

The Caffeine Culture

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Study desks supporting as many energy drinks as textbooks; a bookstore equipped with caffeine pills adjacent to the apparel and supplies; cafeterias offering a diverse variety of coffee in numerous, large dispensers; an energetic student attending classes and writing papers despite lack of sleep is a typical sight at Boston College. Excessive caffeine consumption is an accepted aspect of life for the standard academic, providing a solution to the fatigue that threatens the punctual completion of schoolwork.

When surveyed, twenty Boston College freshmen living in Fenwick dorm of Upper campus and Hardey dorm of Newton campus all reported that the skill they believed would help the most with academic performance was better time management to facilitate time for increased studying. Unfortunately, failure in proper scheduling renders procrastination a common phenomenon on campus. However, some students view waiting until the last minute as harmless, even when that means staying up all night. A resident of Fenwick dorm explains, “I think it is more efficient to spend one night, rather than days, with the help of lots of coffee and many cans of Diet Coke to write a paper. This way I use my extra free time during the day to do things I actually enjoy.” With the vast supply and accessibility of caffeine on campus, there is no longer an urgent need to alter procrastination habits.

As caffeine use escalates during the school year, so do students’ tolerances for the substance. Thus, when the relied on cup of coffee stops having an effect, in desperation many resort to a more potent solution, namely prescribed pills designed to treat Attention

Deficit Disorder. The common effects of Adderall, a popular A.D.D. medication, are similar to caffeine: increased heart rate, reduced appetite, sleeplessness, and enhanced concentration. “I wish my brother had A.D.D.,” a freshman Newton resident jokes when questioned about his view on Adderall. Although the humorous statement succeeded in eliciting laughter from nearby eavesdroppers, it indicates a clear desire for prescription drugs.

The increased intake of caffeine and widespread desire for A.D.D. medication among college students stems from their numerous responsibilities and the limited hours of the day in which to complete them. By extending the amount of hours in the day through continual caffeine or pill consumption, students are able to complete work while balancing other activities. Adderall is typically favored when studying since it supplies energy and increased concentration. A freshman on Newton Campus, explains, “Adderall is overused. Whether they have A.D.D. or not, all my friends who regularly get pills, either through a prescription or a peer, are reliant on it for completing their homework. Also, many use it to stay up all night to make up for waiting until the last minute, which is not healthy.” Students’ dependency on the pills leads to the development of destructive habits, such as frequent all-nighters.

Marketed as a pill that offers alertness for a longer duration of time than any caffeinated drink, many students feel pressured to obtain Adderall illegally in order to maintain good grades. Due to the high demand, students prescribed the drug often sell pills to desperate, wealthy students willing to pay excessive amounts of money for an easier way to complete all their work. A freshman on Newton campus admits, “I saved up all my pills during the summer before college, since I did not have to worry about

completing my school work. Now, I sell my extra pills for prices that vary depending on the individual's awareness of usual selling prices. A lot of freshmen are willing to pay up to ten dollars for one pill, since they have never bought it before." Increased pressure to perform well combined with the seemingly impossible workload leaves many desperate for an instant solution, even if detrimental to their long-term health. Even those never exposed to Adderall before college feel compelled to try it as they see their peers and even roommates take a pill before sitting down to compose a five page paper due the following morning.

Drinking vodka mixed with Red Bull at parties; snorting lines of Adderall, ground up using an ID card, off a textbook: the dependence on caffeine at Boston College is also evident on the weekends. Having worked hard in high school for the opportunity to attend a top college, freshmen students are especially eager to experience college to the fullest by acting social and attending parties. However, lack of sleep during the school week leaves many exhausted as Friday night approaches. Determined to meet new people and release built up stress, scholars regularly force themselves into a more social and upbeat mood through alcohol consumption, drug abuse, and even employ Adderall. A pre-med major justifies, "By hanging out with friends and not devoting all my free time during the week to homework, I have to stay up really late some nights to finish my homework due the next day. To stay awake, I will take an Adderall in the morning to make sure I am alert in my classes, and sometimes on weekends to stay energetic and friendly during a party."

Caffeine and Adderall not only assist in the academic realm at Boston College, but also present students with the energy to stay up yet another night to attend that

possibly life-changing party. Such substances ultimately facilitate the common ‘Work Hard, Party Harder’ mentality of Boston College students.