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ABSTRACT

The civic engagement goal of an interdisciplinary learning community has focused on addressing the local and national substance abuse epidemic (tobacco, alcohol, opioids, including gambling and video gaming) in order to increase student understanding and awareness of the complex factors involved in substance abuse. Two core curriculum courses, Introduction to Sociology (instructor: Dr. Irene Dabrowski) and Scientific Inquiry (instructor: Dr. Roberta Hayes) placed a socio-biological lens on substance abuse incorporating collaborative research projects and student engagement activities over the course of two semesters on the Staten Island campus of St. John's University.

The students in the respective classes worked with a problem-solving approach fulfilling an academic service learning (AS-L) requirement with written and participatory assignments piloting a potential template for a SENCER Model Substance Abuse course. This poster outlines the instructional building blocks applied to the development of this course..

Complex, 'Wicked' Local, National, and Global Problem

Substance abuse: A Disease of Post-Modern Civilization: A National Emergency, A World Public Health Issue

- globally at least 15.3 million persons have drug use disorders
- someone in the USA dies every 19 minutes from an opioid or heroin overdose
- Staten Island, NY, the borough with the highest opioid epidemic per capita in NYC
- The World Health organization has classified video game addiction as a mental illness

Rationale & Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives:

- to develop an intelligent understanding of the drug crisis
- exercise of the scientific method to "get the facts"
- to cultivate substance abuse awareness, especially in the student culture
- students as agents of social change advocating a proactive, preventative approach to substances and addictions
- problem-solving and exposure to community groups and projects fighting substance abuse
- understanding substance abuse in terms of the person, the body, social institutions, and varied living environments, taking into account:

A Complex Web of Factors :

biological social cultural, psychological, medical economic, legal, and political

Modes of Reasoning:

- Active Learning
- Interdisciplinary Learning
- Systems Thinking

SENCER BUILDING: COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Informational Literacy

"Getting the facts" through 5 digital research assignments locating substance abuse articles in the popular media and comparing them to scholarly/scientific articles

- this information became the basis for electronic and hard copy poster submissions
- group dynamic: projects were conducted with students working in teams of 4-5 students

Speaker Series

"Invitation to civic engagement" through a month long speaker series on substance abuse

- speakers recruited from community partnerships and faculty
- topics included:
 - Jewish Community Center Tobacco Free Staten island Project & Campus Nicotine Survey Introduction
 - State and Federal Marijuana Laws
 - Camelot and the Opioid epidemic on Staten Island & in the USA (Camelot: drug counseling and treatment facility) - a drug addict shared his story

Assignment: reflection papers

Open Dialogue Day

"Learning and working together" from varying points of view: biological and sociological

- students in the Scientific Inquiry and Introduction to Sociology classes met together in one class session to present and discuss their research findings

- peers educating peers

Research Day

"Engaging with the student community" through poster session presentations in a university-wide research day

- substance abuse awareness reaching student population at large

Additional/Supplementary Activities for Student Participation

- The 9th Annual Staten Island Health & Wellness Expo (included a "Scared Straight" session)
- "Too Smart To Start," campus-wide substance abuse awareness event organized by a sociology major
- Future Project: a library exhibition on substance abuse awareness based on course materials

TOBACCO SURVEY: POLICY GOAL



Students in the two classes took part in a university-wide tobacco survey of students, faculty, and staff regarding:

- personal use of tobacco containing products
- tobacco use in housing
- attitudes toward tobacco use on SJU campus
- sections of the survey are being used by Reality Check-Tobacco-Free Staten Island (community partner) to survey residents public multi-unit housing with a concern for second-hand smoke
- the survey is ongoing

Goal: use empirical survey responses to assess tobacco use among students and evaluate support for a campus tobacco-free policy

Tobacco-Free Campuses Increasing

- approximately 477 colleges and universities are 100% tobacco-free (American Lung Association, 2017)
- since 2005, more than 70 colleges and universities (at least one-third of educational institutions in NY) have put in place a smoke-free or tobacco-free campus policy (NYS Colleges Tobacco-Free Initiative; www.nystobaccofreecolleges.org)

Sampling of Learning Modules

Introduction to Sociology:

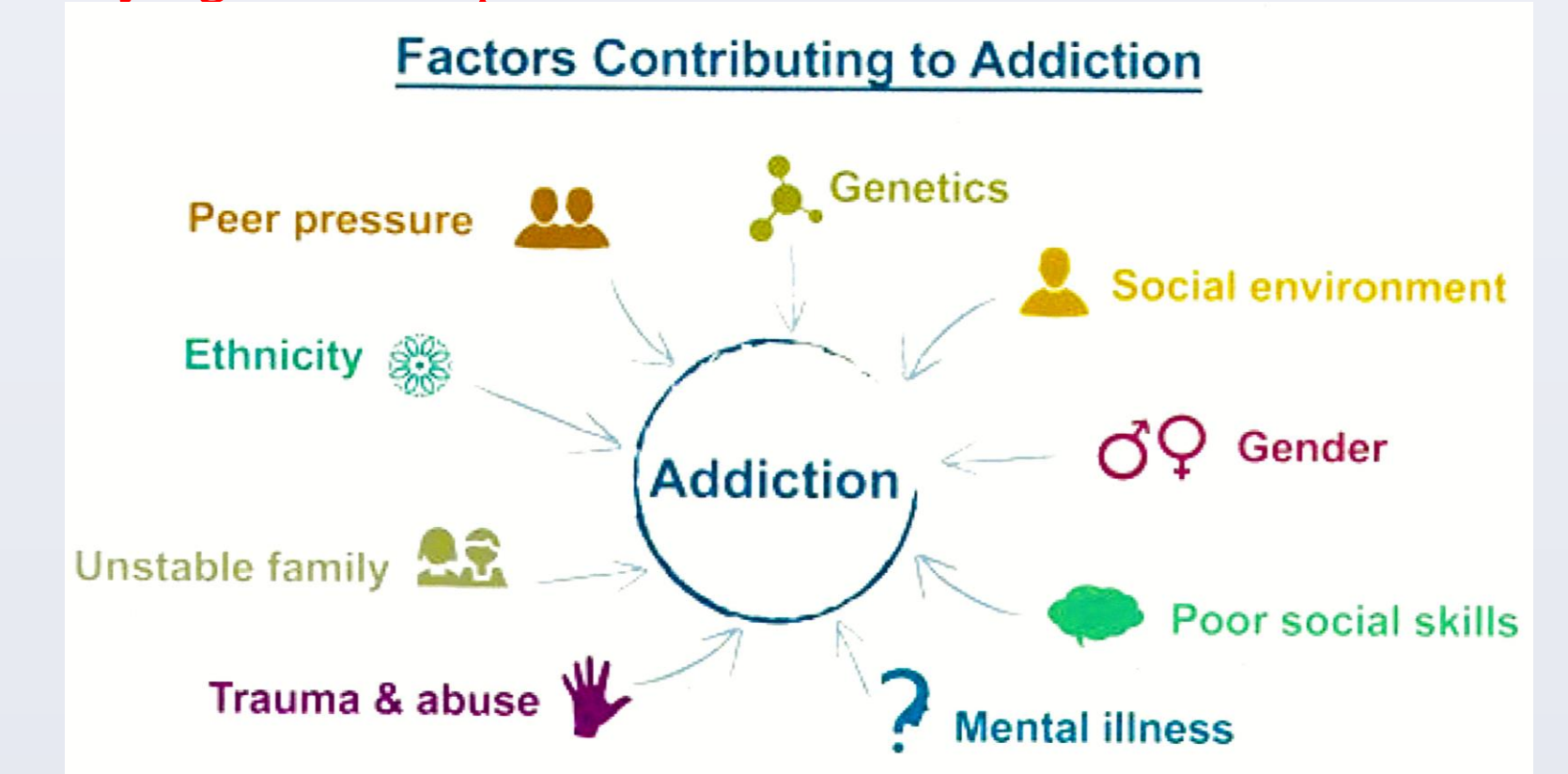
- Demographic Profile of Substance Abuse:** age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, occupation
- Social Reasons for Tobacco Use:** negative influence of family, media, and peer pressure
- Social Pathologies of the Digital Age:** isolation, loneliness, lack of meaning, anxiety, uncertainty, poor mental health
- Social Problems: and Substance Abuse:** poverty, inequality, unemployment, unstable families, homelessness, distressed neighborhoods

Scientific Inquiry: *The Science and Biology of Addiction: Stimulants, Opioids, CNS Depressants and Psychedelic Agents*

- The Dopamine Reward Pathway and Addiction
- Classification of Substances of Abuse
- The Effects of Drugs on the Body and the Brain
- Substance Abuse as a Disease
- Symptoms of Dependence and Withdrawal
- Mechanisms of Treatment: CBT, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Selected Insights From Student Infographics

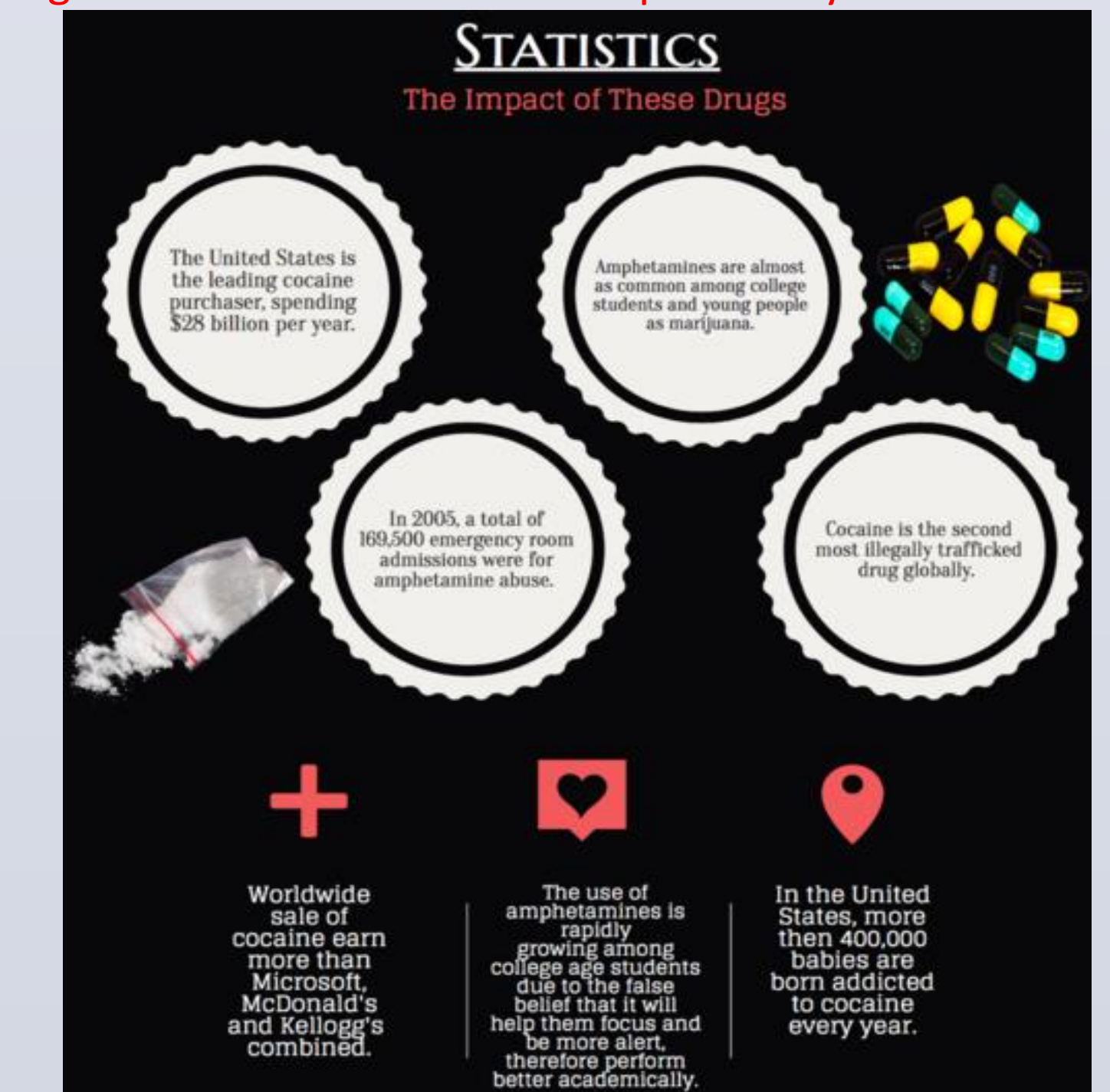
- Identifying the Complex Web of Factors



- Tobacco: Gateway to Potent Drugs



- Alarming Statistics: A Call to Civic Responsibility



Student Reflection: "This is a project every college student should participate in. There is so much smoking and drinking on college campuses. It is a real problem. I plan to share this information with my friends. We should have substance abuse workshops on campus."

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