

2019

Substance Abuse and College Students: What's the Epidemic?

Monique Gomez

California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/writingwaves>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gomez, Monique (2019) "Substance Abuse and College Students: What's the Epidemic?," *Writing Waves*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/writingwaves/vol1/iss1/7>

This Student Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Journals at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Writing Waves by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Substance Abuse and College Student: What's the Epidemic?

Monique Gomez

Keywords: CHAT Analysis, Substance abuse, disorder, behavioral health,
college students

SUBSTANCE abuse is very common in our community, as well as throughout our society. Substance abuse is a disorder that affects many students in colleges and universities throughout the United States. In my CHAT analysis I will be discussing the genre of college students and substance abuse and how the two correlate to one another. A CHAT analysis is how we investigate a genre in many ways, including through an analysis of the text's production, representation, distribution, socialization, activity, reception, and ecology. By using the terms; who, what, when, where, why, and how, I will be able to answer the 5 "W" and 1 "H" questions.

The What and How

The production of substance abuse with college students is the what. College is a time when students transition to adulthood, many living on their own and making behavioral health decisions on their own. In 2014, there was an estimated 12.4 million college students from the ages of 15 to 24 in the United States (Lipari and Jean-Francois). As students enter adulthood, many of them doing drugs or drinking alcohol seems like a thing they need to do to fit in. In Lipari and Jean-Francois article, A Day in the Life of College Students Aged 18 to 22: Substance Use Facts, they state that "more than one-third of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 engaged in binge drinking in the past month; about 1 in 5 used an illicit drug in the past month. Substance use constitutes one of the most serious public health issues for young people in the United States, creating negative health, social, and economic consequences for adolescents, their families, and communities, and for the nation as a whole".

In other words, they are saying that many students do drugs right when they get to college and their families are no longer around. Also, many students using substances have never tried substances before in their lives. Some get peer pressured into doing these things because they do not want to look like the “party pooper” of the party as well as not want to be the “lame one” in the new group of friends that they are around.

On the right, Figure 1 and Figure 2 at the bottom shows the number of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 who used alcohol or illicit drugs for the first time on an average day.

The representation of substance abuse with college students is the how. The representation is how someone views or thinks about something. For example, the college students with substance abuse disorders view the world negatively; they tend not to care for school work, and prefer the partying because students want to have freedom which may involve getting intoxicated and doing drugs. The sober students may have more care for what they do; like going to their classes, getting their work done, and doing the best that they can to succeed.

The Where and How

The distribution of college students who have substance use disorder is the where. The distribution is where substance use takes place. It usually takes place in the house parties, in the dorms, or wherever they can get their hands on to get the substances. Lipari and Jean-Francois describe the types of drugs students get their hands on in their article, A Day in the Life of College Students Aged 18 to 22: Substance Use Facts. The main popular substances that students get their hands on is alcohol, marijuana, and illicit drugs. Drugs that can be included: cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, as well as the nonmedical use of prescription-type pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants,

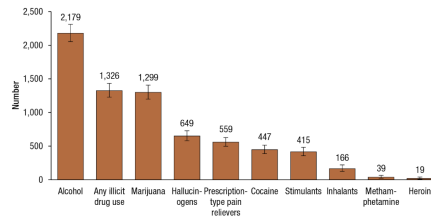


Figure 1: Number of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 who used alcohol or illicit drugs for the first time on an average day.

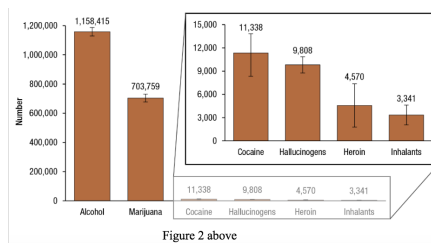


Figure 2: Number of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 who used alcohol or illicit drugs for the first time on an average day.

and sedatives. These substances are bad for student's health and are not handled legally; they could get into real trouble with the school, students could get expelled and never be able to go back on to campus.

The reception of substance abuse and college students is another how. How the students use the substances. Some may misuse by injection, inhalation, and consumption, absorbed via a patch on the skin, or dissolved under the tongue. Causing a temporary physiological change in the body, making a person feel a good sensation while the effects last. The person would enjoy the feeling it gives to the body, making the body want to rely on the drug; wanting the sensation to last, so the person then ends up abusing it as which can end up overdosing. Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances (WHO). Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome; a cluster of behavioral and physiological occurrence that develops after repeated substance use that typically include a powerful desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state (WHO). It is a disorder that hopefully none of us will ever have to experience.

The Who and Why

The socialization of college students with substance use disorder is the who. The socialization is when students first move to college they become "free", as in they no longer have to listen to their parents, or get told what to do, and what not to do. They transition to "adulthood", which means they can do whatever they desire, as well as make choices for themselves. Many students make more wrong decisions than right. For example, students might go to a party and get high or drunk, maybe both, just because they want to feel that sensation that it gives to the body at the time that they are doing it. If continuation for a long period of time, they are likely to mess up their lives in the long run, due to addiction and would have urges to go back and get more substances from wherever they can. Many students are underage to buy any alcohol and use illegal drugs by buying or selling to their peers.

The activity of college students who have substance use disorder is the why. The activity is why students use substances. For what reason? Are they sick? Do they have medical problems? ... Well... that is not exactly the case here. Because many students are stressing over classes they want to "relax". So they decide they want to take drugs to help them cope with all the work they have piled up and help them focus on their studying. They like the feeling of being relaxed which triggers the continuation to use, this is how they get addicted.

The When and Conclusion

The ecology of college students with substance abuse is that addiction might lead to a pathway no one would want to go down, like not graduating, failing all their classes, some may want to drop-out, but when some graduate they will be facing challenging times. Students would want to be high all the time, would not want to follow their careers, and they have gotten far in their lives to just give up.

In conclusion, I am a first-year college student, I am struggling and stressing out with all the work I must get done. It is getting close to the end of the semester and academic year, which means that I will be having to face final exams for many of my classes. I will try my best to study on my own and not use substances because I wouldn't want to get addicted. College students do struggle with many difficult obstacles in their college life. Although, it does not mean that they must give up and take substances to focus and relieve stress. It is natural for college students to go through all of that. At the end of their college careers, it will all be worth the challenging work and late nights up doing last minute work because they did it all on their own, they should be proud. It is not necessary to do drugs! Just have fun and try your best on your own, do not let them control you!

Works Cited

- Lipari, R.N., Jean-Francois, B. A Day in the Life of College Students Aged 18 to 22: Substance Use Facts. The CBHSQ Report: May 26, 2016. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD.
- Saah, Tammy. Harm Reduction Journal, BioMed Central, 2005, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1174878/.
- Saloner B, Karthikeyan S. "Changes in Substance Abuse Treatment Use Among Individuals With Opioid Use Disorders in the United States, 2004-2013". JAMA, vol. 314, no. 14, 13 Oct. 2015. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.10345. Accessed 10 April 2018.
- SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs), 2011 and 2014. "Substance Abuse." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, www.who.int/topics/substance_abuse/en/. Accessed 11 April 2018.