

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS AND RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR
OUTCOMES: ATTITUDES AS A MEDIATING FACTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined environmental risk factors for risky sexual behaviors and examined the possible mediating effects of attitude on these factors. The study is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979) ecological systems theory in that risk factors from participants' "systems" of influence are examined. Subjects were recruited from four mid-western public schools, female, ages 14 to 17. Participants completed measures to assess risk factors for risky sexual behaviors and to identify sexual behaviors.

Additionally, participants completed the Adolescent Attitudes Regarding Dating Relationships scale (AARDR), an instrument that measures high school-aged adolescents' attitudes regarding dating relationships (Davidson, 2005). Three models were examined using structural equation modeling to determine the impact of attitudes on sexual behaviors, with and without consideration for other risk factors. Results indicated that the model with a direct path between attitudes and sexual behavior outcomes was the best fit to the data collected.