

An Analysis of Liquor Outlets in Downtown Puyallup and Youth at Risk

Introduction

The future of our society begins with the youth of today. There are concerns that cities are placing youth at risk by allowing certain development or lack of development in areas of less economic development and lower socio-economic levels. Do municipalities through zoning regulation create a higher rate of juvenile delinquency when there are activities located in close proximity to schools? The examination of liquor outlets, crime data and locations of schools is the focus of this research. I will analyze if there is a higher crime rate located in the downtown Puyallup area and if that higher crime rate is happening close to liquor outlets. How close is the liquor outlets to Puyallup High School and the analysis of a five minute walk from the high school will be determined to concur if having liquor outlets close to a high school places youth at risk for juvenile delinquent acts.

High risk behavior has a direct correlation with substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) in 2008 there were 1.623 million arrests for youths under the age of 18. Although there has been a decline in juvenile arrests overall, with regards to drug abuse violations, there has been a dramatic increase in those arrests (FBI). The percentage of direct alcohol arrests such as drunkenness, driving under the influence and liquor laws was approximately 7.7% of the total crimes committed by youth under the age of 18 (FBI). However, other arrests do not take into consideration whether the youth arrested was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the arrest. Statistically the

numbers of drug and alcohol related arrests for youths under the age of 18 have increased since 2005 but the year 2008 saw a decrease in these activities. On average the last four years (2005-2008) the percentage of youths arrested for drug and alcohol violations is 16% of total arrests (FBI). Gathering data and measuring the community antecedents brings valuable information to the forefront of possible intervention programs to reduce the precursor to high risk behaviors that leads to juvenile delinquency.

Today the increase in substance abuse amongst youth is at an epidemic rate. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services estimate that alcohol and drug abuse amongst youths costs the state \$5.2 billion each year. The fact is that one in five, tenth and twelfth graders reported being drunk within the past year and that one in ten of the same age group has used a prescription pain medication to get high in the past thirty days (WSDSHS, 2008). Because substance abuse is connected to juvenile delinquency, it is important to reduce the number of juvenile dependent on drugs or alcohol. Substance abuse is a very complex and difficult social problem.

There is an abundance of research available surrounding juvenile delinquency and youth at risk. Joy R. Dryfoos commented in her book, *Adolescents at Risk*, “not all children born in poor social environments fail, nor do all children born into privileged circumstances succeed”. Therefore, certain factors can cause a higher susceptibility to deviant activities. Her study on adolescents at risk, where she identifies the four areas youth experience prior to entering adulthood and society as a normal functioning adult are: delinquency, substance abuse, early childbearing and school failure. Major topics of precursors to high risk behaviors are demographics, personal, family and community. However, the multiple factors of youth at risk create complex research and this project only is focusing on the relation of liquor outlets with

proximity to schools. Liquor outlets are a possible indicator of increased youth at risk in the city of Puyallup. Drug and alcohol abuse are factors of other social and economic issues to municipalities and if conducting research will create a connection of understanding and possibly reduce the percent of youth entering into delinquent acts then it is important to understand cause and effect.

The exposure in neighborhoods of alcohol outlets and youth has negative effects to juveniles and situates youth at risk for delinquent acts. Research has shown alcohol related problems in conjunction with density of alcohol outlets has been associated with increased violence, decrease in social capital, increased rates of child maltreatment and motor vehicle crashes (Pasch, 2008). Violence is increasingly common in areas of higher density of alcohol outlets (Livingston, 2008). Because liquor outlets have different categories of licenses the variety affects substantial differences in violence in neighborhoods (Livingston, 2008). The disadvantaged suburban and urban neighborhoods with higher density of liquor outlets and types of liquor licenses were shown to have higher rates of violence and harm when the license type was general described as “alcohol consumption is the primary activity (Livingston, 2008).

A recent study on juvenile delinquency and why youth commit crimes has been redirected to interaction, mutual influence between biological factors and the environment (Shoemaker, 2009). Studies have also been done on body type, learning disabilities, condition ability, psychological, psychoanalytic, intelligence, and personality. The contemporary explanation of juvenile delinquency suggests that there is not a single-cause but rather juvenile delinquency is a result of interactions between biological and physical concepts of youth. This explanation along with the environmental factors brings a contemporary understanding of youth

at risk and how juvenile delinquency is also evaluated with short term and long term pathways to crime.

Research Question

Is there a correlation between liquor stores and crime rate? Is there a change in demographics surrounding liquor stores in comparison to other areas in Puyallup? Does Puyallup have a higher percentage of liquor stores per capita than other connecting cities? Is there an increase in drug and alcohol related crimes located closer to liquor store and is there any significance to school sites. These are some of the questions that can be answered and are there links in some way to liquor retail establishments and what if any are the social and economical impacts on the area. My research will analyze the crime rate and evaluate if there is a connection to liquor outlets but also whether the nearness to Puyallup High School places youth at risk.

Spatial Extent and Data

The spatial extent of this project will be the city limits and unincorporated areas of Puyallup. The area is considered the downtown area and overlaps with three council districts for the city. This will allow council members to understand what is happening in their district in relation to youth and placing youth at risk.

Data collection for this research project includes liquor outlets, and crime data as the two important elements of the analysis. Data was also gathered from sources such as the census bureau, city limits of Puyallup, school locations and boundaries, council districts, parks, police stations, roads and rivers. The layers of data will allow for analysis of many factors. The crime data was received direct from the Puyallup police and was set up as crimes that were committed per beat. A beat was aligned with the data from the census on blocks. The crime was classified;

crime class one non violent crimes and crime class two violent crimes. I believe that data was important to the analysis of the project. Unfortunately this project was placing youth at risk and the crime was all crime committed by all age groups. I question the outcome of actually understanding how risk was increased by this data. I believe in order to fully understand the impact to youth there must be data on school specific grades, criminal activity on campus, identification of socio-economic makeup of the area and juvenile delinquent acts in the area. The youth at Puyallup high might have risk factors close by but there might also be positive deterrents close by reducing the risk. This was not part of the analysis and further study of the area and the youth is needed to fully understand the impact of liquor outlets in this district.

Results

Analysis of youth at risk in the downtown Puyallup area in relation to liquor outlets had some interesting results and also needs further examination to better identify areas and possible causes and effects. The liquor outlets were concentrated along Meridian through the downtown core with a few locations in the outlining areas. The total crime per block was divided by the population per block to determine the crime rate of each block. The next step was to run inverse distance weighted process (IDW) to show the area of crime as a raster projection. The result of this project was not as predicted and needs to be further studied to determine if the crime data received is accurate to census blocks and align with beats. The assumption was the crime rate would be higher around the liquor outlets but this was not the case. Re-examination must be done to be absolutely sure of the results and the data collected is accurate. Having a reverse outcome goes against a large amount of research that has proven increased youth at risk with liquor outlets.

Conclusion

This research project has the potential to identify areas of improvement for Puyallup high school around youth at risk for acts of juvenile delinquency. The research conducted is inconclusive to determine if the area has a high rate of juvenile delinquent acts, youth at risk and a direct relation to liquor outlets in the downtown core of Puyallup. Further study needs to be done to identify who is at risk in the area and if there is youth at risk. Also to identify possible programs already in place that have been shown to be productive in reducing the number of juveniles at risk and at risk behaviors.

References

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