

**DO COMMUNITIES AFFECT ADOLESCENT'S ATTITUDES AND
BEHAVIORS?
THESIS**

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The communities and neighborhoods in which we are raised and interact in are commonly believed to influence our behavior, attitudes, values, and opportunities. Many scholars such as Wirth (1938) have argued for the salience of place. Of particular interest is the effect of community on psychosocial development. Erikson (1963) believed that social and emotional development are directly affected by the environment. For example, neighborhood characteristics such as residential stability and socioeconomic composition have been linked to behavioral problems, risk-taking attitudes, and aggressive behavior among adolescents (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993). Although we know that communities shape psychosocial development, the effects of broad types of communities, namely urban, rural, and suburban communities, have been understudied. Adolescent outcomes across urban, rural, and suburban communities will be examined in this study. This topic is particularly relevant since suburban communities are growing rapidly yet have received the least scholarly attention of the three community types.

Because communities have been transforming through the years this study will also examine how the effects of these community types on adolescent attitudes and behaviors have changed over time.

Although the research literature on adolescent development is quite large, key issues surrounding the differences in urban, suburban, and rural areas have not been addressed. Most research in this area consists of studies of a single community without contrasting obtained results with those from other communities. By examining and comparing adolescents across all three community settings, researchers can develop a better picture of the unique psychosocial outcomes of each group.

The current study will investigate the differences in attitudes and behaviors among adolescents growing up in urban, suburban, and rural environments. Specifically, the research will investigate the difference in the youth's alcohol and drug use, political beliefs, and educational aspirations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychosocial development occurs as individuals acquire an understanding of their relation to the world around them. As they acquire this understanding they start to struggle through the process of deciding on particular values and behavior. However, this process does not occur in a vacuum, but is aided by interaction with and feedback from significant others in the individual's environment. Erikson (1963) noted that the social and emotional development of children rest squarely on the environment. His theory of psychosocial development focuses on the importance of social support throughout the lifespan. Because the social environment of youth in urban, suburban, and rural settings are so different, they each have very different social support systems and face different challenges within their communities.

Urban

The concept of "community" has long had its roots in sociology; it was developed in the 19th Century by Ferdinand Tonnies. In his book

Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887), Tonnies contrasted two ideal types of social relationships. Gemeinschaft (usually translated as “community”) relationships are face-to-face, involving intimate personal contact and shared values. They are most commonly found in a rural setting and are centered on religion, family, and neighborhood. By contrast, Gesellschaft (translated as “association”) relationships are more impersonal, they are entered into as a means to an end, governed by contracts, and have limited responsibilities. These relationships are superficial and short-lived. Like many sociologists of his time Tonnies was reinforcing the idea that relationships in urban industrial societies are impersonal, self-interested, alienating, and more prone to stress and conflict than were pre-industrial revolution rural societies. Similarly, in his book *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, Louis Wirth (1938) discussed the differences between social interaction of those in urban and rural areas, focusing on isolation and a loss of individuality. His argument was that cities change social relationships for the worse. Wirth’s position was that the impact of an urban community was reflected by size, density, and heterogeneity and that these factors were considered key determinants of social organization, attitudes, and behavior. Because of the size and density of cities, it would be near impossible for an urbanite to know all other urbanites; and therefore, out of utility there is a shift away from primary relationships to secondary relationships (Wirth, 1938). These secondary

relationships foster an absence of personal acquaintanceships among interacting individuals. Additionally, Wirth typified urban life by secularization, secondary-group associations, increased segmentation of social roles, and poorly defined norms that lead to alienation. He argued that urban life is marked by impersonal, instrumental contacts which tend to free individuals from the strong controls of primary groups, such as the extended family.

Converse to Wirth's theory of urbanization is Fisher's (1975) subcultural theory of urbanism. He argued that heterogeneity and diversity have positive effects on individuals residing in urban areas. Because urban areas are more accepting of diversity, those who do not conform to mainstream ideas are able to form subcultures, where they can find security and acceptance. Similarly, adolescents who are concerned with social acceptance, may benefit from large heterogeneous environments because they offer a wider variety of friendship options that may reduce their risk of isolation (Watt, 2003).

Adolescents growing up in urban areas face unique challenges that affect their behavioral outcomes. In recent years, the biggest concern in the literature for urban youth is always placed on their exposure to drugs, poverty, and violence. Much of the literature describes urban communities as communities in crises. According to Jargowsky (1997),

the problems associated with urban communities often cause urban youth to reject mainstream values and embrace lifestyles that may jeopardize their social development. In a study conducted by Newcomb, et al. (1999) that investigated issues that influence drug use among urban youth, the researchers reported that the increased psychological distress experienced by urban youth contributed to increased drug use. In a similar study conducted by Scheer, Borden, and Donnermeyer (2000), the researchers found that urban youth experimented with drugs at disproportionately higher rate than their rural and suburban counterparts. The researchers also hypothesized that the reason for their heightened drug use might be that urban youth receive less support and discouragement against drug use from their families than rural and suburban youth.

Many researchers argue that perhaps one of the greatest stressors affecting urban youth is the pervasiveness of community violence in urban communities. According to Davis (1999), urban youth experience violence at a higher rate than their rural and suburban counterparts. Williams, et al. (1994) reported that continuous exposure to violence among urban youth has produced serious negative social and emotional outcomes. McLaughlin, et al. (1994) reported that urban youth have experienced so much violence in their communities that many of them see aggressive behaviors as a way of life and a way to cope with the

stressors in their environment. Osofsky (1999), in a review of the literature, concluded that inner-city youth's exposure to violence has led them to experience high levels of anxiety, behavior and school problems.

Davis (1999) also reported that because of community problems such as poverty, domestic violence, and non-traditional families, urban families often lack the capability to provide their children the support they need. It is well documented in the literature that when youth have healthy social support systems they are better equipped to deal with stressors in their environment. Conversely, stressful life events and low familial support are significant predictors of urban youth problems (Helsen, et al., 1997).

The literature on urban youth seems to suggest that urban adolescents are overburdened with stress brought on by unhealthy social support and community violence which have resulted in increased deviant behaviors. Because urban adolescents face different stressful dynamics in comparison with the experiences of their rural and suburban peers, it stands to reason that the behavioral outcomes of these adolescents will be different.

Suburban

It has long been thought that the suburbs are the ideal place for families. A suburban environment offers families an escape from the

city's crime and violence, and gives them a homogeneous community of like-minded people. However, the idea that family ties are strengthened in suburbia may be a façade. Many times suburban families isolate themselves from the rest of the community and primarily have only each other to socialize with.

In a review of the literature, Miller (1995) examined the history and evolution of the suburbs and highlighted that the ideal of suburban family togetherness does not match the reality of suburban life. In the early 1800s families sought out suburban areas in order to escape the “immortalities” of the city, but remained close enough to the city to take advantage of urban economic opportunities. During this time there was still an emphasize on the role differences between men, women, and children; which allowed family members separation of interests, activities, and leisure time (Miller, 1995). In the years following the Second World War, America experienced a renewed socio-political emphasis on domesticity and family values; consequently the nuclear family emerged as the primary social unit. Additionally, during this time the government endorsed the suburbs and facilitated their settlement by offering generous home loans. Advertisers, marketers, and real estate firms also promoted the suburbs as the new American Dream. The subsequent suburban boom offered families the opportunity for homeownership, family togetherness, and the chance of obtaining the

American Dream. Although the importance of domesticity has died down in recent years, families flocking to suburban communities are still seeking the ideal of family togetherness and the sense that they are protecting their children from the drugs and violence of urban areas. Due to this retreat, suburban families become isolated from other races and classes. As a result of their homogeneity, the suburbs encourage conformity, uniformity, and a false sense of community. Miller (1995) reported that although families retreat to suburban neighborhoods in order to strengthen their family unit, they are actually straining them due to family isolation and lack of public spaces. In modern day society depriving family members of public spaces and thus public sociability can actually be detrimental to their familial harmony. Miller (1995, p.414) wrote,

Public spaces not only facilitate contact with others, but they also provide sites where different ages and genders can mingle so that people can be with their peers and with their families at the same time. These spaces offer opportunities for the family to share common experiences, even though the socializing that occurs there may be with one's peers.

She argues that public sociability actually promotes family harmony. When some emotional and companionship needs are met by others, expectations of family members are lowered, and disappointment in family members is less likely (Miller, 1995).

Some of the literature has assumed that because suburban youth live in advantaged environments, they are more likely than their urban

peers to experience healthy social development (Larkin, 1979). However, suburban youth seem to have different risk-taking behaviors based on their socioeconomic status. For example, Larkin (1979) reported that the advantageous lifestyles of suburban youth have created certain deviant behaviors due to their exposure to significant amounts of monetary resources and material possessions that are sometimes misused.

Additionally, suburban youth are sometimes assumed to be at a lower risk for substance abuse than their urban or rural peers because of exposure to fewer risk factors and more protective factors; as well as greater opportunities for involvement with pro-social others. The paradox here is that involvement in substance use and other problem behaviors is higher among suburban youth than their urban peers (Greene and Forster, 2004). Greene and Forster (2004) found that among high school seniors, suburban youth have tried cigarettes (60% suburban versus 54% urban), driven while high (20% suburban versus 13% urban) or drunk (22% suburban versus 16% urban), and engaged in unsupervised drinking (63% suburban versus 57% urban) at higher rates than urban youth. Another empirical study conducted by Chen, Sheth, Elliott, and Yeager (2004) examined the severity of substance use, abuse and dependence of high school students in a New Jersey suburban community. The measure of substance use disorders was based on 27 specially designed questions that approximate the DSM-IV criteria for

abuse and dependence. The sample consisted of 9th through 12th graders from six high schools (N=1044) and concluded that Suburban youth are at an increased risk for substance-related problems such as alcohol abuse and dependence.

Other research studies done on suburban youth have also reported that these youth are using illegal drugs at increasing rates. According to Nguyet, et al. (1994), these trends towards risky behaviors are related to changing sociocultural attitudes that are more permissive towards experimentation with drugs and sex. The researchers also noted that this trend can be seen to have steadily increased since the late 1960s.

Most of the literature on suburban youth appears to suggest that they have unique advantages because they reside in communities where there is greater economic security and resources than youth from other communities. However, suburb adolescents seem to exhibit as much, or more, risk-taking behaviors as their urban counterparts.

Rural

Place is of special significance to rural people, so much so that rural youth may choose to limit their educational careers in order to remain in their local communities as adults. Despite some scholars challenges of restricted economic options and assumptions that rural life is no longer distinct from non-rural life, research suggests that rural

residents tend to have lived in their communities longer than suburban or urban residents have lived in their in their areas, and often intentionally. (Elder and Conger, 1996)

The most important challenges facing rural environments are declining educational and occupational opportunities, lack of community resources, and poor social and emotional developmental outcomes among youth. Coward and Smith (1981) stated that in many cases rural youth lack the resources and social experiences that are essential in making significant contributions to society. For example, rural youth have poor educational resources and, consequently, develop at a slower academic rate than their urban and suburban counterparts. This stagnates economic growth because the youth are not fully prepared to contribute to the employment sector; which leads to a prolonged dependence on the family and limited development toward autonomy and independence. According to Kowaleski-Jones (2000, p.449), “Adolescents who grow up in resource-poor communities might have a more difficult time developing the skills necessary to succeed in school, stay out of trouble, avoid mistimed pregnancies, and ultimately achieve financial independence as adults.”

There is evidence that suggest rural adolescents may have higher prevalence rates for alcohol use than their urban counterparts due to a lack of social skills. (Griffin et al. 2001; Goldberg-Lillehoj, Spoth, and

Trudeau 2005) A study of 1,568 rural youth indicated that social competence had a direct association with substance use in that those youth with a higher degree of social confidence, in particular assertiveness and the ability to communicate effectively, were less likely to engage in smoking and drinking (Griffin et al. 2001).

Additionally, rural adolescents may be particularly at risk for lower self-esteem. In one study it was found that rural female adolescents from upper socioeconomic families had lower self-esteem than their urban peers (Housley et al. 1987). Compared to adolescents from a suburban community, adolescents from a rural sample had significantly poorer self-images related to peer and family relationships (Sarigiani et al. 1990). Deihl, et al. (1997) investigated the psychological well-being of rural and urban youth and found that rural adolescents had a significantly lower self-esteem than urban adolescents. According to Fitchen (1995), because rural children are often too dependent on their families, their social competence and problem-solving skills suffer. For example, rural children often fail to develop critical life skills that lead to gainful employment. Therefore, they tend to depend solely on their families as a means of solving problems and decision-making. In summary, rural adolescents dependence on the family may cause the adolescent to be overly comfortable in their familial environmental setting and hinder their perceptions of their own capabilities.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there has been much research on adolescents in urban areas, the research that compares adolescent behaviors across urban, suburban, and rural environmental settings is sparse. Further research is needed to explore the differences across all three environmental settings. Additionally, none of the research reviewed here investigated the differences in these three environmental settings over time.

Further, there is little research comparing adolescent's political views to their place of residence. What we do know is that urbanism is correlated with liberalism to the extent that urban residents express more liberal opinions than do rural residents (Fisher, 1995), but we do not know if this is true for adolescents. This research study will investigate the effects of the community on adolescence across three different geographical areas; rural, suburban, and urban.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Data and Measures

The main purpose of this research is to investigate whether growing up in a rural, urban, or suburban setting has an effect on an adolescent's attitudes and behaviors; particularly deviant behavior. More specifically, the research will examine adolescent alcohol and drug use, political beliefs, and educational aspirations. This study will also examine how these attitudes and behaviors, as well as community influence on these attitudes and behaviors have changed over time.

The study will analyze existing data from Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth, which is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The Monitoring the Future Project conducts surveys of high school seniors annually on an ongoing basis since 1975. The samples are large and nationally representative. The project is designed to explore changes in many important values, behaviors, and lifestyle orientations of American youth. The survey instrument has questions on demographic characteristics, family background, and legal and illegal drug use.

One limitation of this data set is that it does not include data from those adolescents who drop out of high school before their senior year. Additionally, reliability and validity of self-reported substance use is a concern. Gibson and Young (1994) pointed out that reporting of risky or illegal behaviors under circumstances that could be perceived as embarrassing or result in punishment could be more vulnerable to underreporting. This concern is especially poignant in the school environment because of students' perceptions of the possible consequences of reporting illegal substance use. However, Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman (2003) noted that self-reported substance use among adolescents has a high degree of reliability and convergence with related attitudes and behaviors.

To capture the different adolescent behaviors of rural, urban, and suburban youth over time, this study will compare the Monitoring the Future data every two years from 1976 through 2000 samples. 1976 to 2000 is a twenty-four year span that will allow enough time to show the changes that have occurred over time in rural, urban, and suburban adolescent attitude and behaviors.

In this study, place will be the independent variable, specifically the type and size of community in which the adolescent grew up. Place will be defined as urban, suburban, or rural. Place was determined by asking respondents, "Where did you grow up mostly?" Response choices

were on a farm (= 1), in the country (= 2), in a small city or town under 50,000 people (= 3), in a medium-sized city 50,000-100,000 (= 4), in a suburb of a medium-sized city (= 5), in a large city 100,000-500,000 (= 6), in a suburb of a large city (= 7), in a very large city over 500,000 (= 8), in a suburb of a very large city, and can't say; mixed (= 0). This variable will be recoded into three variables rural, urban, and suburban. Rural (=1) will be comprised of those who grew up on a farm, in the country, and in a small city or town under 50,000 people. Urban (= 2) will be recoded to those who responded in a medium-sized city, a large city 100,000-500,000 and in a very large city over 500,000. Suburban (= 3) will be those who grew up in a suburb of a medium-sized city, a large city and a very large city. For some statistical analyses a dummy variable will be created for each place, creating three separate variables where as 1 will be the value of that particular place and 0 will be the two other places.

Youth's attitudes and behavior will be the dependent variable in this study. The deviant behavior will be operationalized by measuring binge drinking, drug use, and cutting class. The study will examine substance use in the last 30 days because of greater reliability of responses about recent activities. Data for any drug use were constructed by coding all respondents as having used or not used a particular substance over the past 30 days, regardless of frequency.

Binge drinking will be evaluated as excessive use of alcohol. To capture binge drinking respondents were asked, "Over the last two weeks how many times have you had five or more drinks in a row?" A "drink" is a bottle of beer, a glass of wine, a wine cooler, a shot glass of liquor, or a mixed drink. Response choices were none (= 1), once (= 2), twice (= 3), three to five times (= 4), six to nine times (= 5), and ten or more times (= 6). This variable was recoded into a dummy variable indicating simply whether the respondent did or did not partake in binge drinking over the past two weeks, no (= 0) and yes (= 1).

To determine adolescent drug use, marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs will be examined. The survey questionnaire indicated to the respondent that marijuana is sometimes called weed, pot, or dope and cocaine was also listed as coke, crack, or rock. Other drugs in this study will include psychedelic drugs or any hallucinogens such as LSD, mescaline, peyote, "shrooms" or psilocybin, and PCP. Drug use will be measured by whether the respondent indicated that they had or had not taken or used any of the indicated drugs during the last 30 days? This variable was recoded into a dummy variable. If the respondent indicated any use at all it was recoded to 1 and if they indicated no drug use it was recoded to a 0.

Skipping class will be measured by whether respondents indicated that they had during the last four weeks, gone to school, but skipped a

class when they were not supposed to. If they indicated that they had skipped school at all it was recoded to a 1 and if they had not skipped school it was recoded as a 0.

Educational aspirations will be measured by whether or not the youth plans on attending college in the future. College plans will be determined by asking respondents how likely it would be for them to attend a four-year college after high school. Response choices were definitely won't (=1), probably won't (=2), probably will (=3), and definitely will (=4). This variable will be recoded into a dummy variable so that "definitely won't" and "probably won't" were assumed to mean the adolescent had no future plans of attending college (=0); and "probably will" and "definitely will" were assumed to mean the adolescent did plan on attending college in the future (=1). A limitation of this dependent variable is that just because an adolescent does not plan on attending a four-year college, does not necessarily mean they have no future educational aspirations. The youth could choose a vocational school or a two-year college. They could also decide to attend the military after high school and delay their educational career. However, the present study measures future educational plans and aspirations by whether or not the adolescent plans to attend a four-year college after high school. The justification here is that this shows the youth is or is not motivated

about their future and are conforming to mainstream ideas about education.

The study will also examine whether the place an adolescent grew-up affects their political beliefs. This dependent variable is measured by asking respondents to describe their political belief. Response choices will be measured on a scale from very conservative to very liberal; very conservative (= 1), conservative (= 2), moderate (= 3), liberal (= 4), very liberal (= 5).

Given that various communities are likely to have different types of adolescents in terms of socioeconomic status (SES) and family relations, several variables will be included in the analyses as controls. Family SES will be measured by the parents' or resident parent's level of education. Resident parents will include foster parents, stepparents, or others who mainly raised the respondent. Level of education response choices are completed grade school or less (= 1), some high school (= 2), completed high school (= 3), some college (= 4), completed college (= 5), graduate or professional school after college (= 6). This variable will be recoded to a dummy variable in which 1 indicates the parent had a college education in that they completed any level of college and 0 indicates no college education. Family structure will be measure by whether the respondents came from intact families with both parents living at home. The study will also control for the adolescent sex and race.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Analysis

All analyses for this study were conducted with the variables included on the core data set and were carried out in SPSS Base 14.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago IL). These selected variables appeared the same on all forms of the questionnaire from 1976 to 2000. The total sample for this analysis was 189,934 (rural = 86,076, urban = 60,234, and suburban = 43,624); this included data for every two years from 1976 to 2000.

Year 2000

To analyze the different adolescent attitudes and behaviors among rural, suburban, and urban, crosstabulation and chi-square test were conducted for each dependent variable from the most recent data, year 2000. The variable that measures political beliefs will be measured with a t-test.

In 2000, binge drinking significantly varied by place. Table 1 indicates that 31.9% suburban adolescents reported binge drinking, followed closely by 31.7% rural and 24.5% urban adolescents.

Table 1. Crosstabulation Binge Drinking * Place 2000			
Binge Drinking	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
No	68.3%	75.5%	68.1%
Yes	31.7%	24.5%	31.9%
Chi-Square Tests			
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square	.000		

Marijuana use among adolescents varied significantly by place of residence; suburban youth reported the highest prevalence across three regions. Table 2 indicates that 24.2% of suburban youth reported using marijuana compared to 21.0% rural and 21.3% urban.

Table 2. Crosstabulation Marijuana Use * Place 2000			
Use Marijuana	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
No	79.0%	78.7%	75.8%
Yes	21.0%	21.3%	24.2%
Chi-Square Tests			
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square	.004		

Cocaine use varied significantly by place in that rural adolescents reported higher rates of cocaine use than urban and suburban adolescents in 2000. Table 3 indicates that in 2000, 2.4% of rural adolescents reported using cocaine followed by 1.8% of suburban and 1.5% of urban.

Table 3. Crosstabulation Cocaine Use * Place 2000			
Use Cocaine	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
No	97.6%	98.5%	98.2%
Yes	2.4%	1.5%	1.8%
Chi-Square Tests			
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square	.003		

Adolescent reports of other drug use did not vary significantly across rural, urban, and suburban areas.

The data indicates that skipping school varied significantly by place. Table 4 indicates that suburban and urban adolescent were more likely to skip class than rural adolescents; 44.6% of suburban adolescents reported skipping class, followed by 43.2% urban, and 33.2% rural.

Table 4. Crosstabulation Skipping Class * Place 2000			
Skip Class	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Never Skipped	66.8%	56.8%	55.4%
Skipped	33.2%	43.2%	44.6%
Chi-Square Tests			
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square	.000		

According to the results, youth's educational aspirations vary significantly by place of residence. More suburban adolescents reported having educational aspirations than rural or urban adolescents; 89.7% suburban, 75.7% rural, and 85.1% urban.

The political beliefs are measured on a scale from very conservative to very liberal; very conservative (= 1), conservative (= 2), moderate (= 3), liberal (= 4), very liberal (= 5). All three areas of youth appear to be mostly moderate in political beliefs with rural youth having slightly more conservative beliefs. Table 5 indicates that political beliefs do not significantly differ between suburban and urban adolescents, but varies significantly between rural adolescents compared to the other two areas, significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. T-Test Political Belief * Place 2000	
Place	Mean Political Belief
Suburban	3.154
Urban	3.132
Rural	3.008

Next, the relationship between the adolescent's attitudes and behaviors and place of residence were examined using regression analysis for each dependent variable in year 2000. A logistic regression model was fitted to the data to test the research hypothesis regarding the relationship between the likelihood that an adolescent will engage in a certain behavior and his or her place of residence.

According to the model in Table 6, the odds of an adolescent binge drinking are not significantly related to growing up in a suburban or rural area compared to growing-up in an urban area. This implies that odds of a youth binge drinking does not significantly change between urban, suburban, and rural areas. However, black adolescents are 79% less likely than white adolescents to binge drink. Other non-black minorities are 41% less likely to binge drink compared to their white peers. According to the model, when an adolescent came from an intact family they were 18% less likely to binge drink than those youth who were from non-traditional homes. Female adolescents were indicated to be 42% less likely to binge drinking than male adolescents. The data indicated that the odds of a teenager binge drinking are not significant related to whether or not his or her parent has a college degree.

Table 6. Logistic Regression Analysis of Binge Drinking			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Suburban	.115	.057	1.122
Rural	.060	.256	1.061
Other Minorities	-.525	.000	.591*
Black	-1.559	.000	.210*
Female	-.552	.007	.576*
Intact Family	-.199	.000	.819*
Father's Level of Education	.022	.676	1.022
Mother's Level of Education	-.031	.518	.969
Constant	-.782	.000	.458*

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

According to the Table 7, the odds of an adolescent smoking marijuana are not significantly related to growing up in a suburban community compared to growing up in an urban community. However, if an adolescent grew-up in a rural area compared to an urban area, they are 14% less likely to use marijuana than their urban peers. Black adolescents are 45% less likely to use marijuana than their white peers and other minorities are 23% less likely than their white. The odds of a youth smoking marijuana decreased 33% if they came from an intact family. Interestingly, the odds of an adolescent using marijuana decreased 10% if their father had a college education, but there was no significant change in odds if their mother had a college education. Female adolescents were 28% less likely to use marijuana than their male counterparts.

Table 7. Logistic Regression Analysis of Marijuana			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Suburban	.091	.146	1.096
Rural	-.145	.009	.865*
Other Minorities	-.591	.000	.554*
Black	-.326	.000	.722*
Female	-.335	.000	.716*
Intact Family	-.398	.000	.672*
Father's Level of Education	-.110	.042	.896*
Mother's Level of Education	.070	.181	1.073
Constant	-.654	.000	.520*

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 8 indicates that the odds of an adolescent using cocaine are not significantly related to growing up in a suburban community compared to an urban community. The odds of a rural youth using cocaine are 53% higher compared to urban adolescents. Black students are 69% less likely to use cocaine than their white peers, but other minority groups do not significantly differ from whites. Female adolescents were 39% less likely to use cocaine than male adolescents. Adolescents that come from intact families are 46% less likely to use cocaine.

Table 8. Logistic Regression Analysis of Cocaine			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Suburban	.147	.475	1.159
Rural	.426	.012	1.532*
Other Minorities	.122	.468	1.130
Black	-1.302	.000	.308*
Female	-.498	.000	.608*
Intact Family	-.613	.000	.542*
Father's Level of Education	-.177	.278	.838
Mother's Level of Education	.070	.655	1.073
Constant	-3.282	.000	.038*

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Place of the adolescent did not significantly predict whether or not an adolescent would use other drugs, such as psychedelic drugs, LSD, mescaline, peyote, "shrooms" or psilocybin, and PCP.

According to the model in Table 9, the odds of an adolescent skipping class were not significantly related to growing-up in suburban

area compared to an urban area. However, the odds of an adolescent skipping class decreased by 31% if they were from a rural area compared to being from an urban area. There was no significant difference in skipping class between black and white adolescents. However, the odds of skipping class were increased 37% if the respondent was from any other minority group. The odds of an adolescent skipping school went down 18% if they were female and 3% if they came from intact families. The odds of an adolescent skipping class was not significantly related to their father's level of education, but interestingly if the adolescent's mother had a college degree the odds of skipping class went up 11%.

Table 9. Logistic Regression Analysis of Skipping Class			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Suburban	.083	.123	1.087
Rural	-.367	.000	.693*
Other Minorities	.317	.000	1.372*
Black	.011	.857	1.011
Female	-.196	.000	.822*
Intact Family	-.144	.001	.866*
Father's Level of Education	.035	.454	1.035
Mother's Level of Education	.102	.022	1.108*
Constant	-.223	.000	.800

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 10 shows the model for educational aspirations and indicates that the odds of an adolescent having educational aspirations was significantly related to growing-up in suburban or rural areas compared to an urban area. Suburban adolescents were 27% more likely

to have higher educational aspirations compared to urban adolescents; however, if the adolescent grew-up in a rural area compared to an urban area, they were 42% less likely to have higher educational aspirations. The odds for an adolescent to have educational aspirations were increased 71% if they were female and 33% if they came from intact families. Black youth were 18% more likely than white to report having college plans. If the adolescent's father had a college degree they were twice as likely to have educational aspirations; additionally, if the youth's mother had a college degree he or she was 99% more likely to have plans for college.

Table 10. Logistic Regression Analysis of Educational Aspirations			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Suburban	.241	.005	1.273*
Rural	-.538	.000	.584*
Other Minorities	.007	.918	1.007
Black	.167	.038	1.182
Female	.538	.000	1.712*
Intact Family	.286	.000	1.331*
Father's Level of Education	.923	.000	2.517*
Mother's Level of Education	.689	.000	1.992*
Constant	.797	.000	2.203*

*Significant ($p < 0.05$)

The relationship between political beliefs and place was measured by linear regression shown in Table 11; because political beliefs were measured on a scale of very conservative to very liberal. According to the

model, political beliefs were not significantly related to growing-up in suburban area compared to an urban area. However, urban youth are significantly more liberal than their rural counterparts.

Table 11. Linear Regression Analysis of Political Beliefs		
	B	Sig.
(Constant)	3.084*	.000
Suburban	.022	.510
Rural	-.110*	.000
Other Minorities	.088*	.008
Black	-.146*	.000
Female	.168*	.000
Intact Family	-.100*	.000
Father's Level of Education	.060*	.032
Mother's Level of Education	.024	.370

* Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Changes over time

In accordance with the most recent bivariate data in this study, suburban youth have shown a higher prevalence of binge drinking compared to rural or urban youth and that has remained consistent across time. A steady trend since 1976 shows that suburban and rural youth have had higher rates of binge drinking than their urban counterparts. In addition, suburban adolescents report using marijuana more than rural or urban adolescents and this trend has also remained consistent across time. Every year since 1976 suburban adolescents reported smoking marijuana at a higher rate than rural or urban

adolescents. With a few exceptions, suburban adolescents have also reported a higher prevalence of cocaine use throughout the years. For the most part, other drug use including psychedelic drugs such as LSD, mescaline, peyote, “shrooms” or psilocybin, and PCP did not vary significantly between the areas over time. Suburban and urban adolescents reported skipping school more than their rural peers and that has remained consistent across time. Another trend that has remained constant throughout time is that rural adolescents have rural youth have reported less educational aspirations than urban and suburban youth. Moreover, every year since 1976, suburban adolescents indicate higher educational aspirations than rural or urban adolescents. Table 12 provides a basic overview of some of these trends by showing crosstabulation of place and various key dependent variables for every ten years. All data shown are significant ($p < .05$).

Table 12. Crosstabulation 1976, 1986, and 1996			
Binge Drinking	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
1976	38.8%	34.0%	38.4%
1986	36.4%	34.8%	40.1%
1996	31.1%	26.1%	32.6%
Marijuana Use	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
1976	30.4%	35.2%	37.3%
1986	21.9%	24.2%	25.6%
1996	20.2%	23.3%	25.1%
Skipping School	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
1976	36.3%	46.3%	48.6%
1986	30.1%	38.6%	37.3%
1996	32.4%	45.4%	46.0%
Educational Aspirations	Place		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
1976	44.9%	57.6%	61.9%
1986	60.7%	67.8%	78.4%
1996	74.7%	80.8%	87.8%

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The goal of this research was to examine attitudes and behaviors among rural, urban, and suburban adolescents. Additionally, this study sought to understand how the effects of these community types on adolescent attitudes and behaviors have changed over time. Although there has been a great deal of research on youth in all three of these areas, the research that compares adolescent behaviors and attitudes across urban, suburban, and rural environmental settings is sparse. This research study made those direct comparisons across all three environmental settings. When looking at direct comparisons of urban, suburban, and rural adolescents the results create a complex portrait.

The findings from bivariate analyses in this study suggest that the place an adolescent grows up does affect his or her attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, bivariate analyses show suburban youth have the highest rates of involvement in most substance use and other problem behaviors. When controlling for socioeconomic status, race, and gender

there is no significant difference between urban and suburban youth's substance use and other problem behaviors. This is surprising given that a great deal of research indicates that the reason most families live in suburban areas is to protect their families from the deviance of urban life. Miller (1995) suggested that families flock to suburban communities not only to seek the ideal of family togetherness, but also to achieve the sense that they are protecting their children from the drugs and violence of urban areas. Additional research, similar to the current study, may help people recognize this false sense security given to suburban areas.

Rural areas appear to have the most substantial impact on adolescent attitudes and behaviors. While suburban and urban adolescents appear to be comparable, rural adolescents vary significantly from their suburban and urban peers. The dynamics of rural adolescents seem to be very unique. The most current data in this study indicates that when socioeconomic status, race, and gender are controlled for, rural teens are less likely to skip school or use marijuana but have higher rates of cocaine use than urban or suburban teens. This study also showed that rural adolescents are significantly more conservative in their political beliefs than urban and suburban adolescents. Additionally, the findings in this study support previous research suggesting that rural youth are less motivated about their future educational career than are urban and suburban youth. Perhaps the diminished desire to obtain

an education is related to rural adolescents depending too much on their families which cause their social competence and problem-solving skills suffer (Fitchen, 1995).

Educational aspirations also varied significantly between urban and suburban adolescents. Although suburban youth's involvement in substance use and other problem behaviors appears to be high, they have higher educational aspirations than their peers from urban and rural areas. Perhaps this shows more likelihood for suburban youth to follow mainstream ideals compared to urban or rural youth. It is highly probable that, in spite of the uniquely different life experiences between these groups, adolescents adjust to life experiences in similar ways irrespective of their geographic location.

The failure to find significant differences between suburban and urban youth's substance use and other problem behaviors may be due to constraints related to the operationalization of geographic location. For example, the data classifies "suburban youth" as those indicating they grew up in a suburb of a medium-sized city, a large city and a very large city. This definition does not address the unique distinction within the suburban areas. In considering this point, youth who reside in the suburbs of a smaller sized city may be significantly different from their urban counterparts; however, youth who reside in a suburb of a very large city may not be dissimilar from youth who reside in urban

communities. Future studies might better explore this phenomenon by examining geographic locations from the perspective of neighborhood contexts.

The findings in this study reveal that the effects of these community types on adolescent attitudes and behaviors have for the most part remained the same over time. Because of the consistencies overtime, this indicates that the different results between the three geographical areas are not due to certain situations taking place in time, but rather are due to unique characteristic differences between place.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not include data from adolescents who drop out of high school before their senior year. It only captures data from adolescents who are in school. It is reasonable to believe that adolescents who drop out of school will have different attitudes and beliefs than those in school. Another concern is with the reliability and validity of self-reported substance use. Gibson and Young (1994) pointed out that reporting of risky or illegal behaviors under circumstances that could be perceived as embarrassing or result in punishment could be more vulnerable to underreporting. This concern is especially poignant in the school environment because of student's perceptions or concerns of the possible consequences of reporting illegal substance use. However, Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman (2003) noted

that self-reported substance use among adolescents has a high degree of reliability and convergence with related attitudes and behaviors.

Conclusion

The findings can provide researchers and policy makers with a more comprehensive picture of adolescent behavior that is unique to their geographic environments. By understanding the unique outcomes of adolescents in different environments, professionals can better implement program and policy-specific procedures for improving the outcomes of adolescents given their community context.

The findings show how behaviors change out through the years in each geographic environment and perhaps help to give a better understanding as to how behaviors will continue to change. The more that is known about these important behaviors and attitudes across the rural, urban and suburban areas, the more informed parents, families, schools, family service and health care professionals will be.

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