What did they do?

The project, which promotes the development of sustainable partnerships, utilized data from 28 non-metropolitan school districts in the PROSPER region. To test the hypotheses and predict the problem behaviors, Chilenski hypothesized:

1. The number of tobacco alcohol retailers, youth-serving organizations, and problem behaviors in rural communities will significantly and positively be related to problem behaviors; and
2. The number of youth-serving organizations within a one-mile radius will significantly and positively be related to problem behaviors.

What did they find?

On average, there were 16.93 alcohol and tobacco retail locations and 1.81 youth-serving organizations within one mile radius of each student’s home. 931 of the students (20.7%) had zero alcohol and tobacco retail locations and 1,952 of the students (43.3%) had zero youth-serving organizations within a one-mile radius of their homes. The average student participated in 1.27 of the common problem behaviors with 1,802 of the students (40%) reporting participating in zero of the problem behaviors.

The outcomes indicate that characteristics of the proximal community context predict youth problem behavior. Similar to prior research, early adolescents’ proximity to alcohol and tobacco retailers is positively associated with their level of problem behaviors in rural areas, with students reporting participating in one or more problem behaviors. This association possibly occurs due to a number of factors unique to the rural environment, such as average commute time increasing as much as 20% over the last two decades for residents in rural areas, leaving adolescent youth unsupervised or under the care of an older sibling. The relationship between the proximity to youth-serving organizations and adolescent problem behaviors is in the expected direction, but not statistically significant. In comparison to many cities in the United States, every community in the study had many more alcohol and tobacco retail locations and youth-serving organizations than rural serving organizations, but this discrepancy is probably larger in rural areas due to less service from nonprofit human and social service organizations. The data indicates that the influences of alcohol and tobacco outlets may be stronger in rural communities since there are fewer youth-serving organizations to serve as a buffer.

To review the original source, please refer to:


What can coalsitions do?

- Conduct a needs assessment of the communities within your community
- Regulate alcohol and tobacco outlet density in your community
- Integrate visual tools into your coalition processes

In planning and implementing community change efforts, coalsitions ought to consider characteristics of the built environment by utilizing visual tools, such as GIS mapping. Through the use of GIS mapping, coalsitions increase their communication efforts by creating maps of critical community risks and resources across the distribution of the population. This activity would assist coalsitions in understanding the differences among their communities varying small geographic areas.

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