, which he

¹ Sincere gratitude to Zac Arestad '17 for introducing me to James' discussions of consciousness.

uses to measure the physiological effects of deviancy, which have been shown to correlate with high blood pressure and hypertension(Dressler 1991; Dressler, Baliero, and Dos Santos 1998). Essentially, “individuals who fail to achieve their cultural ideal of success report higher levels of perceived stress and suffer greater levels of adverse health outcomes, such as elevated blood pressure” (Singer 2008, 225). Medical Anthropologist Merrill Singer documents demonstrates that poor people in the US “use drugs like alcohol, [and] tobacco...because they provide solace, even if for a short time, from the daily social stress of perceived personal failure and associate feelings of damaged self worth... because drug use is stigmatized...the solace drugs bring comes with a significant price. As a result, life for a drug user often is a vicious cycle of perceived stress followed by self-medicating drug consumption and resulting social stigmatization and sense of damaged self-esteem (which triggers the desire, again, for solace from drugs” (Singer 2008, 226). While the intensity of this relationship is not the same in elite college students as it is for struggling individuals in impoverished communities, this analysis is helpful for framing a commonly reported dynamic among elite college students. Drugs are used to cope with the emotional strain caused by failure to uphold community standards of success, as well as to cope with the subsequent stigmatization of drug use as deviant. These dynamics are extremely prevalent in highly competitive universities as students juggle competing academic, professional, social, and emotional expectations

However, as I have hinted at earlier, students use a wide range of substances to aid in their “labor”, and as hinted in the tension between the hilarity and

desirability of the Café-Mocha-Vodka-Xanax-Latte, substances used by students having varying levels of *relative cultural licity*(Singer 2008). Some practices students develop are not considered acceptable at Swarthmore; some are at Swarthmore, but not in the outside world. In all cases, *relative licity* depends on variables including the temporality, geography, medium, and social context of the chemical consumed, as well as the audience. The use of sugar, caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol has often been accepted and even encouraged to facilitate the doing of or recovery from labor (Mintz 1966; Minz 1986; Roseberry 1996; Smith 2005). Drugs such as Marijuana, hallucinogenic mushrooms, LSD, and prescription pharmaceuticals are less acceptable study aids in the US; while ordering a Café-Mocha on the way to class is common-place, drinking vodka or taking Xanax against prescription alone or in combination would be wildly deviant. For students employing practices that violate community standards around drug use, a vicious cycle is created, as the use of drugs to conform to norms around productivity are deviant in other ways. Students often actively understand and attempt to manage these tradeoffs.

This thesis attempts to analyze the extent to which drug use at elite colleges as a manifestation of foucauldian biopower, as it traces how individuals do or do not use substances to conform to norms of productive citizenship defined by the their community. It also examines how students are also disciplined for using or not using substances based upon the role of the substance in increasing or decreasing productivity, and the role of college policy in facilitating consumption(Bourgeois 2000; 167). Finally, it also aims to outline the implications of institutional drug use as embedded in working cycles during and after Swarthmore.

To do so, I will examine narratives of conformity and resistance via drug use that already exist via the nearly ubiquitous “Work Hard-Play Hard” framework pervading elite college campuses. These logics portray use of prescription drugs, caffeine, sugar, and other stimulants as students gaining control: “Working Hard”. Meanwhile, recreational and social drug of alcohol, street drugs, hallucinogens, and marijuana constitute conformance to a temporal period which is considered a “time out” for adolescents as they transition into adulthood. “Playing hard” is a release. Students are seen to engage in this cycle of “Work Hard-Play Hard” as a necessity of conforming both to new pressures, as well as age specific social roles and cultural expectations(Quintero 2009; Blum 2016).

One way to conceptualize this relationship is through the concept of biopower: “the ways historically entrenched institutionalized forms of social control discipline bodies” (Bourgois 2000; Foucault 1975). This can play out very literally – Heroin use is policed both legally and socially because it is perceived the threaten social citizenship, while Methadone use is tolerated and promoted because it is seen as enabling productive citizenship(Bourgois 2000). However, what can be harder to trace are the ways in which subjects come to embody biological norms through drug use, as power is not easy to place, but rather diffused through habitus.

Margaret Lock and Vin-Kim Nguyen’s discussion of “Normal Bodies” and “Local Biologies” provide a more detailed lens to analyze how this power is exerted. As western biomedicine evolved over the 19th and 20th centuries, medical discourse came to objectify the human body as a series of mechanisms, which can be identified and traced, providing a classification for the standardization of the body. With the

introduction of statistical modeling technology over the second half of the 20th century, regimes of healthcare came to be oriented around the “normal body”, or the statistically average body based on these standardized categories: to be normal, or average is also “to be...normative (what it takes to be healthy), and is also...equated with what is morally right (the range where individuals ought to be” (Lock and Nguyen 2010, 32-33). The “normal body” imposes standards that inevitably create conflict: not only does what is “average” vary depending on the constituents of a community, but individuals experience “physical sensations” differently based on their “local biologies”, informed by the product of own unique physical characteristics as well as their own embodied experiences (Lock and Nguyen 2010, 90).

Drug use provides a mechanism to reconcile the tension between one’s individual biological characteristics and models of normality based in statistics, fulfilling the moral compulsion to be “normal.” As readily accessible tools, psychoactive drugs provide the means for “citizens of the postmodern world [to] reject one of life’s ‘givens’ after another”(Lenson 1995, 187). As drugs become a mechanism to act on these moral imperatives generated in the formation of the “normal” body, Biopower is exerted by the institutions determining what it means to be “normal”.

As my participants will describe in Chapters 3 and 4, being “normal” extends beyond conforming to certain standards of health. One facet of normality is the social complexity of the body. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock discuss the body as having three components: the physically lived body-self, the social body, or

body as symbol for communication, and the body-politic, or control of the body to conform with cultural regimes and values. They also define emotions as the key to the relationship between the body-self, social body, and body politic (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987, 6-41). Thus, for a body to be “normal”, it must be normal biologically, normal in the symbols it signals to others, and normal in the ways it submits to control.

Another factor complicating college student conformity to a “normal body” is that for some communities, the “average” or standard is not normal, but exceptional. For Swarthmore students, intelligence and ability to work are expected to be well above an “average” college student; thus, at times community standards are more desirable than the “norm.” I will refer to these embodied characteristics as the “ideal body.”

Gilbert Quintero’s explanation of polydrug use in regimes of “work-hard play-hard” as a mechanism for college students to conform to conflicting prescriptions of being illustrates this exertion of power from diffuse structures. In Quintero’s analysis of polydrug use, or the use of combinations of drugs at the same time or in sequence, he argues that students at a public university in New Mexico utilize drugs to conform to expectations regarding increased responsibility but also increased freedom accompanying a liminal period between youth and adulthood (Quintero 2009). While Quintero’s explains polydrug use through “cultural prescription to embody risk-taking, experimentation, and role-maintenance”—which I argue can be seen as biopower – he argues that these expectations are derived and generated for young people in college settings. My

thesis will argue that, at least for students at elite undergraduate institutions, cultural expectations for youth certainly play a role in their drug use. However, these behaviors are neither bounded nor fully explained by age, and have implications for students long after graduating.

What sets Swarthmore students apart from Quintero's analysis is their seemingly voluntary engagement in and reproduction of participatory regimes of over-work known as Self-Entrapment. In a 12-year ethnography of Wall Street investment bankers, Alexandra Michel describes how investment bankers collectively construct work practices that "[habituate them] to indiscriminate overwork that they experience as self-chosen" (Michel 2014, 514). This entrapment led to "bodily breakdowns and cultural distance", which impaired bankers' abilities to advance their goals, and even after recognizing the harm caused by their overwork, "carried this pattern of overwork and subsequent breakdowns into the organizations that they joined subsequently, where they introduced the banks' practices(Michel 2014, 514). The working practices Michel defines that "mutually constitute" self-entrapment(2014, 515) are easily mapped on to the working practices of Swarthmore students, and while Michel's study does not directly discuss drug use, the use of caffeine, alcohol, and pain medication as substances accommodating the body to this grueling work are all mentioned. Applying this framework to Swarthmore explains resistance to alternative methods of treating student stress, and suggests that at least, for students at elite colleges, "work-hard play-hard" culture is not simply a product of age: these are not behaviors that students will grow out of, but are deeply embodied.

Furthermore, many industries that Swarthmore students frequently enter possess their own “ideal bodies” to which members conform through drug use. For physicians, alcohol use is rampant in facilitating the emotional distance required to produce the medical gaze. For computer technologists, LSD and other hallucinogens have been interwoven as a crucial component of embodying the creativity needed to imagine the alternate universes they create in their products. Finally, for bankers, addictive behaviors including partying, painkillers, and caffeine facilitate grueling regimes of work, representing perhaps a more extreme version of “work-hard play-hard.” While this thesis does not follow Swarthmore students after graduation, understanding how the students learn to produce their bodies through drug consumption to meet community may shed light on how they adopt and reproduce these systems.

This thesis will argue that while “Work-Hard, Play-Hard” culture is a compelling framework for viewing drug consumption at elite colleges, they are not the result of cultural ideas surrounding age, but are institutionally cultivated both formally and informally. At schools such as Swarthmore, the party culture characterized by play is a necessary part of reproducing cycles of work that are mutually constituted by different branches of the school. The dominance of this unit of analysis obscures the voices and agency of students resisting narratives attributing their work and play to their youth. In addition, the potential ramifications of the habitus of consciousness regulation enveloping labor and recovery are severe; students are well aware that the drugs they use while doing work and relaxing can and do have adverse impacts on both the work they produce

and in some cases, their health. For my informants, participating in these regimes of consciousness regulation was often a daily struggle, but conformity outweighed concerns about results and consequences. This illustrates a disturbing mindset indicating potential harm both for these individuals, as well as for those who their future work may effect.

Participant Observation: the ramifications of “Insider” ethnography at a small liberal arts college

To answer the research questions that I posed, I used several methods. In addition to conducting a literature review, I did a discourse analysis of newspaper articles in the Swarthmore newspapers *The Phoenix* and *The Daily Gazette* beginning in 2013 up until the present for content related to drugs, as well as analyzed media commonly accessible on campus, including popular paraphernalia sold by the bookstore, as well as the Student-Produced Orientation Play. Additionally, I underwent the Swarthmore College’s Departmental Human Subjects Review process to conduct 11 Semi structured interviews with current students. I received permission from the Office of Student Engagement and the Department of Public Safety to waive my Resident Assistant role as a required reporter in my role as a researcher. I solicited informants for two weeks through the Swarthmore Reserved Student Digest, an email based electronic bulletin board, collected informed consent, and randomized all transcriptions by a code number, for which they key, as well as the paper consent forms, were kept in a locked drawer in my residents. All students interviewed have been assigned pseudonyms, and identifying details have been

obscured. In the interest of arbitrary randomness, I have assigned them names of Professors in the Sociology and Anthropology departments. The section that follows will explain why I chose to use these methods, and the ethical challenges that I faced along the way.

Perhaps rather cliché, a classic goal shared by sociology and anthropology has long been: “...to make the strange familiar, and to make the familiar strange”: my engagement in this endeavor has been to ground my questioning of the relationship between expertise and psychoactive chemicals in the most fundamental lens determining my own view of the world at the time of writing this and in the immediate past: the experience of being an undergraduate college student at a highly selective live-in residential college. From the fall of 2013 to the time of writing these words, I have inherently been a “participant-observer”. “Living” as a Swarthmore student, I have shaped and been shaped by the Swarthmore community, Swarthmore culture, and Swarthmore rituals. My closest friends, peers, coworkers, and dare I say, family, over this period of time have also been constituents of the college. The ideas shaping the questions I asked in this thesis have very much derived from our respective experiences, and have been cultivated from extensive conversations with students, alumni, faculty, and staff, as well as my experience as an employee of the college, working as a member of the student academic support team, the admissions office, and as a Residential Advisor. As such, I am deeply personally connected to the stories living in the following pages.

While I believe my personal connection to the subjects about which I write facilitated both my understanding of cultural phenomena within as well as provided

unique access, which I will discuss later, balancing multiple identities as a student mentor, employee of the college, colleague, friend, and researcher in a geographically and numerically condensed community constrained the parameters of my research. Many of the behaviors I discuss are not legal, and those that are may be frowned upon by certain audiences, despite being common knowledge among the student body. In the interest of protecting my sources of data, this thesis is not my story, that of those closest to me. While the Office of Student Engagement and Swarthmore Public Safety determined that my reporting duties as a Resident Assistant could be waived in my role as a researcher, in order to avoid a conflict of interests, my informants were not selected through any of my networks of preexisting relationships. The experiences analyzed over the course of this paper were selected from respondents to a recruitment flyer that I posted in the campus online newsletter, *The Reserved Student Digest* (RSD), most of whom I had never met before this project.

I chose informants in this way in an attempt to negotiate between my dueling roles as a researcher, one critically examining aspects of daily life to this environment, and on the other an “insider”—a member of the community whose experiences provide valuable insight into the ways that “knowledge” comes to exist in the 21st century United States. Anthropologist Kirin Narayanan writes against the idea of “insider” anthropology, and proposes instead a “...focus on shifting identities in relationship with the people and issues an anthropologist seeks to represent.” For her, “ ‘Objectivity’ must be replaced by an involvement that is unabashedly subjective as it interacts with and invites other subjectivities to take a place in

anthropological productions. Knowledge, in this scheme, is not transcendental, but situated, negotiated, and part of an ongoing process ...(that) spans personal, professional, and cultural domains(Narayanan, 1993; 682). Selecting informants self-responding to a recruitment flyer for students thinking about they ways they regulate their own consciousness in daily life was rooted in “inviting” others like me interested in reflecting on and analyzing personal and cultural practices of drug use; mediating our relationships were a variety of shifting shared experiences as Swarthmore students, and a desire to elevate student voices into a broader societal discourse surrounding and student life. It is my hope that our collective situated and negotiated knowledge will shed light on these phenomena at Swarthmore, and conversely, provide frameworks that can be applied to the world outside the “Swat Bubble.”

In addition to the 11 semi-structured ethnographic interviews that I conducted, I drew data from a variety of other resources and mediums inspired Hugh Gusterson’s employment of *Polymorphic Engagement* in studying the powerful to highlight how Swarthmore students characterize “Swat” culture, and how they conceptualize drug usage as an integral component of their daily lives. In *Liquidated*, an ethnography of Wall Street, Karen Ho samples from Gusterson’s formulation of Polymorphic engagement to study investment bankers. This includes “interacting with informants across dispersed sites, not just in local communities, and sometimes in virtual form; and it means collecting data eclectically from a disparate array of sources in many different ways [such as]... formal interviews...extensive reading of newspapers and official documents...careful

attention to popular culture.(Gusterson 1997, 116)"" Ho adds "informal social events outside of the actual corporate office or laboratory" to these techniques.(Ho 2007, 19)." As I will argue later, in an environment invested in training the next generation of global leaders, data collection techniques tailored towards the powerful are necessary for penetrating the inner worlds of Swarthmore students. Over the course of this thesis, I will draw upon official college paraphernalia student, written newspaper articles, online comments sections, college-sponsored and unofficial social rituals, mass student emails, social media, and the College's Orientation play as data to supplement the testimonies of my informants. This multimodal methodology is aimed at gathering a much broader range of experiences than I could hope to access simply through participant observation.

In sharing my approach to data gathering, it is also necessary to discuss the data I neglected. My position as a participant observer gave me extraordinary access to the daily experiences about which I am writing; I literally lived, eat, study, work, party, and use the bathroom with potential informants. However, in the interests of maintaining my various roles in the Swarthmore community, I chose to draw rather clear boundaries between Tom-the-researcher and Tom-the-college student. Because my role as a ethnographer could not be easily identified by my "otherness" in campus spaces, and because Swarthmore College is a small community in which individuals are easily identifiable based on few details, I chose to avoid "participant observation" in my data collection. This does not mean I ever stopped thinking as a researcher in daily life, quite the contrary, but any data I present from my own experiences will be focused on me as a subject, rather than

those around me. Thus, I will not be providing thick description of fraternity parties, or Science Center Coffee Bar right before it closes at midnight on weeknights in the interest of both respecting the privacy of and protecting the identities of my interlocutors. It can be drawn from the testimonies of my interlocutors and public discourse on drug use that consciousness regulation in “hard work” and “hard play” are a regular feature at Swarthmore, but these behaviors are not my primary concern.

Likewise, I considered consulting Josh Ellow, Swarthmore College’s Alcohol and other Drugs Counselor and Educator, but ultimately decided against approaching him. My reasoning behind this decision was ultimately one of scope; I knew that I wanted to privilege the voices of students in this paper. I have reason to believe that Josh has an invaluable perspective on the total breadth of drug usage at Swarthmore, as well as key insight into the experiences of students disciplined for drug abuse as well as those seeking council over their relationships (or lack thereof) with drugs. However, it was unclear to me how to include his voice as a lone “administrator”, as well as an intermediary interpreting the experiences of other students. The areas that I anticipated needing his guidance the most—helping me to understand drug usage at Swarthmore in its entirety—now seem insignificant to the larger goals of this paper. My goal is ultimately to outline some of the *habitus* present and produced at Swarthmore that connects both work and drugs, and to examine them as a site of conflict between individual agency, cultural norms, and institutional biopolitics. The tensions motivating every day decisions that students make around how to modulate their neural chemistry has tremendous importance

for their physical well-being, emotional well-being, and the work that they do. When that labor is learning how to become an expert, the stakes for everyone else escalate as well.

Mapping the thesis for mapping drug use: an outline for the rest of this thesis

Based on the accounts of my informants, I will argue that institutional biopolitics become mapped onto the bodies of students through drug use, as they struggle to uphold community standards of productivity and success. In chapter 1, I will focus on how Swarthmore College institutionally reproduces different understandings of citizenship, and the role of drugs in this citizenship. I will examine the Orientation play as a rite of passage that socializes incoming students into the particularities of Swarthmore culture, and use it as a medium for examining Swarthmore norms around drug use and work. I will draw parallels between the Karen Ho's *culture of smartness* that defines Wall Street and a culture of smartness at Swarthmore to show how membership in the Swarthmore community is continuously defined and redefined as a product of exclusivity and brutal hard work. Students are simultaneously lauded as exceptional and reminded of lucky they are to be there. These unrealistic community standards make conformity hard to achieve and a reoccurring struggle, while also reinforcing students' identities as leaders and change-makers. These dynamics may have severe implications for Swarthmore graduates that have internalized psychoactive substances use as a mechanism for meeting community standards and coping with stress as they go on to be experts in a variety of fields.

I will illustrate how Swatties² come to conceptualize their physiologies as a tool that can be manipulated in order to address immediate and reoccurring needs. I will then discuss how individual drugs become important tools in addressing specific needs. Finally, I will explore how students view drug use as a component of larger habitus around labor, and examine accounts of the evolution of my informants' behavior.

In chapter 2, I will outline the actual drug use that my participants discussed engaging in, and outline the different roles that those behaviors fill. Through analyzing literature and the voices of my subjects, I will demonstrate that Swarthmore students come to conceptualize substance use in relation to work, and that they use drugs to manage their time, energy, and emotions to conform to the working standards set at the college, as well as manage the stress that that conformity produces.

In Chapter 3, I will explore how alcohol and other drugs are used to address stressed produce from deviancy, and in particular, how binge-drinking socially, or “playing hard” comes to be viewed as an exception to other modes of self-care that Swarthmore students are less likely to engage in. I will show that the working habitus that Swarthmore students develop constitute Self-Entrapment, participatory work structures through which individuals come to devalue their own self-care in relation to work. I will show that partying exists as exception to this entrapment because cultural narratives present alcohol consumption as an integral part of the college experience, and that being drunk makes it harder for students to

² Slang term for Swarthmore College Students and Alumni

work. Finally, I will discuss strategies students use to navigate tension in between differing community standards surrounding acceptable drug use both within and across the “Swat Bubble”.

In Chapter 4, I will conclude by examining drug usage at Swarthmore as a mechanism of biopower, a conflict being waged over students’ neurological chemistry at an individual level, and argue that due to being embedded in habitus, these behaviors are not bounded simply to this stage in student’s lives. I will examine the Swarthmore Drugs and Alcohol policy as the nexus between at times conflicting sets of institutional priorities—those of Swarthmore College and those of the US Federal Law—which I argue are ultimately rooted in different understandings of productivity. Ultimately, I propose that the “work hard-play hard” paradigm is one fostered and reproduced by elite academic institutions because it facilitates conformation to stressful work environments and toxic daily routines; “Playing Hard” is positioned as the necessary reward or counterpoint to working hard, but violates legal and moral regimes both within and external to the college. Students ultimately bear the brunt of this conflict as stress, as it etched both into their physiologies and ways of life; I will outline here the stakes in shifting policies, and I will also describe the implications of future research exploring how drug use as habitus may travel from elite undergraduate institutions to future workplaces.

In the true spirit of anthropological inquiry, these findings come with more questions than answers. The parameters of this project were limited; it seemed evident that the political control exerted through drug use has particular gendered, racial, and class dynamics, but I did not explore this line of inquiry both in the

interests of protecting the identities of my informants and because I lack the statistical background and time necessary to engage in a methodology prepared to make sweeping claims. Further research at Swarthmore could take a more guided approach, looking for connections between these and other variables, such as class year, academic discipline, and dorm of residence. Common discourse on Swarthmore's campus leads me to believe that there is insight to be gained by looking at the similarities or differences in drug use between athletes and non-athletes, as well as at the difference between drug use within and outside of the fraternities.

On a macro-level, while this project does not intentionally follow graduates of Swarthmore College in their future professions, it seems likely that alumni of Swarthmore and similar institutions working in “White Collar Sweatshops”—Investment Bankers, Tech professionals, Medical doctors, and Politicians—may exhibit similar patterns of drug use because of the intense nature of the work required and their (relative) insulation from legal ramifications of illicit activity in roles as “experts”. Examining biopower at work in these fields is of the utmost importance, not only because there are urgent consequences on lives of individual workers, but also because the physiological effects of the substances experts use in their daily lives help define the knowledge that they produce and reconstitute in their daily work. While “drug abuse” is often considered a matter of life and death for addicts, here what is at stake could be much larger: it is the nature of how reality itself is constructed on a national and global scale.

Chapter 1:

Producing Leaders for the Common Good: The goals, structures, and daily practices of a Swarthmore education

“Since its founding in 1864, Swarthmore College has given students the knowledge, insight, skills, and experience to become leaders for the common good.”³

The very first line of the “About” page of the Swarthmore College Website provides a very clear definition of the purpose of a Swarthmore education, and is a narrative which constantly permeates the Swarthmore community, from the rituals of the orientation process including first collection, to that of commencement. Through the cultivation of different values, Swarthmore as an institution produces individuals with the expertise, sharpness, and judgment to create change: in other words, through their cultivated knowledge, natural smartness, and enlightened ideals including diversity, inclusivity, and equity, graduates while at the college develop the moral legitimacy to create meaning.

This mission is situated within a broad set of confusing and at times, conflicted set of goals and requirements for tertiary education in the United States in the early 21st century, that produce certain patterns of behavior in the pursuit of abstract, big picture goals that may at times seem contradictory. In her book *I Love Learning, I Hate School: an Anthropology of College*, Susan Blum outlines some of the more idealistic as well as pragmatic aims: to develop well rounded-citizens, as a coming of age ritual, scholarly achievement, and saving the world, as well as getting a job, obtaining credentials, signaling and sorting based on merit, training for a career, and ultimately as a return on an investment.(Blum 2016, 78).

³ Swarthmore College, “About” <http://www.swarthmore.edu/about>. accessed 11 October 2016

While Swarthmore claims to churn out “leaders for the common good,” its position as an institution of higher learning within the United States presents a separate set of demands. Blum invokes Paul Goodman’s analysis of the university as a “machine” from the 1960s to describe such demands in contemporary higher ed in the U.S., which argues that the main goal function of Universities is to turn out “educational products” through certain institutional logics and policies(251-252). Swarthmore students will not be transformed into “leaders for the common good,” or even learn, by meeting these requirements alone; in order to do so they must learn how to play “the game” of higher education, simultaneously meeting institutional demands while nurturing their own intellectual and moral development.

Narratives about a Swarthmore education often focus on this production of “Leaders for the Common Good,” or largely what Blum describes as ideological goals of higher education, but they rarely address the pragmatic goals that students must meet in order to graduate, in the daily process of playing this game. These goals include the pursuit of credentials, the need to be sorted to stand out from peers by potential employers, obtaining relevant training, as well as the ability to wake up again and be a student the next day, which can include diverse needs such as maintaining certain grades, the relief of stress, or earning money to continue to attend school. As the broader ideological goals of a Swarthmore education may shape a value for and perception of academic prestige, intellectual intensity, and social consciousness, the practical reality of the reproducing daily life as a Swarthmore student creates *habitus*, structured ways of being, that as an essential

component of being a “leader for the common good,” entrench and reproduce themselves in the work that Swarthmore students do. Simply put, the ways in which Swatties approach their daily lives shapes the work that they do, during and after school: self regulation to certain community norms through the use of drugs is no exception.

**Orientation Play, Disorientation:
Rituals and Rites of Passage and Consciousness Regulation at Swarthmore**

So what is Swarthmore culture and how is it formed? It is important to note that there are different interpretations of Swarthmore culture; it is not ubiquitous and varying sub-communities within Swarthmore culture share a wide range of differing, and at times, conflicting values and practices. Furthermore, Swarthmore culture, like any other, is not static; it is constantly shifting within and among the community as Swarthmore students constantly redefine themselves against the other. For the purpose of this thesis, I will treat culture as an act of meaning-making; in the words of Arthur Kleinman and Peter Benson, “Culture is a process through which ordinary activities and conditions take on an emotional tone and a moral meaning for participants.” If this culture composes the commonality binding Swarthmore students as a group, transition into and out of the group are punctuated by rites of passage, and group-ness is continually redefined through ceremony(van Gennep et al. 2013). These rites of passage provide insight into the making of meaning among Swarthmore students in a way that simply being one lacks.

Nina Some of these rites and rituals are emblematic of higher education as a whole. As Susan Blum describes, undergraduate education in the United States is characterized by multilayered and at times competing goals (Blum 2016). Students are expected to learn the technological expertise to contribute to join an increasingly globalizing workforce, but also the cultural practices and value systems to be recognized as fully-fledged adults (Blum 2016, 1-20). This role places the undergraduate experience as more than just a degree, but as an elaborate set of rites of passage, as adolescents are prepared to join the ranks of an educated, upper-middle class. For those at highly competitive universities, these rights of passage are often oriented around joining an exclusive community of the global elite.

Ritual, ceremony, and rites of passage have long been considered integral to the ways that individuals position themselves as members of groups; put another way, understanding and engaging in these social structures are integral to the *habitus* individuals form and to the *cultural capital* they display. To quote Arthur Van Gennep:

"Wherever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make up the apprenticeship in our trades. Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semi-civilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred." (Van Gennep, Vizedom, and Caffee 2013)

These Van Gennep defines as *rites of passage*, which can be subdivided into *rites of separation*, *rites of transition*, and *rites of incorporation*. These rituals can exist simultaneously as rites of passage and as rites with specific and multitudinous

purposes, which can occur in juxtaposition to one another and be intertwined.

Finally, while the meaning with which these acts are imbued is symbolic, the level at which the sacred permeates or defines this rituals is amorphous.

Throughout the completion of their bachelor degree, students at live-in, residential colleges exist as liminal subjects,. In his analysis of liminality in elaborating on Van Gennep's discussion of rites of passage, Victor Turner defines liminal subjects as "betwixt and between" social structures, and existing in complete equality with one another and complete submission to their instructors, whose authority is expressed as the 'common' good" (Turner 1987, 7-9). For undergraduate college students, daily experiences are radically removed both from their previous stage of adolescence and from the transition into the work force to come. Furthermore, as liminal subjects, students are taught to follow new value systems, develop new practices, and understand their relationship to the world around them in new ways: in essence, new *habitus* are ingrained. The ways in which students conceptualize and regulate their bodies are no exception to this metamorphosis.

Psychoactive substances are incorporated into these evolving regimes of existence through a series of social rituals and rites of passage. Gilbert Quintero notes that the social life of drugs, especially alcohol, permeates common collegiate social activities including parties, drinking games, spring breaks, tailgating or other athletic events, and homecoming activities(2009, 41). While athletic events and homecoming activities are noticeably absent from Swarthmore College, a variety of culturally important rituals center daily practices of consciousness-alteration, and

more importantly, the larger arc of rites of passage integral to membership within the Swarthmore community provide a more explicit narrative of possible relationships for students to develop with their own consciousness regulation, and it is impossible to discuss this range of traditions without first addressing new student orientation.

Orientation is a distinct rite of passage that all incoming Swarthmore students (the vast majority of which are first year college students) share at the beginning of each fall semester that explicitly emphasizes the liminality of these new community members. Throughout the week, students not only move into their dorm rooms, register for classes, and sign up for work study positions, but experience a series of workshops, meetings, and gatherings in which older students in a variety of peer mentorship positions, administrators, professors, and other staff explain values, traditions, and unwritten rules of the Swarthmore community. New student orientation disseminates not only the technical knowledge to navigate the campus, classes, and daily life, but also the cultural knowledge necessary to distinguish orientees as full students.

Indeed, United States higher education writ-large is institutionally structured by ceremony and ritual, and this impacts the modes by which Swarthmore students incorporate drugs in their daily lives, as well as the cultural systems within which they are situated. However, there are a series of specific rituals and rites that are understood explicitly as common pillars of uniquely Swarthmore culture, and these interact with the general ritual of the contemporary US college to mold the specific schemas through which students understand the role of drug use within their daily

existence. This process takes many forms, and new student orientation as a rite of passage into the student body is key to understanding some of the common frameworks that Swatties share.

New Student Orientation, the Orientation Play, and Disorientation: How an introduction to Swarthmore shapes “Drug” culture

New Student Orientation at Swarthmore College, perhaps intentionally, fits very literally into Victor Turner’s framework for defining a rite of passage, and presents compelling evidence for understanding how students develop an understanding of the social role of drugs on campus. Turner outlines several critical elements that are integral to defining such social transitions. First, all rites of passage have three phases: first, separation, second, a state of liminality in which the position of the subject is in flux, and third, aggregation, in which the ritual subject is incorporated as a full member of the group into which they are transitioning: in the words of Turner, the ritual subject is then “... in a stable state once more, and by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards.”(Turner 1987, 5) Turner goes on to define liminality as the most important stage of the transition; separation and aggregation are merely states of conformity to social structure. Liminal bodies are not necessarily visible as such, but are at times referred to by titles emphasizing their transition rather than

the states they are between, such as “initiate” and “neophyte”; at Swarthmore, the words “Spec”⁴ and freshman (like many other schools) often fill this role.

Liminal subjects are secluded from the culturally defined, stripped of distinguishers beyond their state of liminality, and “...nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows.” Liminal subjects also share a highly egalitarian social structure with one another, but an extremely rigid social structure between themselves and instructors, characterized by “complete authority and complete submission.” In the words of Turner, “the authority of the elders is absolute, because it represents the absolute, the axiomatic values of society in which are expressed the “common good” and the common interest.”(Turner, 1967, 6-9).

Between 2013 and 2016, new student orientation has directly fit this model. First years and transfer students separate from their previous social environment, leaving their homes around the world, and arriving at campus where they are segregated from the rest of the student body, that does not return until the next week. In addition to having no returning students on campus, during orientation the entire campus is considered dry. Over the course of that week, new students are divided up into orientation groups based on their residential communities, and each group is assigned several older students in leadership positions including Residential Advisors (RAs), Student Academic Mentors (SAMs), Green Advisors (GAs), and more recently, Diversity Peer Advisors (DPAs) and Orientations Leaders (OLs). These older students both formally and informally serve the role of instructor or elder, and are tasked with shepherding new students from event to

⁴ Swarthmore Slang for Prospective Student—a current highschool student that is visiting the college.

event, relaying the rules and social norms of the college, and facilitating workshops on topics such as “healthy relationships,” “diversity,” and “alcohol and drugs”; outside of their specified duties they serve as resources to students, answering questions and enforcing rules within their communities. At the end of Orientation week, older students return to campus, and the normal routine of the semester begins with class; however, campus is still formally and officially “dry” until the Saturday after the start of class, on which the Orientation play is held as a performance of Swarthmore culture, and the Disorientation party marks the official end of new student orientation.

Major Key to Success: Rites of Passage during Orientation Play

The Orientation Play, traditionally occurring either at the end of new student orientation or after the first week of classes, models Swarthmore culture to incoming students as upperclassmen act out rites of passage and ceremonies integral to Swarthmore college by portraying a group of “freshmen” who encounter a variety of dilemmas common to Swarthmore. The Orientation Play originally conformed extremely well to the Rite of Passage of Orientation; first created as a vehicle to deliver information to the first year class from administrators and with mandatory attendance exclusively for first-years, the play was very much a top-down container for delivering culture. In 2014, the play was turned over to a panel of students to administer, giving them the agency to perform what they believed was essential to Swarthmore culture, and the play was shifted to the week after Orientation formally ended; while no longer “officially” part of Orientation,

attendance among first years remains high. While existing outside of the official orientation structure, the Orientation play is considered an integral part of joining the Swarthmore community that is by and for the students.(Meyer-Lee, 2016)

The Orientation Play both presents a narrative of culture on Swarthmore's campus as perceived by current students, as well as a framework for newcomers to the community to interpret their experiences. A unique nature of the Orientation Play is the dialectical relationship in which it coexists with Swarthmore campus culture: its content is generated from returning students, but is modeled both to perform and generate cultural change for new students. Put simply, the students directing and acting in the play are very aware of the culture they both seek to represent and generate. Simon Bloch, a director of the play in 2016, illustrates this, saying: "I think the play means different things to different people...it might provide first years the context or reinforcement for ideas encountered during orientation: ideas like consent, roommate conflicts, unfair assumptions, gender pronouns, gender non-binary, achieving a healthy work-life balance, sex positivity, asexuality, healthy substance use, and many others." Kendell Byrd, another co-director in the same year, directly spoke to the teaching aspect of the orientation play: "One of the big messages is to show first years, new students, transfer students what the Swarthmore community is about. Providing all the fun and awesome and serious aspects of Swarthmore all on one stage."

This is especially effective because it *keys* first year students into important cultural systems by which to understand their surroundings. Erving Goffman defines a key as "...the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already

meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else”(Goffman 1974, 44-45). More thoroughly, keying is composed of a “systemic transformation... involved across materials already meaningful in accordance with a schema of interpretation, and without which the keying would be meaningless”, Participants which know and acknowledge this change is taking place which dramatically alter meaning for them, and cues establish the beginning and the end of this transformation. In the case of the Orientation Play, actors key freshmen as liminal subjects and students in leadership positions as their mentors, the dorms as both work spaces and party spaces, drinking alcohol and group studying as integral social activities, feeling out of place as “the admissions mistake”, competing to see who has the most work as playing “misery poker”, “Pub night” as a party space, a stress relief, and a study break all at the same time, and Paces parties become necessary to recharge between school weeks. While keying is also important to understanding other aspects of Swarthmore culture, these are some of the predominant forms it takes throughout the Orientation Play.

Both the written content and the play as well as the commentary of performers directly address drug use as keying new students as to how it fits in with the rest of Swarthmore culture. According to Max Marckel, an actor playing the Residential Advisor character in 2016, the play has three main messages: “Number one: that everyone is a worthwhile person; number two: to take care of yourself, and number three: to take care of others.... That’s touched on in a lot of different aspects, like take care of yourself while drinking, in terms of work that you have, take care of

others in terms of consent, in terms of respecting where people come from”(Meyer-Lee 2016). Drug culture in the play is further represented in primarily four ways throughout the play: as a social lubricant necessary for making friends (equally valued to the cultural capital of knowing transnationalist Post-feminist theory), as a tool for studying longer, smarter and better, on a weekly basis both to cope with the stress of the pace of work as well as fear of failure, and as a means to recharge from that stress.

Alcohol culture appears in one of the first scenes of the play, clearly as a social lubricant, but also coexisting in the same space as schoolwork. Zack and Billy, two roommates, have just met each other, when Zack suggests that they push their two desks together to make a beer pong stadium. While Billy says that he would rather use his desk as a desk, this interaction sends a key message that living spaces at Swarthmore can be used both for work and for parties. Almost immediately after, some acquaintances of Zack’s show up and Zack invites Billy to a party with alcohol. Billy declines, and then invites Zack to a study group. They both leave for their respective events, and then have regrets, fearing that they will not be successful unless they develop the cultural capital demonstrated by the other—in Zack’s case, learning to “deconstruct contemporary social hierarchies” and in Billy’s case, “getting schwasted.” This duality is further reinforced later in the play, as Zack is telling a story to Maya, another character, Zack says: “So then he chugs the vodka and pukes all over my problem set. I had to stay up all night redoing it.”(Bloch, Byrd, and Charo 2016, 18). In this scenario, not only is there a social space in which both alcohol and homework are present physically simultaneously, but also

temporally- Zack goes from partying to pulling an all-nighter redoing his school work. This presents a framework by which both diligent and voluntary schoolwork, as well as inebriation, are important means of interaction to indicate membership within the Swarthmore community(Bloch et al. 3-4).

The play also establishes other rituals involving substance consumption as necessary for combatting the stress and existential dread induced from schoolwork. In a rap reprimanding the freshmen for playing *misery poker* (essentially, comparing who has the hardest work load), the Student Academic Mentor, or SAM, says that students go to Pubnite to cope with stress.

"School is hard and then you're done. That's why we have fun!

Cuz you never know where your grades will go.

School is hard so take it light! That's why we pub night.

Cuz you never know where your grades will go."(Bloch et. al. 19)

In this performance of a rite of passage, the Student Academic Mentor is literally telling the freshmen a collective way to deal with the academic pressure of Swarthmore is to attend PubNite, a weekly ceremony on Thursday evening where students drink beer, play drinking games such as Beirut and flip-cup, and dance. Through this performance, new students watching the play are keyed to see PubNite not only as a party, but also as a healthy (or at least socially acceptable) way to maintain their work-life balance, and as a necessary part of caring for themselves.

This reframing of party spaces as an integral phase in the flow of work at Swarthmore is further compounded in the way the Orientation Play treats weekend Paces parties. Directly following the scene in which Lesley is reprimanded for

complaining about his work and stress, Lesley's roommate, Alex, suggests that they go to a Paces party and get drunk to relax—in particular, to get “riggity-riggity-wrecked.”(Bloch et al. 21) Other characters come to Paces to reconcile interpersonal conflict, or as an escape; in the case of the RA, the Paces party is framed as one of the only places that the RA can take a break.(Bloch et al. 25) Ultimately, the RA in the orientation play, speaking directly to the freshmen characters, leaves them with one message: “respect your fellow classmates, take good care of your minds and bodies, and remember that no matter what, you are all worthwhile people.”(Bloch et al 35). However, alcohol becomes implicitly bound up in that message, and keyed as a welcome and even necessary medium to address stress and conflict at Swarthmore.

Disorientation, Aggregation

The final symbolic stage of the rite of passage into Swarthmore culture is a party known as “Disorientation”, typically held by the two fraternities, that is held the first Saturday after the beginning of classes. Marketed as the first big party of the year, it officially marks the end of “dry week”, the period of time beginning with orientation that students on campus are expected by the administration to be substance free, and beginning in 2016, commenced immediately following the orientation play. Disorientation serves as the symbolic end of the aggregation period, as not only is “dry week” over, but also have an event to socialize with upper classmen as equals, marking the transition of freshmen into full members of the Swarthmore community. Furthermore, it presents an opportunity to finish

participating fully in the activities generally associated with contemporary US colleges; at this point, freshmen will have attended classes, had the opportunity to sign up for clubs or work study programs, and met athletic teammates; all that is left is to party. Disorientation is explicitly seen as catering to the rite of passage of attending a “Normal American College with Real Parties”(Herron 2015).

“Anywhere Else it Would Have Been an A”: the Culture of Smartness at Swarthmore

In addition to modeling how Swarthmore students should approach drugs for incoming students, the Orientation play also keys frameworks for how work should be done, as well as how students should view themselves in relation to that work. This relationship is embedded in the narrative of “producing leaders for the common good”, and orientation is the beginning of an induction into an elite community which sees itself and is seen in certain ways. This self image both informs the nature in which Swarthmore students go about doing their work, and conversely, the work they do informs the image; in this way they mutually re-inform one another.

In her ethnography of Wall Street, Karen Ho discusses a “culture of smartness” which both serves to constitute members of Wall Street as a group as well as imbuing them with the authority to restructure the world around them. While Swarthmore students are not investment bankers (yet), the Orientation play provides a window into a similar culture of smartness that structures the working practices and self images of Swatties. Mapping Ho’s discussion of “culture of

smartness” on Wall Street allows us to better understand the how Swarthmore students come to be produced as “leaders for the common good”, as well as implication of these processes.

The dominance and spread of a global, post-industrial information economy in the 21st century with the United States university system as a normative standard serves as a syphon through which the expertise necessary to hold and direct power is transmitted. According to Karen Ho, in a society in which globalization and discourses surrounding concepts within including ‘the market’ and ‘the state’ are abstracted and naturalized, it is only by studying the everyday practices of those creating and shaping the meaning of these institutions that the construction of this hegemony can be understood.(Ho 2009, 42). She goes on to show that outlining the routines and ideologies of Wall Street workers, and understanding how they are learned is essential to understanding the ways in which global regimes of economic inequality are created, restructured, and reinforced. However, these practices and mindsets of Wall Street workers are first developed and centralized at elite educational institutions, alongside those of other white-collar knowledge-producing fields including but not limited to politics, law, medicine, computer technology, other natural sciences, and academia itself. The regimes of work normalized at these institutions are important because they define access to platforms of knowledge-production, as well as structure the knowledge that is produced—which on Wall Street, this is the direction of the global economy, and the lives of those attached.

Ho argues that the ideology structuring the work of investment bankers and the currency enabling their legitimacy constructing markets constitutes what she calls the *culture of smartness*, a regime under which investment bankers are imbued with a particular vision of their role and are seen and see themselves as “both agents of and models for socioeconomic change”(Ho 2009, 41). She describes this as follows:

“To be considered smart on Wall Street is to be implicated in a web of situated practices and ideologies, coproduced through the interactions of multiple institutions, processes and American culture at large, which confer authority and legitimacy on high finance and contribute to the sectors vast influence.

The culture of smartness is not simply a quality of Wall Street, but a currency, a driving force productive of both profit accumulation and global prowess.”

(2009, 40)

This culture on Wall Street contains several distinct components – membership in an elite, global, intellectual community unified by an innate “impressiveness”, symbolizing “know-how” and “global agency”, and then “surviving brutally intense hard work and an insecure job environment, which in turn allows them (investment bankers) to internalize the merit of their analyses and recommendations”(Ho 2009, 42). By understanding themselves as survivors of this exclusive process, through which views of status and “hard work” continually reinforce one another, Wall Street workers come to believe that they should reshape the world, because they simply know better.

As recruitment into Wall Street relies heavily on narratives already constructed at elite universities, it is no surprise that these institutions also engender a similar culture of smartness that, in many cases students learn to navigate during high school or earlier. In attempts to place students into elite universities, high schools emphasize “impressiveness,” grading on 5.0 scales instead of 4.0 for advanced classes and manufacturing honors to boost students’ resumes.(Demereth 2009) Shamus Rahman Khan discusses how high school students are taught to present privilege and learn behaviors that display their “smartness,” despite lacking preparation. However, as adopting these ways to illustrate “eliteness” prove successful as students graduate from high school and are accepted into top academic institutions, students internalize this relationship(Khan 2013). To be smart is to be elite, and to be elite is to be smart; this is recognized at the highest level, as Susan Blum writes that in the 2010s Harvard students receive mostly “A”s. As she concludes from these sources, “success, not learning, is the obvious goal in college today.”(Blum 2016, 32-33). This emphasis on success, and fixation on “impressiveness” taught in high schools and mandated at colleges represents a crucial aspect of the culture of smartness that is reproduced broadly across higher education in the United States.

Karen Ho’s discussion of the components of the culture of smartness beyond simply impressiveness— internalized empowerment through membership within an exclusive network, understanding themselves in the abstract as the embodiment of “know-how” and the survival of a brutal work regime—are also highly present in

student experience at Swarthmore. Many of these themes are literally taught to incoming first-year students annually in the Orientation play.

The Orientation Play primarily reinforces the narratives of exclusivity, competition, and brutally hard work through the tale of the *admissions mistake*, a student accidentally accepted at Swarthmore but lacking the intelligence, work ethic, or cultural capital to succeed; while the play can be seen as a parody of sorts, concepts such as the *admissions mistake*, *misery poker*, and ideas of what it means to be socially responsible at Swarthmore pervade the community throughout the student experience. According to the directors of the play, “One of the big messages is to show first years, new students, transfer students, what the Swarthmore community is about.” As all aspects of production are directed by a board of students, the play itself is seen on campus as a representation of ideas and values of older students.(Meyer-Lee 2016). As a representation of Swarthmore culture by and for Swarthmore students, the Orientation Play, the abstracts portrayed in a fictional way throughout the play carry a very real weight in the lived experiences of Swatties.

The very beginning of the Orientation Play simultaneously reinforces to Swarthmore students both themes of their place within an elite community with an acknowledgment that the same community might erode their sense of worth, key parallels Wall Street culture. The first scene of the play opens with the Head Dean of Admissions telling students how “extremely talented, impressive, and unique” they are, a narrative familiar after a week of similar speeches from various other administrators and college officials (Bloch et al. 2016, 1). This ritual reflects that of

the orientation process for investment bankers, who at the culmination of their orientation period are “lauded as the cream of the crop, (and)...told how lucky they (are) to be initiated into a global firm where money, ingenuity, and opportunity flowed freely” (Ho 2009, 75). Simply through their induction into these communities, members are recognized for their inherent “smartness.”

Despite that recognition, both Wall Street Workers and Swarthmore students are also constantly reminded of the exclusivity of their environments and of their competitiveness. Even during orientation while being lauded for their intelligence, analysts undergo a constant screening process where they often stay up until 2 a.m. studying for placement examinations for the most prestigious positions. This is reinforced by a constant message of how “lucky” new hires are to be at these firms. However, even once fully oriented, analysts endure an environment in which that achievement is rewarded by grueling work. In describing this environment, Louis Walters, a vice president at Salomon Smith Barney, illustrated a workplace characterized by 6 foot by 6 foot cubicles, with the only decoration being a Princeton mug. In her description, in all of the hard work to get to be a Wall Street worker and a member of this culture of smartness, only to wind up with a space barely large enough for a mug, “the mug is a sort of residual reminder that you are someone special”(Ho 2009, 84).

The Swarthmore College Orientation Play also reinforces the tenuous position of students through the search for the “Admissions Mistake”; shortly after the Dean of Admissions tell students how impressive they are, he says that one student does not belong as they are an admissions mistake and so not worthy. As

they play continues, the struggles of the characters in conforming to Swarthmore work or culture, become analyzed through this lens, inducing a constant fear that despite their “smartness” and hard work, students are not quite good enough to belong. The play also acknowledges that despite the newfound acceptance of students into this elite community, that the environment might be grueling, as the dean repeats twice to students every year: “each and every one of you is a worthwhile person.” Like on Wall Street, part of this culture of smartness is the foundational rhetoric is that members are each exceptional, no matter how they are treated.

Another central component of Wall Street’s culture of smartness addressed in Swarthmore’s Orientation Play is that of brutally intense hard work. While Ho analyzes many accounts of how Wall Street workers are made to work 100 hour weeks, a common theme seems to be that this hard work is normalized and glamorized: the harder, the better. One analyst at BT, in discussing this environment, concludes that “the point is to create a postcollege atmosphere where, within days of beginning work, analysts and associates begin to “live” there, comparing notes about who is staying the latest, and “getting slammed” the most, not to mention participating in the makeshift Nerf football game at 1 a.m.. This overwork is a staple of investment banking; bragging and complaining about how much work and how little sleep one gets forms a key cultural currency on wall street, as it becomes foundational to the value of the field(Ho, 2009, 99-100). Similar to on Wall Street, working hard is also essential to how Swarthmore students see themselves, and forms cultural capital. In the Orientation Play, a unifying social

activity is *misery poker*, by which students compare who is the most unhappy based on how much they have to do. Through this social ritual, staying up all night to finish a problem set, or do readings assigned last minute not only become normalized, but a badge of honor (Bloch, Byrd, and Charo 2016, 18). Perhaps most indicative of this culture of hard work, the refrain “Anywhere Else it Would Have Been an A[2],” immortalized on a college T-shirt in many ways embodies this narrative: because Swarthmore students simply work harder, they learn better. This brutal hard work, like on Wall Street, thus becomes entwined with the process of learning to be a “leader for the common good.”

Parallels to the culture of Smartness on Wall Street can continue to be drawn. Ho cites part of the appeal of Wall Street as a way for elite undergraduate students to reproduce their community: “Where to find Harvard after Harvard?” (Ho 2009, 58). This is remarkably similar to the logic used to describe the “Quaker Matchbox,” the phenomenon by which nearly 15% of Swarthmore alumni marry one another—Swarthmore students seek to recreate Swarthmore after Swarthmore. (Ho 2009, 58, Mischel 2014).

Ultimately, this culture of smartness serves as a medium through which the daily practices and values of elite undergraduate students are transmitted. The culture of hard work legitimizes the eliteness of both investment bankers and these students; however, it also allows for the creation of behaviors that are then reproduced through respective exclusive communities of individuals that both see themselves and are seen as legitimate moral agents of social change.

In the case of regulating consciousness, this has profound implications. As students developed ingrained relationships with using substances to control their daily interface with reality, these physiological effects have profound implications onto the ways they view the world, which ultimately colors the work that they do. In order to fully understand how institutions of know-how operate, such as Wall Street, the Tech Industry, Biomedicine, and Academia, it is first necessary to understand how professionals in these fields are self-regulating their minds, and what impact it has both on their work.

To quickly recap, I have spent the last chapter discussing the ways in which the Orientation play, as a performance by students for students, teaches incoming Swatties what Swarthmore culture is. The play teaches incoming students that working, living, and partying are blurred spatially and temporally, and that alcohol use is a necessary tool for coping with stress and addressing conflict. In addition, the Orientation Play also establishes a “culture of smartness” at Swarthmore, where students are simultaneously treated as exceptional and as undeserving members of the community: this tension is reconciled as students prove themselves through continuous brutally intense work, of which surviving grants expertise. Finally, members of this culture of smartness seek to reproduce their communities, and thus thus reproducing these structures with individuals subject to the same socialization. In the process of acquiring the cultural capital of a degree, students both learn to see alcohol as an integral tool used to address stress, and to derive their own importance from the brutally hard work they are expected to accomplish. I will return to discussion of postgraduate life in the conclusion; in the next chapter I will

explore the ways in which the “hard work” mandated by the culture of Swarthmore and traditional narratives of work-hard play-hard effects the chemical self-regulation of Swarthmore students on a daily basis.

Chapter 2:
**Shaping Minds to Shape Minds: the roles of psychoactive drugs in the daily
lives of students**

“Our lives revolve around what (drugs) we consume.” Braulio nodded emphatically and gestured with his hands as if they were wrapped around a globe, driving home his point with each word. In case I was confused, the next sentence out of his mouth reaffirmed why he had volunteered for the study: “I don’t see my life outside of this daily consumption.” We were less than a minute into our interview.

As Braulio made clear, drugs—defined by historian David Courtwright as “psychoactive plants, products, and processing techniques [that produce them](2001, 09)—are ubiquitous for college students. Braulio’s assertion raised an important and well debated question: do humans use drugs in response to pressures from their daily lives, or do humans structure their daily lives around the use of drugs? Some scholars examine drugs as commodities, goods produced through human labor, bought, and sold(McKusker 1990, Roseberry 1996, Courtwright 2001, Gootenburg 2008). Others view drugs through the lens of social consumption: drugs serve as the foundation of common rituals that give structure to the social world(Topik 2009, Thompson 1999). These explanations both point to drug use as a tool that people engage with willingly, which would support drug use as a response to the pressures of daily life; however, another camp analyzes drug use as a mechanism of discipline.

Anthropologists such as Merrill Singer (2007) and Phillippe Bourgois argue that drug use and abuse exemplify *biopower*, Michel Foucault's term which Bourgois defines as "the ways historically entrenched institutionalized forms of social control discipline bodies(Bourgois 2000; 167)." As Bourgois argues in analyzing the use of methadone to treat heroin addiction, contradictions between the daily experiences of drug users and academic, medical, and state discourses reveal that biopower can be traced in individual patterns of drug consumption. He uses Foucault to argue that "power and knowledge constitute one another, and in that process they set the parameters for disciplining social life...academic, medical, and juridical fields of study and practice emerged historically as central components of social control through the construction of epistemological frameworks defined as legitimate science and health (Foucault 1981). Concretely, in the case of methadone, competing scientific, political, and populist discourses mobilize an avalanche of objective, technical and rigorously quantified data that render them oblivious to their embroilment in a Calvinist-Puritanical project (Weber 1958) of managing immoral pursuits of pleasure and of promoting personal self-control in a manner that is consonant with economic productivity and social conformity"(Bourgois 2000). Ultimately, in the case of methadone, these frameworks all function together—drugs do take on social meaning, are commodities, and also are incorporated into systems of power.

While these frameworks at times pose contradictions, they ultimately exist alongside one another in dialectical tension: psychoactive substances are used in response to daily pressures, and also structure daily life itself. Braulio's belief that

his life revolves around drug use and not the other way around is a testament to the influence of biopower. Causality does not matter because whether Braulio is using drugs as commodities or socially, the outcome is the same: the cultural systems and institutional values that Braulio finds himself immersed in promote specific patterns of drug use that define his daily life.

The intersection between the cultural lives of drugs as social commodities and systems of governance takes place geographically over the human brain, which is subjected to a variety of competing systems of power. As the locus mediating the relationship between individuals and the world around them, as well as the site in which students invest, store, and apply their academic and professional skills, the brain-- and more broadly, the manifestation of its chemical state through consciousness—is the primary mechanism defining students' lives. As such, drugs serve as important technologies for manipulating biology, particularly in warping human experience around systems of power. Over the next chapter, I will discuss how students use drugs to conform to neoliberal notions of productivity, the particular regimes of work induced, and the role of drug use in coping with stress at Swarthmore.

(Neo)Liberal Arts:

a brief literature review of the capitalization of consciousness in the labor of being a student

One logic structuring daily drug use is capitalism. As Max Weber famously argues, “modern capitalism” structures human life with “overwhelming force”(Weber and Kalberg 2009; 157-158). This system of power that he presents as a guiding framework for human activity is created from two major components. One half of this system comes from capitalist economic practices: “A relatively free exchange of goods in markets, the separation of business activity from household activity, sophisticated bookkeeping methods, and the rational, or systematic, organization of work and the workplace in general. Workers are legally free ...Profit is pursued in a regular and continuous fashion, as is its maximization, in organized businesses.” However, Weber also proposes another dimension of this system—an “economic ethic”—which he defines as a set of values that “legitimizes and provides the motivation for the rigorous organization of work, the methodical approach to labor, and the systematic pursuit of profit typical of modern capitalism(Weber and Kalberg 2009; 9)”. Under Weber’s notion of modern capitalism, the organization of life around work is not merely utilitarian, but it is religious, moral, and cultural. As Stephen Kalberg so helpfully illustrates in his translation, this ethic is embodied by “...the notion that labor is an absolute end in itself”(Weber and Kalberg 2009; 9).

Weber’s understanding of this economic ethos, or “spirit of capitalism”, is particularly important in explaining why and how college students regulate their bodies as part of doing work because he both argues that this ethos as part of the larger mechanism of modern capitalism is a dominating force that shapes human existence, but also that it is learned. Weber claims that the organization of life around labor primarily over other activities “...is not inherently given in the nature

of the species. Nor can it be directly called forth by high or low wages. Rather, it is the product of the continuous process of education and socialization.” (Weber and Kalberg 2009; 11, 78). By Weber’s analysis, modern capitalism is the dominant force in structuring human existence, and it does so by providing a religious, moral, and cultural framework for the strict prioritization of labor, which is then spread and reproduced through extended and socialization in a variety of structures.

While the original institution through which Weber’s “Spirit of Capitalism” was spread and reproduced was Protestant Catholicism, these heuristics soon became ingrained both in family units and schools. As Stephen Kalberg writes in introducing his translation of Weber,

“Parents taught children to set goals and organize their lives methodically, to be self-reliant and shape their own destinies as individuals, to behave in accord with ethical standards, and to work diligently. They encouraged children to pursue careers in business and see virtue in capitalism’s open markets, to seek material success, to become upwardly mobile, to live modestly and frugally, to reinvest their wealth, to look toward the future, and the opportunities it offers, and to budget their time wisely... In this way, action oriented toward values originally carried by ascetic Protestant sects and churches endured long after the weakening of these religious organizations. An orientation toward ethical action became cultivated also in community organizations, including schools.” (2009; 33)

These organizations of socialization pass on not only values of the spirit of capitalism such as methodical planning, self reliance, ethical norms, time

management, and investment, but also specific practices by which to do so—of which consuming substances can be integral.

Weber's proposal of this "spirit of capitalism" or frame of mind through which life is oriented around labor lays important groundwork for understanding how the self-regulation of human bodies becomes integrated in the process of labor, but first must be rerouted through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital*, and *social capital*. While the understanding and discussing *habitus* fully has been the project of many works, here I am going to focus solely on introducing the concept, and shall return later to further implications of this theoretical framework as they become relevant in the data analysis. Bourdieu says himself about choosing the word *habitus* for his framework that: "... with the notion of *habitus*, you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The *habitus*, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So....it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought...Moreover...the *habitus* is a capital, but one which, because it is embodied, appears as innate."(Bourdieu 1992; 86). The "Spirit of Capital" produces *habitus*: common behaviors, ideologies, and practices learned through one's social environment, encompassing a set of dispositions that structure one's activities, and serving as a form of capital. As Weber succinctly demonstrates, in as early as the 18th century in Pennsylvania, the spirit of capitalism was "... understood as the essence of a morally acceptable, even

praiseworthy way of organizing and directing life”(Weber and Kalberg 2009; 85-88).

Here, a system of discipline arises out of the intersection between economics and religion; a “spirit of capitalism” as habitus is not only economically advantageous, but socially advantageous as well. To orient one’s life according to capitalism has tangible political, cultural, and social benefits. To extend Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus, “the spirit of capitalism” manifests as social and cultural capital.

Ingrained unconscious behavior and practice both signify and can be exploited for economic capital, but because their transmission is embodied and therefore less recognizable than material capital, they become misrecognized as natural, and serve to reproduce class division beyond mere division of wealth. This “cultural capital” is commonly seen in formal educational signifiers, and encompasses cultural competencies such as reading and writing, as well as former markers such as possession of degrees(Sadovnik 2007; 84-88).

This cultural capital is often associated with membership within groups- membership presupposes certain ways of viewing the world, doing things, and skillsets, and this groupness takes the form of social capital, which Bourdieu defines as “...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of

the word”(Sadovnik 2007; 88). Essentially, habitus structuring work, like the “Spirit of Capitalism” are important because they both provide those in which they become deeply embedded distinct cultural advantages, which then become heightened as these ways of being become further entwined with social groupness that carries further value.

Psychoactive substances become embedded in these wider webs of being because simply organizing one’s schedule around production falls short: a natural extension of capitalist logic is the necessary intervention at the biological level to *intensify* labor. Harvey, a Marxian geographer, extends Marx’s argument that capitalism must constantly be reinvesting the profit accrued to argue that in order to accrue profit, capitalism must constantly expand. It can do so in two ways—by expanding the amount of labor to exploit, or by increasing the extent to which labor already being done is exploited, which he calls *intensification*(Harvey, 2001). While Harvey is largely referring to Capitalism within regional and international systems, this framework also can be applied on the individual level. Habitus such as the “Spirit of Capitalism” maximize the amount of time daily devoted to labor. Once these dispositions are in place, for capitalist subjects to continue to function or improve they must *intensify*, or increase the efficiency with which they labor. It is here that the regulation of the body through consumption becomes an essential tool of increasing efficacy.

Bodily regulation has long been associated with the rise of modern capitalism with the rise of “Proletariat Hunger Killers” used to enable long, grueling labor. Sydney Mintz outlines the rise of sugar in conjunction with tea among the working

class in the late 18th century as highly important for allowing the poor for coping with their daily lives. First and foremost, tea and sugar provided a cheap replacement for alternative dietary items such as milk and malt liquor which were hard for most poor to afford; in addition, tea allowed laborers to feel like they were having a hot meal, even if in reality they were only having bread and tea. Second, sugar also served to reinforce the complex carbohydrates that formed the bulk of working class diets, such as breads and porridge. Third, sugar became ritualized; beyond simply being a practical source of energy, it became valued as “homey”, and was consumed at a variety of special occasions and in other contexts. However, most importantly, sugar in the form of spreads for breads began replacing hot meals in the middle of the working day, which loosed the family structure by dramatically decreasing the preparation time required for meals, allowed wives to work instead of preparing midday or evening meals which increased families’ incomes, and dramatically increased the efficiency of the working day by eliminating or shortening the break in the middle of the day when workers would go home to eat(Mintz 1985) Sugar helped to intensify labor by providing more energy from less food, for less work, and for less money, and also became embedded in people’s lives due to its ritualization. Here, Sugar provides a very baseline intensification—it allows people to do more for less-- but also becomes bound up in webs of social meaning around class and ritual, which are integral to understanding the ways it continues to be spread and consumed.

Alcohol, coffee, and tobacco have all also been written about extensively as “Proletarian Hunger Killers”, respectively relieving pain, hunger, and stress, and in

the case of coffee, providing focus and energy (Mintz 1966, Courtwright 2001, Smith 2005, Roseberry 1996). Employed historically in a number of different contexts, they provide a toolbox approach for current college students to adjust their daily realities.

One mode of drug use that becomes embedded in the practices of Swarthmore students is the mindset that the body and brain can be intervened with using drugs on a daily basis to meet student's needs.

The brain and mind is a crucial component of college life. In addition to determining how students perceive their surroundings, they also are the tools employed in the daily schoolwork of college students, as well as a major source of investment, where individuals store the skills, habits, and ideological frameworks learned in college. Because of the importance of the mind both in daily life and to the future labor of Swarthmore students, my interlocutors described a great concern with their state of mind or 'consciousness' a composite of internal and external stimulus including physiology, social stimulus, mood, and rested-ness. William James, Harvard psychologist and philosopher, provides a discussion of consciousness that seems to fit a broader understanding of the interaction between these forces: *"It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness,*

definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation.” (James, 1902; 388).

According to both James and my informants, daily consciousness is neither normative nor consistent, but existing on a spectrum, which at the introduction of stimulus is subject to change. Psychoactive drugs play a variety of important roles within the toolbox of approaches that my participants utilized in the daily alteration of their emotions, energy level, and alertness.

One of my informants framed his drug use as one out of a variety of methods that he used to tinker with his mental “machine.” According to Daniel, a first-year at the college,

“I think about this topic pretty broadly. Everything from music, to sex, to hallucinogenic drugs, to tobacco, caffeine, alcohol—everything.” I find that my favorite thing is like my mental machine. I love my mind, it’s the best tool, it’s the best toy, it’s like just the coolest thing. And the physical machine: I love that my body works well, and does what I want it to do, and that’s awesome. And with all of this, I’m very aware of risk and damage. And with all of it, every decision is based off of value to my machine... I’m very conscious each time of like, why? Why am I doing this now? What do I get out of it? What’s the purpose? What’s the point? Is it worth it?”

For Daniel, he views his body, and most importantly his mind, as a tool mediating his interactions with the world. While he employs a variety of techniques to alter that mediation to achieve different effects, he is also extremely deliberate about the effects he aims to achieve, as well as balancing potential risks and damages to that

medium. Substances for him are not about releasing control, but rather about gaining it.

That being said, in the process of gaining control through substance use, Daniel also acknowledged that not only does he see immediate negative ramifications, but also that he tends to value short-term gains over long-term losses. When he was telling me that every decision for him was based off of value to his “mental machine”, he admitted that his logic might not be completely rational.

“And a lot of it could be completely delusional—and maybe I’m tricking myself into it a lot, I don’t know—but subjectively it feels like, okay—I’m gonna take some acid. Maybe that’s not good for me physically, or for my actual neural function over time, but the benefit psychologically or emotionally would outweigh that. Or I’m going to smoke some nicotine which is a carcinogen, and it’s not going to be good physically, but the psychological emotional benefit now merits that.”

Daniel understands and even agrees common arguments against smoking and use of acid, but ultimately concludes that often that using these substances is worth it despite their risks to what he values most: his mind.

Other students develop patterns of consumption in response to changing environments. Nina, a junior, characterized her substance use as strategic, but developed her routines through trial and error in an attempt to cope with the transition to the pressures of Swarthmore.

“I’ve definitely thought out these things strategically... Every single habit that I’ve developed has happened kind of coinciding with my schedule, and sort of the larger schedule here. They definitely happened naturally.”

While Nina was not directly how to consume drugs by coming to Swarthmore, she adapted her drug use based on the daily pressures she faced.

Before coming to Swarthmore, Nina actively avoided drinking coffee, did not consume alcohol, and did not consciously plan out when she would smoke marijuana; however, after starting college, she altered her consumption of each of these substances to address specific needs. She started drinking coffee in an attempt to convert more hours in her day into productivity.

“I remember all of my freshman fall, I was very against drinking coffee. And then there were a few days that I was crashing at 4 PM, and I was like oh I need some coffee—but then I realized that didn’t work because I would stay up until like 2 in the morning because I was hyper sensitive to caffeine, so I was like, well I need to figure out a better time to be having this if I’m going to drink caffeine. (Now) I’ll try to put off coffee until the middle of the day, because if I have coffee like first thing in the morning, then I’ll get to 4 o’clock and I won’t be able to stay awake. So all of it developed organically in terms of figuring out what makes sense.”

Nina initially started drinking coffee as a tool to adapt to the pressure to be alert at certain times of the day; however, in the process of adjusting herself with caffeine she ran into other challenges, such as crashing too early, or being forced to stay up

too late. Her use of coffee is extremely regulated to maximize what she sees as the positive effects of coffee while minimizing its negative effects.

Nina's relationship with alcohol developed completely while at Swarthmore, in conjunction with larger Swarthmore social rituals, as well as a reward system for her own good behavior.

"The alcohol ritual, obviously Thursdays and Saturdays are the nights that people go out here, that's just like Swat culture. I didn't drink in high school. With Alcohol, it's always when my work for the day is done—well actually, that's only when I'm binge-drinking, which isn't, like, bad, but then if it's 9 PM, and I'm back in my room alone, I'll have some wine or some beer with whatever I'm working on, if it's a paper—I would never do that if I had a problem set, but if it was something that just required some more creative thinking, then I would do that. Alcohol is definitely a reward for the most part, because it's rare that I will have wine with my work, because I get really bad hangovers, and a lot of the time it's just not worth it. So that's just another thing where it's like it's me not doing it almost as much as it's me doing it. Alcohol is definitely a reward system because it's like now I'm done with my work and I can drink or whatever."

Nina incorporated alcohol into her routine, both as an adjustment to the weekly social rituals of Swarthmore, and as an incentive to complete her work; however, similar to caffeine, she also avoids alcohol in certain contexts when she prefers other effects.

Because the ease at which she gets hangovers limits the contexts in which Nina can use alcohol as a reward system, she supplements her self-reward system with sugar; in addition, she also uses sugar to cope with stress. *“Sugar—that’s for when I’m stressed, that’s when I have a lot of work. When I know I’m going to be up until like 1. I need something good to get me through this horrible process. My go to is chocolate—I like Hershey’s—people are always like Hershey’s isn’t real chocolate, but I love the artificial cocoa butter—I know Hershey’s is bad but I love it it’s soooo good. Or Sour Patch kids—sour candy or chocolate. As I’m working or before I go to bed, I’ll have a thin mint, or a few thin mints to be like, you’ve done a good job today. So I think for me it works as a reward, or like, even if I am stressed, it’s like, you’re doing really well, have some chocolate.”* In addition to using substances like coffee to keep her body physically alert and able to work, Nina uses candy and alcohol to keep herself emotionally able to work—either in mitigating the effects of stress, or providing positive motivations and feedback as incentives.

As a final component of her regulatory system using drugs, Nina smokes pot as a necessary break from the cycle of Swarthmore life. In her words,

“I do not consume Marijuana very frequently, but usually it’s like, before a break, when I literally have nothing to do. I don’t like doing it in the morning, but if I were to do it in the evening—usually, I have a really hard time waking up the morning after, so usually I’ll wait until an evening where I have like nothing going on afterwards, like when I have nothing to do at all—if I’m going home the next day, or if I’m going to be in the airport the whole next day. There was one day that I smoked pot the night before my midterm, and I

slept through my midterm, and I was like “I can never do this again” I cannot be doing this when I have things to do the next day. Pot is like—it’s kind of like I have nothing left to lose—If I’m doing that then the whole next day is gone. I don’t even know if that’s a reward, it’s just like now I can do nothing. I can afford to do nothing right now, and it will make me do nothing. So I think it’s like a relaxer.”

While Nina’s use of marijuana does not fit into her reward system like alcohol and candy, for her it serves as a physiological marker signaling her brain and body that it no longer has to be concerned about work. More importantly, although she developed routines with sugar, caffeine, alcohol, and marijuana through experimentation at Swarthmore, together they form a cohesive system that both enable her to complete her work, and signal when she can relax.

A third informant, a senior named Joy, summarized these schemas best as consciousness regulation, or exhibiting agency over the way one moves in the world. To her:

“Consciousness regulation would be modulating certain aspect of your physical state so that you can also regulate the way you’re engaging with the world—for example, caffeine if I don’t feel like I’m awake—I want somehow to have efficacy over the way I exist in the world, and its acknowledging that there are external substances that can have influence over that.”

Students use drugs to exert power over their experience of the world. In the case of my informants, this physiological intervention is often shaped by the particular

pressures of their work cycles, and the larger communities within which that work is embedded.

The Spirits Catch You When You Fall Down: Alcohol and other drug use as a coping mechanism at Swarthmore

I would be drunk as much as I could without it affecting my work while at Swarthmore because it was such a miserable, stressful place. After being drained/stressed from working all the time, I really didn't have the stamina to do much else. Drinking was one of the few things that would take the edge off of the constant stress of Swat.

I'm aware that I pretty much just described myself as an alcoholic. However, as I was told by an upperclassmen when I was a freshman, "it's not alcoholism until you graduate." Now that I'm out, I don't drink nearly as much or as frequently as I did at school, nor do I drink just to be unstressed for a little while.

It was not healthy and I am not going to pretend it was okay. I went to CAPS weekly, talked to SAMs, etc. to help deal with the stress of Swat, but I could not find another way to deal with the stress. I was just doing my best to cope. I truly don't think I could have made it through Swat without what constitutes substance abuse. – Anonymous, '2016

These words were written in a comment as a response to an online Daily Gazette article entitled "Swarthmore College Fosters Drug Abuse"(Menz 2013). They express a common approach to drug use at Swarthmore that is stigmatized both at Swarthmore and in the outside world: the use of substances to cope with stress. Specifically, while at the time this alum believed their use of alcohol was not healthy by general standards, they also believed that it was necessary for their emotional regulation and integral to their ability to finish Swarthmore. One way that this stress is presented is through anxiety, which students can often feel is induced by Swarthmore. A common refrain I have heard over the last for years has been "I feel

like if you don't have anxiety when you get to Swarthmore, you definitely have it by the time you leave." While challenging to assess the validity of that statement the longer I have been at here, the truer that has seemed to be. While I was not able to find any public records measuring stress at Swarthmore, students certainly perceive themselves to be stressed, and see it in others as well: in RA training, the word-of-the-mouth statistic that was circulating was that in a recent semester, as much as 50% of the student body had an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at least once, and that those appointments were mainly stress induced. Stress is known to have a well developed relationship with drug self administration and addictive behavior in general (Sinha 2008). Unsurprisingly, stress emerged as a major theme structuring the types and patterns of drug use in my informants.

While Nina and Daniel both described the utility of their drug habits, these excerpts do not address the deeper structural concerns that have led them, or often lead other students to do drugs to leverage control over their environments. While some Swarthmore students use of substances conforms to typical narratives of work-hard play hard culture—by either helping them to meet new levels of responsibility, or explore new levels of freedom—the main motivation that my informants shared was stress. This stress manifested in several themes throughout our interview. First, students used drugs as placeholders for different elements of self-care, such as getting enough sleep and having hobbies external to their schoolwork and extracurricular responsibilities. Secondly, students used drugs to cope with feelings of inadequacy—both in terms of succeeding academically, but

also in meeting what they perceived to be responsibilities of adulthood. Finally, students used psychoactive substances to process stress from their personal lives, particularly stressors from outside of Swarthmore. In these endeavors, drugs also address stress on three levels: drugs aid students in completing their work, which both helps to get through the day and feel successful, the physiological effects of some drug usage dispel negative emotions accompanying stress, grief, and disappointment, and consumption underlies many social events and rituals designed to address student stress.

For Daniel, caffeine, in the form of tea and coffee, is essential to keeping him awake and alert for completing his daily tasks, allowing him to complete more work, faster, and therefore reducing the stress from his workload. .

Daniel: Caffeine was great for focus... for keeping me up. It's a morning thing, a daily thing. That's where the ritual comes in. I hate—despise habit—but I love ritual. And I think the only difference is intentionality. But for me, the ritual nature of things is just beautiful – very, very important. So with making tea in the morning, there's a ritual to that, and timing, when you drink it. I smoke a pipe, which is a really ritualistic thing for me, much more so than actually getting nicotine. Cleaning the pipe, packing the bowl, having a collection of tobacco and picking what you feel like that day, what matches the weather and your mood, having a collection of pipes and picking the pipe that's right for that day, or the fact that you're going to smoke. And a lot of those are personal rituals, which I guess are very separate from social rituals, which would be like social drinking or social smoking—which are totally

both very ritualistic, but for me very separate and very different. And for me the individual rituals probably have more inherent importance. They help ground me.

In discussing his use of nicotine and caffeine, Daniel touches on using substances both to help him actually complete all of his work, but also to help ground him emotionally from day to day. However, these daily rituals are simply integral components of Daniel's daily life—in addition to nicotine and caffeine, he primarily relies on alcohol, marijuana, and hallucinogens to cope with stress.

Outside of grounding him on a daily basis, Daniel primarily consumes drugs to remove himself from negative emotions.

Daniel: “Hallucinogenic drugs are an escape; they allow you to have perspective. When you're stuck in your day-to-day thing of studying what's important, grades are important, tests are important. And then if you're tripping for a few hours, that's like a complete paradigm shift of where you're at and what you're thinking about. Which I think if done correctly is wonderful, and can hopefully add passion and positive perspective to what you're doing.”

For Daniel, hallucinogens help him control his personal growth—not over his daily life in the same ways as caffeine and nicotine, but over his ideologies and belief systems. Using them makes him feel as though he has agency over his life, and is not simply responding to external pressures.

Finally, Daniel uses alcohol and marijuana as an escape on a smaller scale: not as an opportunity to reevaluate his priorities, but rather as a temporary escape

from his daily stressors. For him, even as this escape can be social, it is highly personal and individual.

Daniel: I think primarily, smoking pot or drinking alcohol, is just less than a perspective shift, but more of a break. You're in a bit of a different space, a slightly different perspective, but more of an escape. Just like a comforting blanket--- you're not liable to be thinking about the stuff that is causing you anxiety or frustrating you. For me, those are what those things are mostly for. Primarily, it's this kinda thing that I do with others, I do ritualistically with others, I do by myself, but It's all for a personal end. It's all "what can I do, how can I structure this whole world of chemicals to optimize how I want to be at certain times. And if I go out and go drinking with some friends on Saturday night-- it's fun and it's great, and there's people, and bonding, and fun times, and just it's good fun—but in the back of my mind, I'm always thinking, in the back of my mind, part of the reason I'm doing this is that come Monday I'm going to be far less stressed out, and pissed off, and annoyed with all this work, than I would have been otherwise, on a very kind of selfish personal level."

Here, Daniel's use of alcohol and marijuana are to address his negative emotions, and to remove himself from the daily circumstances causing them. While he recognizes a popular narrative that he should be doing them to maximize pleasure, he says himself that underlying that narrative, for him at least, much more based in the utility of coping with weekly life at Swarthmore.

For Nina, substances do not serve as an escape for negative emotions in the same way as Daniel, but rather, help her persevere through them. Sugar and Alcohol serve as a reward system, providing pleasurable feelings that she allows herself to indulge in after she completes her work; sugar and coffee help her to push through busy days and stressful nights. The way she views it, they simultaneously distract her from the unpleasant nature of her workload, and serve as placeholders for spending more time on self-care.

Nina: Sugar—that's when I'm stressed, that's when I have a lot of work.

When I know I'm going to be up until like 1. I need something good to get me through this horrible process. I don't eat candy in groups—that's definitely a private thing. Coffee is an alone thing (too). I don't like going for coffee, it's not very exciting for me because I just drink black coffee, it's definitely a utility thing. It's not like a group thing, it's like I will have my coffee and be doing work. I didn't drink a lot of coffee before I came here, I still try not to drink too much, but I really just didn't need it in high school because I was getting enough sleep, and didn't have too much work, and could nap in the middle of the day.

Nina drinks coffee because she does not get enough rest to keep up with her work. She eats candy to keep herself emotionally well enough to keep working. Finally, alcohol serves as the backdrop for social interactions that demarcate the temporary end of work, and marijuana signifies a more permanent end. These substances serve to reward the hard work being done, and serve as a balm for the exhaustion that follows.

Another informant, a junior named Maya, highlighted this pattern of using drugs both to induce relaxation in a stressful environment, as well as provide an emotional incentive to push through the working week. Maya, who throughout our interview said that she regularly consumes caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and occasionally hallucinogens and party drugs, first started this consumption at Swarthmore, but only consumes alcohol when she is not in school. These substances are primarily to help her relax while at Swarthmore.

Maya: I never did anything before I came here, I never drank, I never smoke, I never did weed, I just picked it up here. When I do stop smoking, for whatever reason, I don't have withdrawal symptoms, even though I've been smoking for three years, pretty much daily. And after a while, I just forget about it, which is nice, but then the second I come back here, it's like "Oh, this is an option I have to relax". So I'm going to take it. Because even though I've been smoking for a while, I still get head rushes, which is nice, especially after like 6 hours of staring at a book, so I just do that and drink some coffee, and go outside to be alone for a while. I feel like before certain classes or after certain classes I try to smoke more than if it were a free day, especially before long seminars. Try to stay in the headfuzz for at least the first 10 minutes. I'll take LSD if it's there, but I don't feel like I have to insist that somebody buys it. I don't feel like I have to come back to it, but it's a thing to do sometimes, something to look forward to in the week if it's coming up.

In much the same way as Nina, Maya uses substance both to reduce the stress of doing work, and to provide an incentive or something to look forward to when she

finishes. In this way, these drugs both make her work easier, and help to give it meaning.

Another informant, a freshman named Braulio, signed up to interview with me precisely because he felt as though his entire life revolves around consumption, and more specifically, that he has to use drugs to intervene because he does not have the time needed to take care of himself.

Braulio: I don't see my life outside of this daily consumption. I wake up in the morning and drink a cup of coffee, and smoke a cigarette. And it just sort of becomes routine at some point. And you see and talk to other people about this, and you see memes and comments online saying 'oh, I can't function without my coffee". And like Why? What is it in this substance that gets you going? So when I don't get a good night of sleep, if I'm feeling kind of tired. The go to is to just drink this energetic substance that gets me going. And in a way it's kind of a crutch of sorts. When I can't get through something, it takes its place. In regards to smoking cigarettes, at that point, it's a routine. So is drinking coffee. It's not that I rely on these things, but in this sort of a chaotic environment—I can say that Swarthmore is chaotic—with classes, with the workload—it grounds you in some regard. I think in my view that's a negative thing, and I've been trying to steer away from it, but that's very much what defines my reality.

Braulio sees chemical intervention as a crutch: a way to replace experiences to which he lacks access, and a necessity for coping with daily life at Swarthmore.

Braulio uses these crutches primarily to cope with stress, including sleep deprivation, a lack of social stimulation or hobbies, an increase in the difficulty of classwork, and pressure to conform to normative narratives of college and adolescence.

Braulio: For me it's kind of become a cycle, I go to sleep at one, I wake up at 7, and the first thing I do is drink two cups of coffee. And then I feel energized like I can do things. And then I think, "Oh this is great, I can not get a full night of sleep every night, this is great." And I've kind of acknowledge that this is not a good way to kind of survive, but I don't want to say that I've been forced into this situation, but it's helped me operate on a day-to-day basis. With a workload where you can't fit everything into the kind of 16 hours, so you can get 8 hours of sleep, I can kind of push myself beyond that. What helps with that lack of sleep or lack of control is this crutch: coffee, or cigarettes, weed. I don't enjoy it (weed). But it's a placeholder- same thing with cigarettes, same thing with coffee. It's not that I seek it out, or I constantly need it...but it becomes part of your routine. So smoking weed with friends is not something that I get a huge joy out of. But it's something that's there—we're bored, there's nothing there, let's just going to do this. It's the first go-to to doing anything else. For me it was mostly, you need an effect, and the substances give it to you. You need energy, you drink coffee. You need a destresser, something to keep you socially calm, I'll smoke a cigarette with friends. You need something to help with creativity, or relaxed, and do nothing, or be brain dead for a few hours, I'll smoke weed. Or

if I want a big rush I'll do Acid. And realizing that has made me change the way that I consume things. Like I would consume alcohol a lot because people would say that it's a social lubricant, and it seemed that it would make conversation effortless. But I sat down and thought about it, and I don't need that to make conversation, I can just do it. you just create 'em. I don't need coffee, I can just sleep more. I don't need weed, I can just sit and meditate. But when those things get hard, when I don't have time to sleep, when I don't have time to meditate, when I need that social atmosphere, I'll smoke cigarettes, smoke weed, drink coffee. It's absolutely a logistical thing. When my schedule is preventing me from doing these things, doing these substances are a way for me to get by. I think that if I had more time. Or more ability to just sit down and focus, or sit down in social settings and interact without substances I wouldn't do that. I don't need alcohol, I don't need acid, I don't need cigarettes. All of these are really a placeholder for something that I don't have. And that's really just time to focus on myself more.

Braulio uses a wide range of drugs primarily as a substitute for taking care of himself. While he recognizes alternatives exist, he feels as though he often cannot implement them. What prevents him is both the internal and external pressure generated by the work culture at Swarthmore[3].

Finally, Swarthmore students also use drugs to cope with stress or trauma induced from the outside world. Christopher, a senior, exemplifies this dynamic, as he recounted to me his reflections on binge-drinking and tobacco-smoking. I will

not share block quotes from our interview, in the interests of protecting his identity, and the identity of others involved, but rather summarize some salient points here. Christopher began smoking cigarettes in response to a sequence of events: first, a break-up that left him isolated from previous support systems on campus, and then a friend's hospitalization for suicidal ideation. In the hospital with his friend and the friend's mother, Christopher began smoking to cope with the stress of being there for his friend without a support system, and then found upon returning to campus that trying to catch up with his work made it challenging for him to engage in other methods of coping. Christopher's experience illustrate a trend common enough: while Swarthmore students do exist within common frameworks, their personal lives do indeed matter, and the nature of schedules of daily life at Swarthmore makes it difficult to account for trauma induced by personal relationships. Students often turn to drugs to make up the difference.

Conclusion

Swatties use a variety of drugs to address stress in their daily lives by replacing needs and relieving negative emotions. However, the individual difficulties that students often use drugs to address—a lack of sleep, lack of socializing, fatigue, confusion, anxiety—are often pieces of larger value systems defining ideals for the Swarthmore community around productivity and morality. These compartmentalized incidents of drug use are symptomatic of broader attempts to conform to these systems. While this understanding of drug use is cultivated at Swarthmore through particular mechanisms, the pressures that Swarthmore students face—a rigorous and competitive work culture, relative

isolation from the outside world, and amorphous and contradictory community expectations—are hardly unique. The next chapters will focus on the dynamics that engender these kinds of mentalities at Swarthmore, and discuss the connections between the formation of community standards around work and the use of drugs in the self-regulation of deviancy.

Chapter 3: “Nerds of Feather”: Navigating Community Standards at Swarthmore

Many of the ways that Swarthmore students use drugs to aid in their cycles of work revolves around the relief of stress. This stress is widely produced in what students see as the struggle to meet the community standards reproduced at Swarthmore. These standards are produced and echoed from a variety of sources, ranging from staff and faculty to other students. These agents act as a dynamic web that together produce collective understandings of what is and is not acceptable at Swarthmore. To frame this in terms of biopower, the discourse structuring daily norms produces a physical reality, as students use drugs to regulate themselves to exist in the ways that these discursive practices tell them they should.

Students use drugs to conform to community norms in a variety of ways. One manifestation of this conformity is the precedence that alcohol related social events takes over other social activity, and at times school work; because partying (with alcohol) is constructed as an integral piece of the normal college experience this becomes exempt from normal working logics. This can be viewed as the resolution of tension between the “normal body” and the “ideal body”: while the ideal Swarthmore student would be working, in this case the “normal” college student, or the one that would be partying, becomes more important. Additionally, students use drugs to medicate the stress produced by failing to meet community standards, which can compound when the drugs they are using are stigmatized.

Work as the norm, Alcohol as Exception

One theme that emerged in my interviews was that for many students, using alcohol was the only time that they felt as though they could escape doing work. This tension is best illustrated in an interaction that Christopher described to me in an interview that he observed between another student and a dean:

Student: *"I've just been feeling really overwhelmed by work recently; I can't concentrate and I don't know what to do.*

Dean: *I totally understand, it happens to me as well. One thing that I've found really helpful that maybe you could try is taking a day over the weekend completely off from work, and not even thinking about it.*

The student nodded, but then as soon as the dean moved on to talk with someone else, Christopher noted that the student dismissed the advice as "impossible" with the analysis "clearly, they (the dean) just don't get it." So why do Swarthmore students work in such a way that produces so much stress, especially given well-known school policies such as pass-fail and refusal to assign class rank or GPA, which have been designed to foster learning by reducing competition? More importantly, why is the consumption of alcohol seemingly an exception to this rule?

Alexandra Michel, a scholar in behavioral organizational research, offers a compelling sociological framework for understanding how and why Swarthmore students participate in regimes of work that ultimately create the stress motivating much of the drug use caused by many of my interviewees, even if no one is making them do it. She proposes that even the socially powerful can "entrap themselves in

structures of their own making, such as the depleting high-intensity work schedules that seemingly autonomous knowledge workers choose for themselves” (Michel 2014, 515). These structures are difficult to identify and correct because they “do not follow the logic of cause and effect and interaction, but rely, instead on mutual constitution(Michel 2014, 515.” Knowledge-workers see themselves as autonomous, so they “often do not notice how a culture chooses through the, and how their actions maintain and reinforce the destructive culture...Because the actors do not notice it, they cannot counteract it, and can rarely self-report on it, which makes this form of power difficult to study.” Essentially, despite having seemingly high degrees of control over their daily lives, those participating in self-entrapments “work themselves into the ground, even when it hurts the organization that they were seeking to benefit and even when they and the organization attempt to change the destructive pattern” (Michel 2014, 515). While Michel draws these conclusions from an ethnography of investment bankers, the conditions that she highlights are easily applied to Swarthmore.

Swatties are like Investment Bankers: Pt. II

While students are not “laborers” in the same way as investment bankers—they are “consuming” their education as much as they are producing it”—in the daily completion of their schoolwork they exhibit similar behaviors to those Michel outlines as integral components of the self-entrapment experienced by bankers. One similarity between the two is that Michel’s subjects and Swarthmore students exist in cohort-based flat hierarchies that progress temporarily. While bankers

were promoted between the hierarchies primarily as a cohort based on the time worked at the firm, Swarthmore students progress through school in a similar fashion, as they are not ranked and expected to collaborate.

Another locale of overlap between the two is the prevalence of self-monitoring. Michel uses this phrase to refer to the practice of giving “feedback to bankers regarding the consequences of their actions, but no goals or targets, and (trusting) them to self-adjust” (Michel 2014, 522). Students are evaluated on their performance by professors in the form of grades, which typically are defined as defined as goals (Blum 2016, 35). However, since at Swarthmore Grade point average is not calculated and classes can be “pass-failed”⁵, and as a result, are not given goals or targets, expected to adjust in a similar way. Both students and bankers “compete with themselves” (Michel 2014, 523). Bankers compete with themselves to record the most hours they have ever worked in one day; Swarthmore students play “misery poker” to see who have the most work to do. By treating both as a game in which overwork is the variable that must be maximized to win, students and investment bankers alike conceal the influence of the broader systems they reside within.

Self-monitoring also occurs through constant proximity in both of these settings. For investment bankers, one way this manifested was through open floors, in which every employee could be overheard and observed. Combined with 24 hour

⁵ Every freshmen takes their first semester of course Pass-Fail, meaning that any student receiving a D or above passes and that their grade is not revealed on their transcript. In addition, students can elect to take up to 4 more classes on a pass-fail basis, although the criteria for passing is bumped to a “C” for Juniors and Seniors. Students do not have to declare whether they are using one of their “Pass-Fails” on a class until later than halfway through the semester.

administrative support, meals, health clubs, and dry cleaning services, bankers become accustomed to being at the office, and because other people were always around, it always seemed like time to work” (Michel 2014, 523). Similarly, Swarthmore students live, socialize and work in the same spaces together, and spatial boundaries are blurred. Students work all day in the dining hall, McCabe Library puts out snacks and coffee at night, the Science Center has showers and a coffee bar that is open until midnight. Naps are taken publicly to the point that they are candid napping photos are documented under the tag “sleeping Swatties.”⁶ As Joy[4] puts it, quite simply: “Most of my days are structured around social studying.”

Even when there is no work to be done, Swarthmore students still struggle to let themselves relax, at times spending hours on trivial working tasks. Christy describes this dynamic as follows:

Christy: “At Swarthmore, it’s hard because there’s this feeling that you should be working all the time.... Like you almost get stressed out when you aren’t working because you don’t have enough work. I know some people who seem like they’re able to keep a good balance, but I don’t know how they do it”

The dynamic Christy describes is facilitated by the blurring of work-life boundaries, to the point that students are constantly surrounded by people that they perceive to be working harder than them. As Christy describes, this leads to students self-monitoring their own working practice even, to invoke Michel, when “there was nothing urgent to do” (Michel 2014, 522).

⁶ <http://sleepingswatties-blog.tumblr.com/>

Put another way, because both bankers and Swarthmore students are constantly surrounded and observed by people doing work, they monitor themselves to intensify work. Braulio described his understanding of this relationship as follows:

“Something I’ve noticed since coming to Swarthmore is that I’ve been working a lot harder than I ever have in my whole life. And I think the only reason is, people around me are doing the same thing. If all of my friends weren’t sitting down in Cornell⁷ doing work, I probably wouldn’t have been either.”

Simply by constant exposure to one another and the blurring of work and leisure boundaries, work becomes intensified.

These leads to the final similarity between Michel’s subjects and Swarthmore students: more or less autonomous schedules. To quote a bank director in Michel’s study, “there is no need to focus on efficiency...as long as they meet the deadline.”

This relationship is echoed for Swarthmore students: it does not matter when they do their work or how long they spend on it, as long as it gets done in time.

As Michel concludes, this series of elements causes participants to “collectively manage themselves” in accomplish tasks, and no longer look for organizational control, creating “invisible structures... [having] ...the unintended consequences of intensifying work ethic.” As students often lack visible elements of control in their daily lives, they internalize getting the work done in completing a rigorous Swarthmore education as their own individual responsibilities, intensifying

⁷ Swarthmore’s Science Library, a popular spot for students of all disciplines to hang out and do work

their own work in the same ways. Understanding student stress at Swarthmore as a product of self-entrapment is critical, as this framework explains the voluntary participation of students in practices that they simultaneously acknowledge to be overwhelming and harmful.

Alcohol As Exception: why is partying exempt from normal working practices?

Students actively participate in work practices that they find to be harmful and reduce stress, but as evidenced in Christopher's testimony earlier, the idea of simply taking a day off from work is absurd. So why does partying is permitted, but taking a day of rest is not? The answer is that partying provides a culturally-permitted excuse for drinking because of prevalent narratives regarding its importance of coming of age, combined with biology: it's hard to do homework while drunk.

Working practices at Swarthmore are incredibly difficult to escape as they pervade every environment spatially and temporally. Many Swarthmore students spend most of their time together due to the small residential nature of campus; this is compounded as the mentality that work should be the top priority turns social activities into collaborative or social studying. Christy embraces this aspect of Swarthmore, but also finds that it can have a negative impact on her mental health.

Christy: The most important thing is just to make time when you're not working and to do something that's completely fun. The worst semester I had at Swat was freshmen spring, I wasn't really making much time outside of studying to spend with friends, and I was studying with friends a lot but I

didn't really take breaks. And I started to realize it was just taking a really big toll on my mental health and also on my relationships.

While Christy certainly made plenty of time to spend with other students, being around others similarly stressed by work only facilitated a decline in her coping, another indicator of self-entrapment at play.

However, like many Swatties, this is where drug use becomes especially important for Christy, particularly in the form of party culture, because not only is alcohol a culturally-acceptable exception to working norms, but if done with enough intensity, physically prevents a student from doing work

Christy: I think party culture is really important because when you're partying you really can't be doing work (because you're intoxicated).

Because the other major way I really hang out with friends is studying together, which I love and try to do a lot, it's so important to just have that break, just for mental health and just maintaining relationships.

Christy finds the party culture particularly important at Swarthmore because it is indicative of a broader rhythm for many students: it represents an acceptable time for them to step away from work and socialize with one another. Such as in the case of the weekly Pubnite this relationship is made explicit, and according to Nina, is recognized widely as part of Swarthmore culture.

Nina: (A) lot of Swat culture is very ritualistic, we all sort of get into our schedules. The alcohol ritual, obviously Thursdays and Saturdays are the nights that people go out here. That's just Swat culture.

Nina illustrates that partying on Thursdays and Saturdays are Swarthmore specific times to stop working and start drinking because they have become ritualized and thus accepted.

The ritualization of drinking in this way has become possible alongside regimes of self-entrapment in part because binge-drinking in college commonly viewed as an integral part of coming-of-age.

Students such as Lee and Christy use drugs to help them cope with the stress of failing to live up to community standards, out of fear of poor performance academically, and also that they are not spending enough time on their work. This stress is amplified by the communal nature of work at Swarthmore; many students work together, and deviating from that rhythm represents not working as hard as everyone else. Cultural conformity helps to drive this party culture at Swarthmore, both because substance use helps students to self-medicate their feelings of inadequacy, and also because designated party times are culturally acceptable periods for students to take a break from work.

Braulio Braulio

Braulio In Braulio's experience, a big reason that socialization at Swarthmore is tied to substance consumption is that the use of drugs, and especially alcohol in particular has elevated priority even at times over studying due to its perceived integral role in the "college experience."

Braulio: Since I came to college, I realized that I'm a very social person, social interactions really drive me. Like, I could be in my room all day and just feel down, and then talk to a person for like 20 minutes, and I'm back at

it, I feel great. And those things kind of went hand in hand. So in high school, and in college when people like are together, there's something that brings them together. For my group of friends it was usually some kind of substance. And there were different reasons for different people, but that was the uniting factor. So in some regards, I associate that social aspect with the substance aspect. That's definitely true at Swarthmore as well...I think Swarthmore creates a very specific culture around drinking. It seems like a lot of people come from very privileged backgrounds where drinking alcohol wasn't prevalent. And it seems like a lot of people have their first drink once they get on campus. So the first interaction they've had with drinking culture is getting on campus. And you see it in music and movies, this association with higher education and consumption of alcohol, they go hand in hand. And I see so many people who feel physically forced to drink alcohol, because it's part of the experience. And because you don't want to miss out on the experience, you don't want to miss out on the alcohol. It's a positive feedback loop.

According to Braulio, an integral component of the drinking culture that he has experienced is driven by students not wanting to miss out of rituals of alcohol consumption that are framed as essential rites of passage within US colleges. These fears are intensified due to Swarthmore's reputation as a "nerd" school: students know that their rhythms of work are different than how college is generally portrayed in the US media, and so while they see themselves as having fewer

opportunities to drink—Thursday and Saturday nights, and for those with class or assignments only Saturday—those opportunities become more important.

Another freshman named Steve echoed this sentiment, adding that for many incoming students, life was so strictly controlled before they came to college that this particular piece of college life gains a greater importance; while many students have only limited freedom in the sense that they devote the vast majority of their time to academic work or extracurricular activity, the few socially licit spaces for drinking, namely, Thursday and Saturday nights, and the act of doing drugs (as well as having sex) on those nights takes special precedent over other activities because many students have not experienced those substances before.

Steve: It seems like a lot of people here came from really good small schools, or had really micro-managing, borderline over-protective parents. So for a lot of them, this is new stuff that they don't have a lot of experience with. It's something that everyone goes through—the stage that the first time they have something, they go overboard with it for a bit. So I know with weed and alcohol, that's usually pretty big. And I've noticed at Swarthmore, it seems to be that way with hookup culture as well. I know a bunch of people here came from—if not sheltered families—then very good schools, where you sit here and study, and if you have a boyfriend or girlfriend or romantic partner, you aren't doing anything (sexual). And then you get here and you let loose for a couple years. I went to a pretty laid back high school, so I had the opportunity to experience a lot of binge habits—so I kind of—if not matured

through it faster, realized that this exists, and I can kind of cut it back a little bit.

For Steve, he sees weekly rituals of drinking at Swarthmore as tied to understandings of what normal college should be like—and the pressure for Swarthmore students to conform to them, even as they have not engaged in those practices previously.

Having been here for several years, Joy thinks that this relationship is expressed especially strongly by freshman, and manifests very clearly in the Orientation Play.

Joy: I think something that's interesting about the Orientation play is that its kind of exhilarating for freshmen because there's a lot of fear about coming to a college with a lot of nerds, and it's like a nice confirmation that, "Oh its true, people do have sex, people get drunk," especially since so many of the conceptions of Swarthmore are like, oh it's a nerd school, so it's really like a confirmation that, "oh I am at college, and I'm getting to do these college things." So it's really just a manifestation of college values and college activities.

Taking into account Daniel, Steve, and Joy's stories, larger official consumption based rituals are constructed around pressure to conform to larger macro-narratives around the rites of passage of college education. However, the way these students express their understanding of Swarthmore also reveal another feature of

the rhythms of the school—pressure to conform to what is conceptualized as an internal community standard that is beyond simply logistical.

Medicating Moods and Coping with Failure

As evident in some of the comments made by my informants thus far some of the stress that they use drugs to address is driven both in an attempt to, as well as by the perception that they do not, live up to community standards. Merrill Singer writes about the self-medication of poor communities through drugs extensively and argues what has seemed evident from my interlocutors: “Whatever the longer-term problems drugs cause, in the short-term they allow users to regulate their lives by helping them cope with an otherwise overwhelming emotional burden(Singer, 2008; 224).” According to Singer, a primary source of stress that causes the poor self-medicate is a lack of cultural consonance in lifestyle, a model developed by Anthropologist William Dressler. Defined by Singer, this is used to represent “...the degree to which an individual had succeeded in achieving the cultural model success for his/her community.” Dressler reported that those falling short of their idea of success reported higher stress levels and had worse health, such as higher rates of hypertension. Singer connects this to the work of Sociologist Robert Merton, who characterizes this bind as a “double defeat”: because US narratives around social class are tied to individual merit despite existing within systems promoting inequality, individuals not only recognize that they are not succeeding, but blame themselves. To quote Singer in summary: “...structurally imposed social inequality produces not only poverty but also the experience of personal failure, which, in turn,

leads to self-reported higher levels of perceived stress as well as greater frequency of hypertension.”(Singer, 2008; 225).

So what does *Drugging the Poor* have to do with undergraduate students at elite universities? While both the nature of drug consumption and the social pressure at Swarthmore differ from the contexts Singer discusses, Swarthmore students who are not meeting what they see as community standards for success often use drugs to self-medicate. These students also often fall prey to the same narratives around individual success, blaming themselves, when they are not achieving what they believe to be the community standard. Finally, oftentimes, the use of drugs in and of itself as a coping method exacerbates this dissonance, as the stigmatization around certain kinds of drug use further ingrains feelings of failure. This dynamic festers in an environment fetishizing impossible work standards and glamorizing “misery poker.” While students openly acknowledge the commonality of feeling like an admissions mistake, and it is often denounced, it still carries power; a common strategy students use to deal with feeling like the admissions mistake is by using substances.

One common community standard that Swarthmore students struggle to uphold is meeting the idea of hard academic work at Swarthmore. As Braulio said earlier:

“Something I’ve noticed since coming to Swarthmore is that I’ve been working a lot harder than I ever have in my whole life. And I think the only reason is, people around me are doing the same thing. If all of my friends weren’t sitting down in Cornell doing work, I probably wouldn’t have been

either. I would have found something more interesting to do. And I enjoy the coursework, and it's something I seek out. But same thing with alcohol and everything else, it's something you're forced into because everyone else is doing."

While the school discourages competition through policies by policies such as a mandatory "Pass-Fail" semester and by not reporting grades, students coexist in a small community in which the expectation by both professors and peers is often that students will spend all of their time working, which reproduces itself as students do not want to be seen as deviant.

Another informant, a freshmen named Lee, summarized the turmoil he experienced academically coming into Swarthmore, and what he feels he has tried to achieve.

Lee: The first two months here, I had no idea if I was going to transfer. Coming from Arizona, I graduated with honors, and didn't take a single day of calculus. And then I got here and realized I needed a lab requirement, so I signed up for intro to chemistry. So I got into the class, and the first week they presented: here's all of the stuff we assume you know—review it. And I looked, and it was pretty much my entire year of honors chemistry, in a "have-fun" review. And then as the math got harder in the class, I would be sitting there thinking—where'd the e come from, what's the L? and my friend would say, that's a logarithm. And I'm like, what's the weird hieroglyphic looking symbol? That's calculus. So I had to teach myself the math to do the chemistry. And I heard similar stories from a friend in physics. What I

realized is they say “intro” class but at any other school there’s no way I could see that being an introduction. When I hear introduction, I think—I can have absolutely no idea what this is about, sit in here, and learn. As weird and bad as your education may have been—I can come in here not knowing the difference between a proton and a neutron and this will teach me. And they just assume you know—it’s like the intro, past the stuff that got you in the college. And a lot of it was for me, I’ve never seen this stuff before.

For Lee, high school had not prepared him for his coursework at Swarthmore; he quite literally did not know the information that was expected of him. Because of this dynamic, he spent the entire first semester, on and off, teaching himself material and playing catch-up, and yet was still stressed enough that he considered transferring. Knowing that he was struggling in school made it hard to justify spending time doing anything other than studying.

Lee: For a lot of my time in highschool—the education system in Arizona, after a certain point, you don’t really need to study for classes, and you’ll still do really well. For a lot of time, I would get home, and have an hour most of homework, and then have the entire day to be social. But then coming here, you get done with classes for the day and it’s read 40 pages of night, there’s homework, there’s memorize this for the test that you’ll only see once. So it’s been a struggle figuring those out because consciousness regulation and socializing become detrimental in their own way. And they’re fun and they keep you from going off the deep end. But every minute you spend with your

friends is a minute I could have been spending studying that I probably need—we'll find out when the final comes. Here, everything is a sacrifice of other things to do.

In Lee' experience, every moment spent relaxing contributes to the feeling that he has not taken the steps needed to set himself up for success.

Even in spite of the constant effort taken to prepare, Lee feels as though he's always on the verge of not being good enough, and he sees that as a common enough experience at Swarthmore.

Lee: Here, self-deprecating humor is the best. After a test, you ask someone how they did and they're like "I'm excited to use pass-fail on this class" and you're like, "me too. This guy's pretty cool, we have something in common, we both have no idea what we're doing." And it's interesting to see on kind of a functional "oh god, what am I doing here level" because you walk out of tests being like, I failed that, I should use a pass fail, my life is a mess, there's no way I can pass this final, and then you just kind of go back to the day to day grind, and then hopefully you pass the final and you're like, okay that happened.

For Lee, despite constantly preparing, his success is never assured, leaving him in a constant state of anxiety. Furthermore, the people around him share these struggles, but instead of diminishing the validity of the perceived community standard, this only serves to ramp up his stress. Christy

Christy

Relative Licity (and lack thereof):

Community policing of drug use at Swarthmore

For students using drugs at Swarthmore to cope with stress, another challenging dynamic is stigmatization of substance use, which compounds a lack of cultural consonance in lifestyle, manifesting in the “double defeat” coined by Merton. While college in the US, and particularly elite undergraduate institutions, are often viewed as sites where regular social norms around drug use are suspended, and hedonism instigated through “Work Hard- Play Hard” culture prevails, community norms, rules, and regulations still exist. This relative licity varies from subculture to subculture on campus, can change based on time, location, and intention, and may not adhere to broader college policy or law. These guidelines may not deter students from engaging in deviant behavior, but impose an additional layer of negative psychological consequences. Simply put, students using psychoactive substances to cope with stress that violate community standards compound the stress that causes them to use drugs in the first place.

Critiques against substance use at Swarthmore often center narratives characterizing drug use as unguided hedonism: those using substances are too lazy to come up with alternative social activities, hopeless addicts, or moral deficients that bully those around them into sharing their drug habits. This discourse is well represented in an Op-Ed piece published in the Swarthmore Daily Gazette in the fall of 2016, titled “Swarthmore Community Fosters Drug Abuse.” In the article, the

author, a freshman, argues that the consumption of drugs dominates social life to the point that there are no alternatives for people who want to be sober, claims that students who consume drugs do so out of boredom, and that if they could allow themselves to think of other options, they would not do drugs as much. In his own words:

"I couldn't help but to think that there was something wrong with how freely, almost thoughtlessly, Swarthmore students take drugs, and the degree to which socializing depends on the use of drug use....The problem is not that Swarthmore students are doing drugs. The problem is that social life at Swarthmore is in large part founded upon the casual use of alcohol and marijuana. As a consequence, there's almost nothing to do for those who don't want to do drugs, who can't smoke or drink for whatever reason, but who don't want to cloister themselves in the libraries at night...It seems to stem from a lack of imagination. Swatties simply cannot think of anything else to do. They lack options, or at least they think they lack options, so they do the most obvious thing they can do, smoke and drink."

The article concludes with the author arguing that if individual students honestly considered the questions: "Am I doing what I want? Or Am I doing what I think I *should* want?", then students at Swarthmore would not do drugs. This narrative is important, not only because it many of my informants find it to be inaccurate, but also because they find it to be condescending. The author here contends that "Being around drunk people when you're sober is like playing jazz to an audience of metalheads" and in the comments section is challenged by an older student he does

not use drugs, but finds that comparison to be unproductive and derogatory because it clearly positions jazz over metal music as a superior form of art(Menz, 2016).

This type of discourse illustrates both some of the common misconceptions around drug usage at Swarthmore as well as the stigma attached to it that contributing to a type of stress known to in fact exacerbate drug abuse.

These community guidelines often do not prevent or cause substance use, but shape the nature in which students ingest substances. For example, Joy consumes caffeine to help her stay alert through a variety of mediums dictated by what she perceives to be social norms.

Joy: I definitely have different associations with different caffeinated substances for different times of the day. Like if I have to stay up late at night, I'll drink tea instead of coffee, because I think the idea of drinking coffee at night, seems like I really messed up. "Why do you have to be up that late, Joy?" Why are you drinking this morning drink at 1 AM because you have to stay up? With tea at least even if its caffeinated you can kind of pretend that everything is fine, it definitely has more of a nightly feel to it. Where I feel like coffee has definitely more of a day connotation. Sophomore year when I was like really messed up academically, I would drink Monster (energy drink)—I think if there had been toxicology reports, of me after sophomore year, I would have been 60 or 70% Monster. I think it's also because the person I was dating at the time drank a lot of monster, so I think he kind of normalized it for me, because he drank it all the time to stay awake, and it really does work. I didn't really get into coffee until Junior

Spring, but—my mom was a super health nut when I was in high school, so I wasn't even allowed to drink soda. So my first major soda experience was in college. I also had this weird thing during sophomore spring, where I would just drink Doctor Pepper, which is horrifying and I'm glad that I stopped that. I would do Orgo in McCabe and just drink Doctor Pepper. I think Caffeine is interesting in which people like really understand that it is an addictive substance, it's like kind of this very normalized addiction, and we laugh about it, but I think it's cool that you're looking at how people structure their days around these low-key very addictive substances. I feel like for parts of Swarthmore I'd be like pretty cognizant of how much caffeine I was consuming, because I was like oh, I don't want to develop an addiction. And then this summer when I was applying for graduate schools and stuff, I was like, honestly, I'm going to go to graduate school, I'm going to need to drink coffee there, I might as well just build the addiction now, so I started drinking like a cup a day, and then I decided I didn't want to go to grad school now, so I'm stuck with this low key bad addictive habit. I'm trying to get more into black coffee because I feel like it's more of a respectable habit. I feel like it's respectable to say, oh I drink a couple of cups of black coffee a day, but I feel like it's heathenness to be like oh I need two lattes a day."

From Joy's perspective, when she wants to consume caffeine, there are a variety of prioritized restrictions that guide her use. Joy prefers to drink coffee over soda, because she views soda as extremely unhealthy due to its sugar and chemical content. When she is in crisis-mode academically, she will drink Monster, but she

prefers to drink other caffeinated substances regularly because energy drinks are conceptualized as extremely intense and did not want to sustain the levels of sleep deprivation that she used Monster to address. Joy's caffeinated source of choice is now black coffee, because black coffee is seen as more professional and less indulgent than lattes; however, at night, Joy prefers tea, because consuming coffee—a daytime beverage—reinforces how behind she is on her work, and therefore her own deviance. Even with a substance that she sees as an extremely normalized addiction, Joy has a complex set of strategies for navigating what she perceives as the social norms regulate caffeine consumption, and while at times she violates them, doing so brings her additional stress.

Another way Joy describes that community standards shape her consumption is the frequency and the intensity of her drug use, particularly with alcohol.

Joy: Something I was thinking about with alcohol that's interesting socially is that my friends and I regulate too much drinking—which I think is a very college experience. Whether that's in the moment—whether saying to someone “I think you've had too much,” or going up to a friend and saying, “hey I think I've had too much, if you see me going for another drink, can you be like ‘yo chill.’” But I even see it on like a big scale, so if one person is like “hey do you want to go out tonight,” being like “no no no, we're getting super trashed tomorrow night, we should do this instead”—sort of like distribution of how acceptable it is to be super drunk one night if you're going to be drunk

another night. How much you can do something depends on the extent and frequency to which you engage in it.

For she and her friends, not only are there notions of acceptable times and frequencies with which to use alcohol, but they actively attempt to enforce these norms with one another. Ignoring these norms can have very real social consequences.

Finally, reliance on substances as a crutch—or addiction—can be stigmatized by these relative licities even as local circumstance actively facilitate consumption. Joy sees this trend especially in colloquial understandings of alcohol use at Swarthmore.

Joy: College is like a sanctified space for alcoholism. Did you go to the Speak to Swatties event on failure? A few people stood up and talked about struggling with alcoholism at Swat, and I feel like that's something I should really acknowledge exists, and I feel like I have friends who casually talk about behavior that if he wasn't at Swarthmore I would be like, yeah, he's definitely a high-functioning alcoholic. I feel like people don't think that happens to college students, because they view college as this place that exists outside of normal drinking rules, where you're allowed to drink ridiculous amounts and do this kind of thing, but I think that a lot of Swarthmore students probably have alcoholism, but don't really know how to talk about it because you kind of like, think you're invincible drinking-wise.

I feel like that also feeds into a lot of narratives of masculinity. Cause I feel like there's this portrayal that all these frat boys are alcoholics, but it's okay because they're in college, that I feel like is quite lonely for people who are actually alcoholics, because there's this idea that if you are an alcoholic then you've failed at drinking in the way that you're meant to in college. College is this time where you can be binge drinking and won't develop an addiction. But a lot of people who binge drink do develop addictions, so I feel like it's tied to masculinity because I feel like it's very weak to acknowledge that you have a problem. Because it's so tied to college and so tied to men in college in particular, like this is a time where you're a superhero, so you can't acknowledge that alcohol has become pathological to you.

In Joy's description, at Swarthmore it is expected for students to participate in regular-binge drinking, but unacceptable for them to use alcohol in coping with stress, because it conforms to popular understandings of alcoholism. This does not stop students from using alcohol in taboo ways, but rather lowers their cultural consonance in lifestyle, intensifying their symptoms of stress that alcohol is used to cope with in the first place.

Writing Papers, Rolling Paper:

smoking, stoners, and life 15 feet away from major academic buildings

Another point of tension that students feel in their drug use on campus is the stigmatization of smoking tobacco as a source of relaxation or stress-relief versus

binge drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana. While students that smoke tobacco are aware of potential health risks and engage in smoking often very deliberately; however, at Swarthmore, smoking tobacco in particular is highly frowned upon due to its association with cancer, lack of education, and thoughtlessness.

Steve: With smoking, it's proven without a doubt now it causes cancer, it causes all these other health problems. But like, everything else does too. Smoking might do it more reliably. But at the end of the day, the sun gives me cancer. Putting on sunscreen so the sun doesn't give me cancer gives me cancer. Drinking soda was going to give me cancer. The death part of living happens no matter what. And it's how you fill that space in between. And for me, smoking is kind of a casual thing. It's hard for me to picture how people smoke a pack a day. But for me, if not a social thing I do with other people, it's sort of—you're slowly killing yourself—but is the feeling that it gives short-term, justify? And for me, it is, even though it's a stupid belief to have. Most people have way too much sugar consumption. And alcohol destroys parts of your body. And there are a bunch of people here on their high horse who are like, I'm above the ilk of the people who smoke cigarettes outside my door—but then get trashed (drunk) every Thursday and Saturday night. So it's interesting—they're saying, I won't do that because it's horrible for you. But I'll do this other thing because I think it's fun.

According to Steve' testimony, although legal, smoking tobacco is seen as a deviant drug at Swarthmore. This alone is not enough to stop people from smoking, but it does increase their stress levels.

Part of this deviancy comes from what students feel are a misconception of values of individuals that decide to use drugs, which particularly impacts students that smoke tobacco and marijuana. Steve, Lee, and Joy all talked specifically about the “stoner” stereotype, and how they feel it is misapplied at Swarthmore. As Joy phrases the question:

Joy: Why is this idea of a person who is a stoner, why—I don’t know, I feel as a person who has been considered kind of a stoner in the past, I don’t really smoke that much any more, I feel like there’s often a misconception that if you meet another person that uses these substances in a certain way, you’ll like get each other, and like what is this idea of stoner culture, why is there this idea that people who enjoy certain types of drugs enjoy certain activities, is it related to the substances, or like the type of person that often does them? I think it’s a different kind of (air quotes) comradery than is seen with substances like alcohol because it’s more stigmatized.

In Joy’s analysis, she is not sure whether “stoners” are treated as an imagined community because of the substances they use, their personalities, or because those substances accompany other shared activities. The only factor she is sure of is that tobacco and weed are stigmatized. However, Steve provides a more focused perspective—he sees “stoners” as connected through a particular social experience accompanying the smoking of tobacco and marijuana, but pushes back against the common stereotype derived of those who smoke, arguing that it is based in the stigma around those substances.

Steve: I know for me and my friend group, we're one of the more, hippy-esque people, because we're of that ilk, we're all Swarthmore students, we know cigarettes kill you, but we still smoke 1 or two a day, one after class and one at night, and it's really for the social aspect. 'Cause of course you can not smoke—if you're smart you do that—or there's a vape that has it. But there's something, and especially here, there's a social aspect to smoking cigarettes that you can't get in another way. There's a part on your end of holding it, and then you're with at least one other person, and you're having conversations you wouldn't normally have because you're out there with time to kill. So I know tobacco is something that people that I know of argue is a study tool, in some cases it kind of focuses you in, and it's not that you're unable to process multiple things, but you feel as if you can be more focused, and it takes off stress. So that's the big thing for a lot of people that smoke here.

Another big thing in my dorm is smoking weed, and that's more of a consciousness change. Where it's kind of—not only is it its own unique social thing, but the effects of it can also mellow you out, after a long day of classes, you can sit back, smoke, and then lay back with your class readings. You can use it to avoid studying, but also sort of as a study aid. In some cases it's the mindset that you go into it with. If I've already done a decent amount of homework for the night, this is my cup of coffee or sip of whiskey that people have, this is that for me. And in other cases it's like okay, let's smoke a bit, and then just get to the readings. And I'd argue in the same way as

tobacco, it can either zone you out more, or making you really just focus on one thing. And if you can put in the effort to make that one thing sitting down and studying, it varies of course, but it can anchor you down into a sit and make you read readings that you would normally get bored of, in like 10 minutes. People think of people who smoke weed as stoners, as lazy people with skateboards listening to Punk Rock. But these people are all Swarthmore students.

Steve recognizes that it would be “smart” not to smoke tobacco, but argues that it is defining for him and his friend group through the social experiences that it creates, as well as the psychological benefit it brings to studying. For him and his friends, who he describes as hippies or stoners because of their use of tobacco and marijuana, smoking offers a routine, opportunities to connect unhampered by distraction, and a mechanism to provide greater focus to the work that they do. Ultimately, for Steve, this experience runs counter to the narrative of the “stoner” as lazy and anti-authoritarian; for him, smoking is a system of maximizing productivity, managing stress, and facilitating social connection in the same way that other students use alcohol and caffeine.

Ultimately, even at Swarthmore, “stoners” and high-achieving students are seen as mutually exclusive, despite a recognition that this common narrative does not hold up under scrutiny. In our interview, Lee mentioned how pronounced he saw this distinction upon coming to Swarthmore.

Lee: In high school I was what you might call here a massive stoner. And it wasn't anything that seemed out of the normal for a high school student growing up in Colorado, and I didn't realize the paradigm shift of coming here(right away). But my behavior really hasn't changed.

For Lee, much like Joy and Steve, being associated as a stoner is negative and stressful, because the substances they use to cope with stress, facilitate their work, and build social cohesion are viewed incongruous with the very values of hard work and communal learning that they are using substances to uphold.

“It's not Alcoholism until you graduate”: Deviancy Across the Bubble

The tensions students feel by violating community standards not only applies internally within Swarthmore, but can also extend to normative social standards and stigmas. For Braulio, although he sees the use of drugs as necessary aids in his daily life, he very much feels as though these habits are frowned upon, especially by adults.

Braulio: There's not enough conversation about how everyday college students approach their studies or approach their life in regards to substances. In every day life, especially with adults, there's this very negative attitude towards anybody doing anything to get through their day, how you interact with that, and especially now, in the age of pharmaceuticals, in the age of the coffee industry, the tobacco industry, our life kind of revolves around what we consume.

For Braulio, when hearing others discuss the use of psychoactive substances in daily life, he finds most perspectives to be negative, despite seeing the use of drugs to be widespread both in his life and those around him.

Another example of this dynamic returns us to the anonymous alumnus from the class of 2016, and to Joy's analysis: students drink in ways that they know to be considered deviant, and while they are unable to conceptualize alternatives that tools to help them get through Swarthmore, their explicit deviancy produces stress. This illustrates a conflict between the "ideal" and "normal" bodies: while Swarthmore students are expected to operate under different rules from society writ large, when this exceptionalism positions them in opposition to normative moral imperatives, they feel the strain of resistance.

Conclusion

Over the last chapter, I have discussed a variety of ways through which Swarthmore students are disciplined into conformity through drug use. Students use drugs to address the stress created by participatory regimes of overwork referred to as Self-Entrapment that preclude alternative modes of self-care. Students engage in ritualized parties with alcohol as a naturalized compliment to this overwork, because ritualized binge-drinking both prevents them from doing work biologically and is exempt from logics of Self-Entrapment due to larger narratives prescribing partying as an integral piece of the college experience. Students regulate their drug consumption to the norms of the Swarthmore community itself, which while are amorphous, are mutually reconstituted by its constituents. Finally, students consider larger societal norms in their biological self-

modulation, either medicating themselves to meet external standards, or using drugs to cope with the stress produced from deviancy.

Now that I have discussed how drug use at Swarthmore simultaneously a diffuses and creates tension between different value systems to which students are attempting to biologically conform, I will discuss the implications of understanding drug use as a mechanism of conformity, and explore how identifying the systems to which students are conforming can help inform policy and future research both at Swarthmore and in the outside world.

Chapter 4

Degrees of intoxication: Understanding drug use at Swarthmore College as a product of biopower on both sides of the bubble

Over the last four chapters, I have outlined how Swarthmore students come to be socialized into using drugs to embody community ideals. Students use drugs as tools to embody alertness, ground themselves through ritual, and provide reward systems incentivizing good behavior, or conformity, that they may not necessarily want to exhibit. Additionally, students use drugs to cope with the stress produced both by overwork, and through failure to live up to community standards. Furthermore, students use drugs as a placeholder for other types of care both for stresses previously mentioned, and through trauma induced external to working patterns at Swarthmore. Drug and alcohol use are chosen over alternative self-care techniques because they present an exemption to the overwork embedded in regimes of self-entrapment at Swarthmore: college drug use is prescribed as a culturally integral part of the “college experience”, and intoxication (sometimes) makes work physically impossible. Students also use drugs to navigate between different competing norms at Swarthmore, and larger conflict between expectations of Swarthmore students that conflict with societal expectations writ large.

These complex regimes of consumption present amorously as individuals attempt to navigate the competing ideals presented by their undergraduate education, as well as the tension between these ideals and expectations enforced by broader societal understandings of the “normal body”. While often perceived as voluntary, students use drugs in response to morally imperative standards for

existing in the world, which can be amorphous, multitudinous, and contradictory, and thus can be conceptualized as biopower, as students self-discipline to meet these imperatives imposed on them.

Understanding drug use in elite colleges, and particularly “work-hard play-hard” culture in this way has both immediate and future implications. First and foremost, applying these frameworks to an ongoing conversation over alcohol and drug policies at Swarthmore may help to elucidate the varying needs, and tensions at play, and provide new targets for policy implementation. I will spend the next part of this chapter giving a brief history of changing drug and alcohol policy during my time as a Swarthmore student, and then make suggestions as to how the data gathered in this thesis might reframe these debates, reconciling tension between students and college staff.

At a larger level, this project has implications because it finds that drug use at competitive undergraduate institutions is not only a product of a “time out” period in between adolescence and adulthood, but also of specific habitus. I will spend the last part of this conclusion discussing how these specific embodied relationships might travel with Swarthmore students after they leave the bubble, informing future research on college drug culture and on the knowledge based industries in which Swarthmore students are likely to work.

Regulating Fun at Swarthmore: the biopolitics of the “Spring of Discontent” and the evolution of drug and alcohol policies

Understanding drug use by Swatties as a project of conformity rather than rebellion is immediately relevant in the context of shifting drug policies at Swarthmore College. Beginning in 2013 and coinciding with my tenure here, a broad series of policy changes have occurred, prompted by the Title IX investigation of the school following the “spring of discontent.”⁸ Among these were the establishment of entire new offices, such as the Title IX house, the Office of Student Engagement, and multiple revisions to the drugs and alcohol policy.

Changes to the drugs and alcohol policy largely had the effect of increasing adherence to State and Federal Laws, making alcohol less accessible in public spaces across campus(Chaffinch 2016). In 2013, the “DJ Fund”⁹ was abolished, removing public funding for parties(Chong 2016, Chaffinch 2016). In 2014, Swarthmore College’s drugs and alcohol policy underwent several major changes: granting limited immunity to students seeking and needing help in alcohol and drug related emergencies, the prohibition of hard alcohol at gatherings of over 30 people, and the prohibition of drinking paraphernalia, as well as any alcohol related games (Elliot

⁸ The spring semester of 2013, referred to as the “Spring of Discontent”, was a semester characterized by intense student activism motivated by student anger at the way cases of sexual assault were adjudicated, as well as a reoccurring series of offenses targeted at minority students on campus including the urination of a student on the door to the intercultural center. Important events include protests interrupting Board of Managers meetings, and lawsuits against the school around the way staff handled sexual assault, which lead to the school being investigated by the Federal government for Title IX violations.

⁹ The DJ Fund was a source of money provided by the Student Budgeting Committee to which any student hosting an event could apply. While the money was officially allocated to hire a DJ, students would frequently voluntarily DJ and use the money obtained through the fund to purchase alcohol.

2014). In 2015, the threshold of individuals needed for an event to require a party permit was reduced from 30 to 10 students, and in 2016, party permits required two students trained by the Office of student engagement to serve as Party Hosts(Setty 2015, Events and Party Policies 2016). With these changes, between 2013 and 2016, public parties serving alcohol on campus went from being held by a variety of campus groups to primarily being held by two groups: the campus fraternities Delta Upsilon and Phi Psi, and a NuWave, a group formed to provide an alternative party space to fraternities (Chong 2016).

In addition to the decrease in the variety of parties available on the weekends, Swarthmore social party traditions have changed dramatically as well, with the disappearance of previously ritualized events. One tradition that disappeared in light of changing policy was Crunkfest, an annual festival held in Worth Courtyard associated with pushing boundaries including public nudity, sex, and hallucinogenic drugs, which was canceled in 2014, although it was rumored to have taken place in secret (Grenham 2016).¹⁰ Another annual party that disappeared over this time period was Genderfuck, a party that had been held for over since the 1980s centered around experimenting with gender norms, which was canceled in 2015 due to concerns that the party was in fact losing that initial intent and becoming a place where queerness was mocked, as well as concerns regarding the logistics of hosting the event and potential concerns around alcohol abuse (Fallati 2015).

¹⁰ An open space surrounded by Worth and Willets Courtyard, both known for being the party dorms on campus

Perhaps most lamented by both my informants and campus culture writ large has been the slow decline of Pubnite, an open campus party held Thursday nights involving an hour and a half of drinking games, and then dancing until midnight, at which point the songs “American Pie” and “Closing Time” are played, signaling the end of the event. Initially held as a fundraiser for the senior class, in 2014 changes to the party policies made charging money for admission to an event as a fundraiser illicit, cutting off funding for Pubnite.¹¹ While Pubnite has survived through to the present as a free event supported by volunteers and GoFundMe campaigns, both my informants and other students to perceive Pubnite to be declining, likely to fade away in the near future after the class of 2017 graduates (Herron 2015).

A final tradition that students perceive to be threatened by the changing alcohol policies is “Worthstock”, the weekend in between the end of classes and finals during which a series of events take place “aimed at helping students relax and unwind before final exams begin” (Zipp 2015). Prior to 2015, Worthstock was typically characterized by a “boozy brunch” in which students brought alcohol into the dining hall, before assembling tables and chairs in Worth courtyard to play drinking games and listen to live music. However, due to the alcohol policies changed in 2014, in 2015 and 2016 staff members and student workers monitor the exits and entrances to the space, checking student IDs, and permitting only students above the ages of 21 to bring in limited amounts of alcohol (Zipp 2015). While

¹¹ Traditionally, during the week between the end of classes and graduation, senior class officers organize events for the rest of the senior class. This period of time, in which classes are over and seniors are the only people on campus, is known as Senior week.

Worthstock continues to be held, students perceive the changing policy as making it harder to enjoy what is often characterized as “the one day that Swatties emerge from the libraries into the sunlight and seem to be genuinely having a good time.”¹² Collectively, these evolving policies aimed at keeping students healthy and safe have been characterized as “regulating fun” (Chaffinch 2016, Regulating Fun at Swarthmore 2016).

Examining alcohol use in particular for Swarthmore students as a mechanism in conformity, particularly in mitigating stress, helps to illustrate a point often articulated by students but that is often interpreted as complaining: Swarthmore is stressful, and restricting the ways in which students consume alcohol social does not prevent the consumption of alcohol, but merely forces it underground, making it more stressful to drink. In the words of an anonymous senior from the class of 2016, “Swarthmore’s rigorous academics and geographic isolation necessitate more stress-relief than one organization can provide... The College must enable students to make their own fun, or they may do so unsafely or not at all.” Students speculate that what they see as the “regulation of fun” has been contributing to the skyrocketing rates of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), which have dramatically increased over the 2015-2016 school year, and far exceed both the national average, and that of Swarthmore’s Consortium partner, Haverford (Chaffinch 2016, Regulating Fun at Swarthmore 2016). The accounts of my informants seem to support this line of thinking: every student I interviewed

¹² This is the way Worthstock was characterized to me as a freshman by a senior, and I have heard it since described in the same way, nearly word for word, by a variety of members of the college community including staff members.

described using drugs to cope with stress, and many described saw the shifting policies not as reducing their use, but rather reducing the social aspect of stress relief they were able to gain through use, increasing the extent to which the students relied on the substances alone for release. However, interestingly enough, in spite of the restriction of use through official college policies, some students saw their drug use as directly encouraged by the College itself.

Producing Productivity: biopower and work-hard play-hard at Swarthmore College

In seeming tension with the series of angry editorials demonizing the recent changes to the alcohol policy, some of my informants actually saw tension between the treatment of alcohol at Swarthmore and the federal and state laws prompting the policy changes. For Braulio, a freshman informant, Orientation events were critical in the way that he came to perceive binge drinking as a necessary compliment to the stressful regiments of schoolwork that Swarthmore imposes. He described his transition to college to me like this:

When we first got to Swarthmore, they had this big presentation [referring to the alcohol and drug workshop with Josh Ellow and subsequent discussion groups with Student Orientation Facilitators] on alcohol and drugs, and they were like some people, they work hard and they play hard, and that's such a funny concept. That you need that break from something.

For Braulio, alcohol, and particularly binge-drinking, were not associated with blowing off steam before getting to Swarthmore. However, once he got here, he

found this behavior to have been facilitated by the treatment of official policy, and reproduced en masse by students.

Braulio's analysis of these trends is that this interaction between formal and informal campus policy—interactive discourse produced by students, faculty, administrators, as well as media depictions of college drinking—actively produce work-hard play-hard culture as a necessary component of a Swarthmore education. According to him, this relationship is produced by two factors: the socialization of Swarthmore students that doing work should be the default, and subsequently, the positioning of drinking (and at times, other recreational drug use) as the exception to this rule because of its integral role to the “college experience.” Braulio describes this dynamic as follows:

I think all of it is social...something I've noticed since coming to Swarthmore is that I've been working a lot harder than I ever have in my whole life. And I think the only reason is, people around me are doing the same thing. If all of my friends weren't sitting down in Cornell¹³ doing work, I probably wouldn't have been either. I would have found something more interesting to do... But (it's the) same thing with alcohol and everything else, it's something you're forced into because everyone else is doing it.

In Braulio's analysis, students over-work because they are actively comparing themselves to the people around them, establishing work as the primary purpose of a Swarthmore education.

¹³ Swarthmore's Science Library, a popular spot for students of all disciplines to hang out and do work

However, Braulio also sees binge drinking, or “playing hard”, as an exception to this rule that is generated by a variety of discourses produced both by external media and by the college itself. In his words:

I think Swarthmore creates a very specific culture around drinking. It seems like a lot of people come from very privileged backgrounds where drinking alcohol wasn't prevalent... it seems like a lot of people have their first drink once they get on campus. So the first interaction they've had with drinking culture is getting on campus. And you see it in music and movies, this association with higher education and consumption of alcohol, they go hand in hand. And I see so many people who feel physically forced to drink alcohol, because it's part of the experience. And because you don't want to miss out on the experience, you don't want to miss out on the alcohol. It's a positive feedback loop.

According to Braulio, Swarthmore students often have little experience with alcohol before getting to Swarthmore, and are predisposed to view alcohol consumption as an essential component of college life itself.

Where biopower comes into play is where official and student discourses converge in establishing fun as both a necessary component of working hard, as well as tied to alcohol use, which for some students, manifests in the collective redefinition of fun as alcohol use and alcohol use as fun. Braulio traces this relationship to central relationship between alcohol and events that are seen as both fun and community defining, such as Pubnite, the annual Halloween Party, Winter Formal, Worthstock, and Senior Week.

I think a lot of the time, that's what Pubnite is [a break]. For me Pubnite is very social. There's no other way that I can interact with a large group of people that I don't know, outside than Pubnite or NuWave parties or the

frats. If you want to meet new people, it's by going to these events, drinking alcohol, meeting new people, and then leaving. Alcohol becomes such a novel aspect of these experiences that it seems like you can't have one without the other. I don't think that's true, but that's not an option.

Because of the precedence that homework takes, as well as the lack of recreational spaces on campus, student turnout at events that are not alcohol related is perceived as limited to the point that for students like Braulio, they are not even perceived as options.

Even as drug policies have evolved to limit the consumption of alcohol at these events, alcohol both remains central to the events themselves, and an important component of what makes them "fun" and therefore useful in relieving stress. Braulio discussed this role by outlining a dynamic he has observed among some of his friends:

Instead (of the college providing alcohol to students at parties) people are staying in their dorms and binge drinking. I think that's the biggest argument that people give for having more alcohol at parties, is taking more pressures off students that don't know how to properly consume alcohol. And I see that—I'm dating this girl that lives in Willets, who is part of a sports team, and they have a really intense relationship with alcohol. So before every pubnite, or every weekend, or the Halloween Party or Winter Formal, where alcohol isn't allowed, they're like, we're going to stay here, and get as drunk as possible, and then we're going to go. It's this process of them substituting that environment—it seems like alcohol becomes more of a central piece—not as the backdrop to something social, but as something you do before you go a party. It becomes the activity itself, rather than the backdrop of another activity. It becomes a crutch to have fun, or interact with people, and then at somepoint it becomes a routine, or a ritual.

Even as the events themselves become “dry”, the absence of alcohol at them makes its consumption beforehand that much more important to students such as Braulio is describing, to the point that it replaces the event itself. As he eloquently summarizes:

Now we’re drinking natty light before we go to pubnite. It’s this thing that becomes central to everything else—this thing that begins the ritual. So me drinking this can, shotgunning this can, begins this ritual to me having fun the rest of the night. And if I miss this one aspect, then everything else is not the same. And that’s how they present it at the beginning of Swarthmore.

The guy who does all the drug and alcohol abuse, he comes up and he’s like it’s fine to have alcohol to have fun, we expect you to do that. You read all the Pubnight emails, and they’re like you’re stressed, you’re tired? Come drink it away. It’s the beginning of this process. And people get into it, and it becomes the norm. I don’t think it’s positive or negative, just the reality.

By divorcing the physical presence of alcohol from campus wide social events, the consumption of alcohol is reinforced as “fun” in and of itself, rather than facilitating other types of stress relief, further ingraining the extent to which alcohol is embedded in student coping mechanisms. For students such as Braulio, work-hard play-hard culture is neither a natural product of adolescence, nor of media portrayals of college life such as *American Pie*, but is and has been actively constructed and reproduced by campus discourse and policy, biologically regulating Swarthmore students into a work cycle.

Where do we go from here: drug policy prescription in the “visioning” process

The outcry from students in response to changing alcohol policies on Swarthmore’s campus as evidenced both by the series of angry editorials in student newspapers, and by the personal conversations I’ve experienced throughout my time here indicate that change cannot be complete: in addressing the legal vulnerabilities of college policy, students perceive their wellbeing to be put at risk. Considering the ubiquity with which my participants reported using substances to cope not only with the unique stresses produced by Swarthmore but also with stresses from their personal lives that they felt the “culture of smartness” at Swarthmore prevented them from dealing with, enforcing a tighter policing of drug use hardly seems as though it would address this broader issue.

Alternatively, as previous Resident Assistants have argued “banding together to scapegoat some poor fuck in the OSE (Office of Student Engagement)” is unproductive, as previous alcohol policies on campus have historically reinforced illegal and dangerous alcohol behaviors as a necessary compliment to the rigor demanded of Swarthmore students. Notable alumnus *Jeopardy* champion Arthur Chu '08 even argued that the college “directly cut itself off from the legal system by directly encouraging illegal behavior on a massive scale” (Chaffinch 2016). So how can policy be directed at improving student health while neither further restrictor nor promoting drug use? By targeting the overwork that students report to be generating their stress to begin with.

Drug^[5] use and Self-Entrapment inside the bubble: potential policy

interventions for Self-Entrapment at Swarthmore

To quickly recap the past chapter, since 2013, Swarthmore College alcohol and drugs policies have shifted dramatically to align with “best practices” in the field, indicating a departure of previous alcohol policies, which actively encouraged alcohol consumption, often in violation of state and federal law. These ongoing revisions have generated significant and sustained unrest from many students, who have experienced policy changes as not preventing dangerous or unhealthy alcohol-related behavior on campus, but rather regulating student-generated social events, or “fun”. Attempts by the Office of Student Engagement and other community members to generate alternative substance-free “fun” and to reduce unhealthy work practices driving drug consumption has been largely ineffective in addressing the academic stress that students such as my informants use alcohol and other drugs to cope with, as seemingly contradictory, students continue to willingly participate in structures of work in which they sacrifice potential opportunities for fun and stress relief to work harder. This contradiction can be interpreted through self-entrapment, or mutually constituted participatory workplace practices that individuals perceive as their autonomous agency but actually work against both participants’ own health and self-described goals. Parties centered around alcohol are exempted from other types of fun that are ignored because alcohol is constructed as an integral part of the college experience, and therefore education and acquisition of cultural and social capital.

Based on this summary, policies restricting alcohol use on campus further would only result in increased stress for those using alcohol as a form of stress release; however, policies facilitating drug use further would only continue the

trend of institutionally produced “work-hard play-hard” culture that has come to define Swarthmore in the first place. One potential solution to this bind is to address the prevailing self-entrapment on campus, thus reducing the need for alcohol consumption in response to stress while simultaneously mitigating student unrest over policy designed to keep Swarthmore College in compliance with federal guidelines. This self-entrapment is constructed through the interaction of egalitarian structures, self-monitoring both through feedback by faculty members, and the constant surveillance by peers, the blurring of living, social, and work spatially and temporally, feedback on performance lacking goal or target, and autonomous working schedules. Thus, policy change has the potential to address stress-induced drug consumption by targeting these elements.

While Swarthmore actively facilitates an egalitarian hierarchy between students, as well as diminish the importance of grades as working goals, one potential path to combat Self-Entrapment at Swarthmore that would be culturally feasible is to limit work spatially and temporally. Swatties have long clamored for a Student Center, a building explicitly for socializing in which they do not have to feel the gaze of working peers. Drawing clearer distinctions between living, social, and work spaces would help reduce the stress that students feel when they are not doing work. In addition, limiting to some degree the hours that professors and administrators send emails (while I have had some professors that have explicitly restricted their email interactions to business hours during the week, I have had plenty others from whom it is not uncommon to receive emails at 2 AM on a Friday

or Saturday night) might help establish temporal boundaries outside of which students could relax.

To be clear, these policies are no more than a straw figure: I do not expect them to work, and I lack the expertise required to generate fully-fledged suggestions. I merely hope that these examples illustrate some of the answers that this project has found: namely, that the source of stress-induced drug use can be traced, and that while seemingly participatory, those embedded with these systems of self-entrapment struggle to escape. Moving forward, combatting Self-entrapment at Swarthmore seems critical not only in resolving the triangulated tension between shifting alcohol policies, the “regulation of fun”, and campus drug and alcohol use, but also has significant implications for Swarthmore students after they graduate from the college.

Out of the frying pan, into the fire: the effects of self-entrapment and drug use in the production of “leaders for the common good”

Self-Entrapment, and in particular, the role of alcohol and other drugs in facilitating destructive work practices, has potentially severe implications to Swarthmore students even after they graduate. Swatties are likely to pursue fields with various ideal traits accompanied by varying regimes of drug use to embody those traits. Even if Swarthmore students do not end up in those fields, as Self-Entrapment becomes constituted and socialized as habitus, it is likely to be carried into future workplaces, where it will be reproduced and reflected in other employees. In the pages that follow, I will trace the embodiment of desired

characteristics through drug use in medicine, computer technology, and investment banking, three fields in which many Swatties aspire to participate after graduation, and discuss how these practices can be adapted from one environment to another.

Beer Goggles: Alcoholism and the Production of the Medical Gaze

From the very beginning of medical school, alcohol is constructed as an integral part of medicine. For doctors, it serves many roles: it provides the centerpiece of social functions and it serves as a mechanism to facilitate relaxation and stress relief. Most importantly, alcohol is used to self-medicate against the emotional fallout that accompanies work as a doctor: this emotional regulation is key to maintaining the objectivity and detachment required to exert the medical gaze from day to day.

Several accounts illustrate the manners in which alcohol is taught to medical students as a specific tool used to cope with emotional stress placed on doctors in their daily work, and reinforced both horizontally and vertically in medical social structures. For medical students, going out to drink alcohol is an important bonding ritual for cohorts, which is particularly emphasized due to their busy schedules. Many see themselves as having comparatively few opportunities to socialize and to have fun, and so it becomes necessary to take advantage of free time to drink with one another. This urgency leads to extremely organized drinking practices, which are central to the organized socialization of medical. Its centrality to these social rituals exacerbates the importance of alcohol, as medical students who choose not to drink can be ostracized as outsiders. Finally, senior doctors explicitly encourage

alcohol use as a means of relaxation and escape from the emotional rigor of medical work(Rourke 2012).

Not only is the use of alcohol deliberately encouraged, but punishment for abuse is often minimized, positioning alcoholism in medicine as an exception. While alcohol misuse does have severe professional repercussions, students find that faculty are more concerned with image than with health: standards requiring medics be “fit to practice” does not prevent dangerous alcohol consumption, it merely pushes it underground. Medical students and professionals are not discouraged from consuming alcohol, they are simply encouraged to keep it out of the workplace, and drinking becomes about self-medicating. This produces a paradigm in which alcohol assumes a pivotal role, yet it is recognized that such treatment would be considered unhealthy or problematic outside of the medical workplace. Such logic is illustrated through jokes such as “an alcoholic is someone who drinks more than their doctor”, which both positions alcohol use in medicine as external to popular definitions of alcoholism, but also hints at the potential problems induced by alcohol(Rourke 2012).

Use of alcohol may be introduced as a central component of med school, but continues to pervade the field long after students graduate. While alcohol dependence known to have an onset during medical school has been linked to lower remission rates(Hall, Pomm, Frost-Pineda, and Gold 2002), studies have found that alcohol consumption in physicians generally tends to increase by age(Mangus, Hawkins, and Miller 1996). While alcohol-dependence is hardly ubiquitous, it is

certainly prevalent, as some studies suggest that as many as 1 in 15 doctors have a problem with alcohol or substance misuse in their lifetime(Rourke 2012).

An interesting paradox of in the prevalence of alcohol abuse by physicians is that doctors are uniquely positioned to understand the severe biological consequences of their actions; however, one framework for explaining the social, cultural, and individual prevalence of this use is the utility of alcohol in producing the “medical gaze.” First outlined by Foucault, the “medical gaze” is an ideological approach by which physicians give order to patients as bodies to be treated, rooted in observable sensibility and aided by the technology of pathological anatomy giving physicians the power to classify bodies as series of object-components.(Foucault 1975, 120-125). In her ethnography of surgery students, Rachel Prentice discusses the integral nature of detachment, or the regulation of emotion in the aim of scientific objectivity, to the adoption of this “medical gaze” by blooming doctors, which in the course of their work, they have to be able to employ or turn off at will. For doctors in Europe or the US, “...most emotions [are treated] as negative or threatening states that training mitigates...emotions [are treated] as internal forces of irrationality and disorder that threated reason and good judgment(Prentice 2012, 36-37).” By this formulation, a good doctor is one that can control their emotions—to turn them on and off as needed—to construct patients as bodies or people strategically. Alcohol plays a key role in facilitating the management of emotions, as a tool for coping with stress. Therefore, while it is broadly recognized that alcohol can threaten both the work and health of doctors, it also serves as a tool used to embody characteristics deemed essential to the field. Biopower is exerted over

doctors as they use alcohol as a mechanism to conform to western values of detachment integral to the production of the medical gaze.

“That California Trip”: biohacking, LSD, and the production of alternate realities

Much like alcohol aids doctors in conforming to emotional norms, drug use by computer technology workers in Silicon Valley can also be explored through the lens of facilitated conformity: in this case, the use of hallucinogenic drugs and handcrafted or self-prescribed pharmaceuticals to induce creativity. The development of computer technology, and particularly the internet, has been closely intertwined with psychoactive substance use, as even the ARPAnet, the precursor to the internet, was used to facilitate the sale and distribution of both illegal drugs and information pertaining to them(Walsh 2011, 55). However, beyond facilitating purchase and knowledge production, coding and drug use are intertwined as both attempt to augment human capacity and emphasize the ability to see outside of rigidity—fluidity and creativity. In this way, hallucinogenic drug use is integral in enabling computer technology workers to embody the alternate realities that lead to the imagination and execution of their projects(Walsh 2011, 55-56).

One major way that the relationship between drug use and computer technology workers becomes engendered is through the increasingly interchangeable nature of drugs and the internet as technology: drugs are technology, and the internet as technology serves as a drug. One way drugs constitute a technology is through a long history of expanding human productivity,

which the internet has revolutionized: while drugs serve to facilitate different states of human biology, the internet facilitates communication between individuals. However, a more important parallel is the existence of the internet as a drug, creating a “parallel dream world.” While some of these processes directly mimic the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, others serve as drugs in a more abstract way, simply by providing a window into an alternate reality. Ultimately the internet and drugs become technologies for redefining culture and creating new worlds: for the people developing internet technologies, the use of drugs and particularly psychedelic substances facilitates the subversion of conformity needed to form these new worlds(Walsh 2011, 56).

For many working in computer technology, psychedelic drugs serve as a portal to another dimension by allowing them to rewrite their own bodies, or “biohacking.” One way this is characterized is by rewriting a humans memory, much like a computer: “By taking psychedelics, you clean out the storage banks, and have to reprogram yourself” (Kirn 1991, 99). For others the computer is characterized as “alien”, and drugs are needed to “relate” to it. Drugs have allowed programmers to “free up [their] mind(s) enough so [they can] see it (problems) in a whole new way(Kirn 1991, 100).” Either way, drug use in the tech world is often characterized as “intellectual adventure, not intoxication.” For this reason, “Alcohol is widely dismissed as insufficiently insight-inducing. Cigarettes are scarce. [and] Cocaine is charged with promoting aggression and stupidity” (Kirn 1991, 101). Kirn summarizes this relationship eloquently: “In a business that seeks to shrink the

human mind and put it in a box for easy access, access to one's own mind is not a guilty pleasure but something approaching a duty(Kirn 1991, 101)."

Computer companies often have actively facilitated these practices. For example, the drug tests that companies such as Intel performed on prospective employees are delayed for incoming employees, employees often have sufficient notice to avoid testing positive, and the tests employed do not detect most hallucinogens(Kirn 1991, 101). In the present day, some employers actively encourage "microdosing" of hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD to increase productivity and creativity as necessary to remain competitive in the intense, fast past, and results-orient environment of modern tech corporations. In these ways, the use of hallucinogens is both conceptualized by individual tech workers and encouraged by the powers that be as mediums for conforming to the norms of industry: in this case, a commitment to extending human perception. As the internet paves avenues into new social realities, drugs chart paths into new biological ones: they both allow "...citizens of the postmodern world [to] reject one of life's 'givens' after another(Walsh 2011, 57, 26; Lenson 1995: 187). For pioneers in computer technologies, they are morally compelled to reject these certainties, and the use of hallucinogens becomes a crucial component of embodying that rejection.

Rising and Falling Markets and moods: Wall Street, drug use, and managed mania

For investment bankers on wall street, drugs are similarly an essential component of conforming to cultural expectations: psychoactive substances are

used to numb pain, stress, and exhaustion that accompanies the cycles of highly energetic overwork in which bankers are expected to engage. This behavior is not officially encouraged, nor in many cases condoned: what is policed is the rigorous work regimes and the dedication and energy that are expected to accompany them. Low performers are fired for being an “energy drain” while hires are primarily characterized as “young and energetic” (Michel 2012, 335-336). Bankers police themselves and each other based on their work productivity, which comes to dominate their entire lives and identities as banks centralize living services at the workplace. As such, “[work] performance reflects their skills and judgment, versus job restraints, work is prestigious, and selection is competitive...they do not see themselves as job holders...work is not what they do, but who they are” (Michel 2012, 353-354). In order to embody the creativity necessary to sustain this production, bankers turn to painkillers and alcohol to mitigate the grueling effects of their draining work.

One way that bankers use drugs to embody this regime of productivity is to induce numbness through a variety of behaviors including drug use, with the intent of “disciplining the body into obedience” (Michel 2012, 347). One VP at a bank describes gaining lots of weight from overweight which induced heart problems: in taking up running to attempt to address weight concerns, this individual irreversibly injured his back and joints, and used pain medication to cope with the constant pain induced by this sequence (Michel 2012, 347). As a trend, bankers also “shopped, partied [drinking alcohol], and consumed pornography to counteract

numbness, achieve control, and escape (“it is a way to escape, so that I cannot ruminate about my problems even if I wanted to.”) (Michel 2012, 343).

While bankers perceive these patterns of drug use as choices, they are in fact induced by intelligent design: bank directors engineer these work environments such that bankers regulate themselves to these work schemas, often incorporating substance use. Several ways that this control is induced is through assigning bankers autonomy, creating floors that are open spatially that function as a panopticon, and positioning working hours as a “game”: instead of being disciplined externally, bankers voluntarily compete with one another to see who can work the most. This is no accident, according to a bank director: “we have no use for managers. Our systems ensure that people control themselves, sometimes without knowing it. We just feedback to people how well they are doing and we leave it at that. We don’t even set targets. People compete against themselves” (Michel 2012, 336-337). Biopower emerges here explicitly: bankers regulate their own biologies to meet the expectation around work without even realizing it, and come to artificially embody ideal traits valued in their workplace.

Biopolitics of drug-use in knowledge-based workplaces

Understanding drug use as a product of biopower in elite workplaces is primarily important because it allows use to be examined as a product of institutions. As Alexandra Michel so eloquently concludes in her analysis of self-entrapment as experienced by investment bankers:

“The issues of social concern are not inequity, but the harmful consequences that individuals are compelled to inflict on themselves because of the banks’ socialization, how long the socialization endures, and what it does when it diffuses through our economy...the study thus changes our understanding of power and control which is usually thought of as either centralized, where it is inflicted on the powerless by the powerful, or as democratized, shared, and participative, where participants are granted input or autonomy. In contrast, the study portrayed control as a self-spun web, which traps everyone alike. It thereby qualifies taken-for-granted perceptions of knowledge workers as more autonomous than industrial workers. Knowledge work may not diminish but may merely displace control, surprisingly, targeting employees with the most rather than the least status, education, and options” (Michel 2014 530-531).

As Michel illustrates, individuals within high-powered professions do not necessarily have more autonomy, and are conditioned to inflict harm on themselves in the interests of conformity. This is consistent with accounts of alcohol use among physicians, as well as the use of hallucinogens among computer technicians: while these professionals are explicitly aware of the harm they are inflicting to their bodies, their health is less important than embodying the normative values of their communities. Charlotte Walsh succinctly remarks that: “interestingly enough, the drug use here [in the internet age] is much more about conformity than rebellion” (Walsh 2011, 57)

Recognizing that knowledge workers are socialized into regimes of self-discipline inflicting self-bodily harm through drug use is important beyond merely

tracing the impacts on their bodies because these social elites both produce work that has broad societal effects, and their working habits set broader standards for those in other industries. According to Michel's study of investment bankers, after their fourth year of working in the industry, bankers tended to experience physical and psychological breakdowns which no amount of bodily intervention through exercise, compulsive behavior, or drug use could quell, which ultimately resulted in "declining creativity, judgment, and ethical sensibility" (Michel 2014, 524-525). Similarly, alcohol use, known to impair judgment, has been found to increase in physicians over the course of their careers (Mangus, Hawkins, and Miller 1996). On the same track, brain damage is characterized as a necessary sacrifice for innovation by computer scientists (Kirn 1991, 103). These threats to decision making become all the more urgent when posed to the professionals that have increasing control over the processes and symptoms responsible for managing life, controlling resources, and facilitating human engagement in the world writ large.

In addition, these practices do not exist in isolation, but serve as models of how work should be done. Michel finds that even once bankers leave Wall Street, their work lifestyles stayed largely the same; but they had the effect intensifying the workplace environment for their new coworkers (Michel 2014, 525). This seems particularly relevant in the context of developing Self-Entrapment in undergraduate education, which then may inevitably reproduced in graduates' subsequent workplaces. Not only is the disciplining of bodies into conformity in these industries of power concerning because it has the potential to undermine their cognitive

function and thus the work produced, but also because of the power of these prestigious workplaces to generate normative bodies for other industries as well.

To summarize, drug use by students, physicians, computer scientists, and investment bankers is concerning because it enables “normal bodies” to become “ideal bodies”: that is, the standard that individual biologies are disciplined to are not based in statistics, but rather in the ideals of these professions, but at the potential risk of impairing decision-making. This framework allows rampant drug use within these professions to be analyzed not as individual moral failings but as a moral responsibility to take on attributes of the ideal body, which are cultivated at the undergraduate level and refined in the professional workplace.

Conclusion:

Over the course of this chapter, I have argued that understanding the ways in which drug use at Swarthmore College can be understood as biopower embedded in larger habitus of work-hard play-hard culture and self-entrapment as they constitute the culture of smartness at Swarthmore allow for us to examine them as culturally dynamic. These embodied understandings of the body, drugs, and work are not confined simply to the liminal period between youth and adulthood, but have the potential to travel, threatening the health of former Swatties and distorting the workplaces in which they arrive. This can help inform drugs and alcohol policy at Swarthmore by shifting the target of regulation from the social consumption of substances to the structural elements reconstituting the self-entrapment within which work-hard play-hard is embedded, while also contributing to existing scholarship that collegiate drug use is not necessarily bounded by a coming-of-age

ritual, and the subsequent understanding that behaviors induced at college may not stop there.

As these habitus become integrated into larger structures of power—“the culture of smartness” on Wall Street, for example—they become in the process of helping to reshape the world. Ultimately, the stakes of using this framework to understand the influence of these fields is high, as they collectively participate in defining how, when, and to what ends we live. This analysis makes Braulio’s assertion that his life is defined by what he consumes that much more gripping, and in a context where even the powerful cannot understand why or even what they are doing to their bodies, the reflexivity provided by sociology and anthropology offer hope for understanding the world as it exists and conceptualizing less destructive alternatives.

Glossary: Swarthmore Specific Terms

Cornell: Swarthmore's Science Library. Located next to the Science Center Coffee Bar, which is open till midnight during the week and serves Chinese food from a local restaurant for lunch. Largely a social library, the first floor is flat, and made up of flat tables and desks with large, diner style booths. On the first floor, everyone can see and be seen. The basement is composed of book shelves, but alongside them are large tables designed for collaborative work. Finally, the second floor is designated as a quiet study area, and has a reputation for being the place to do work when stressed.

DJ Fund: a provisional fund of the Student Budgeting Committee, through which students could apply for money to hire a DJ. These funds were often misappropriated to instead pay for alcohol, which enabled any student group to host a party with alcohol present on the school's dime.

McCabe Library: the main library on campus; sometimes referred to as "McCage" or "MacCabre" for its imposing stonework and lack of windows. Free coffee and Snacks are made available in the evening, which usually include some kind of animal crackers, gummies, and candy. McCabe is also home to campus film screening rooms, as well as thesis carrels.

Office of Student Engagement (OSE): an office established in 2014 in charge of student affairs. OSE staff members oversee housing, resident assistants, student events, party and alcohol permits, and campus spaces.

Pass-Fail: a policy aimed at promoting collaboration, exploration, and adjustment to college life. A course designated Pass-Fail means students simply receive a P or and F on their transcript; they and they alone, however, can see a shadow-grade assigned by a professor, or the grade they would have received. All Swarthmore college freshmen take their first semester of courses Pass-Fail, and the criteria for passing is a "D". In addition, each student may allocate up to four further classes as Pass-Fail; these can be declared any time up until a deadline after halfway through the semester. The criteria for passing is the same for Sophomores, but for Juniors the threshold for passing is raised to a "C". Some departments may restrict which classes can be taken Pass-Fail for majors and minors. Freshman Fall is positioned as a liminal time for incomers to adapt to Swarthmore, because all courses are taken pass-fail, meaning that for freshman, the consequences of working poorly are not real yet.

Pubnite: A party held every Thursday night at Swarthmore in Paces Café from 9 PM to 12 AM. During the first half of the event, tables are set up with red solo cups so that drinking games such as Beirut and flip cup can be played; during the second half of the event, tables are pushed back and lighting is dimmed for dancing. Alcohol is primarily kegs of Natural Lite beer. Different seniors volunteer to DJ every week. At midnight, Pubnite is concluded by playing the song "American Pie" at which

point all partygoers gather in a circle in the middle of the dance floor and dance the Can-Can during the chorus of the song. Ritualized shouting is displayed in response to certain lyrics. After the end of American Pie, the song "Closing Time" by the band SemiSonic is played, at which point partygoers leave and the DJs clean up the space, which usually involves throwing away trash and mopping the floor.

Resident Assistant: A student employee of the Office of Student Engagement. A junior or senior student assigned to a particular hall and charged with fostering student wellbeing. This entails enforcing campus policy, coordinating with Public Safety, facilitating community building events, addressing conflict, serving as on-call resources during days when party permits are available, and reporting concerns about student wellbeing to supervisors in the Office of Student Engagement. Seen as both Student Mentors and oftentimes first responders to campus issues.

Spring of Discontent: The spring semester of 2013, coined by former president Rebecca Chop in the email to the school, who characterized it as the "spring of our discontent." Known for student mobilization against the Swarthmore administration and the factionalization of the student body. Characterized by heavy protest against the fraternities, federal complaints against the school's management of cases of sexual assault/violence, student occupation of a board of managers meeting and the subsequent clapping down of another student, and the protest of chosen graduation speaker Robert Zoellick, an alum of the college.

Student Budgeting Committee: A student-run committee tasked with distributing school-funding for student activities. Often described simply as the SBC.

The Swarthmore or Swat Bubble: a set of norms, discourse, activities, practices, and experiences perceived as unique to Swarthmore's campus or being a student at Swarthmore; the perceived separation geographically and culturally of life on Swarthmore's campus from the outside world. Thus, one can be in the "Swat Bubble" either by being on Swarthmore's campus, or being a current student.

Swattie: Swarthmore student or alumnus

Worth Dormitory: An upperclassmen only dorm, known for being a dorm where partygoers gravitate. Depending on who you ask, it has the reputation of housing primarily athletes and smokers. I lived there during the spring of 2016, and during my experience there I found this reputation to be largely unfounded.

Worth Courtyard: the courtyard surrounded by Worth and Willets Dormitories; a popular outdoor party venue. The home of Worthstock.

Worthstock: officially, an outdoor music festival held in Worth Courtyard arranged by the school during the weekend in between the end of classes and final exams. Unofficially, an (much cherished) opportunity alcohol all day in celebration of the end of classes.

Willets Dormitory: a dorm primarily housing freshman and sophomores known to be a popular location for unofficial parties. Some joke that “Willets kids grow up to live in Worth”.

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