

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL AND PARENT ATTACHMENT ON RURAL ADOLESCENTS' AGE AT FIRST INTERCOURSE: A COMPARISON OF CONTEXTS

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(ABSTRACT)

This cross-sectional survey study investigates the relationship between school attachment (SA) and adolescents' age at first intercourse (DV), as well as the influence of SA on DV in comparison to the influences of parent attachment (PA), other parent and school factors, and individual factors. Early first intercourse is defined as prior to age 15. Participants are 1,757 mostly African-American and White 7th through 12th grade adolescent boys and girls in five rural counties of a Mid-Atlantic state.

Bivariate correlations comparing SA and PA revealed significant and positive correlations between SA and DV ($p < .001$), as well as PA and DV ($p < .001$). Linear regressions including only SA and PA showed SA was most predictive of DV for adolescents reporting the lowest ($p < .05$) and highest ($p < .001$) levels of PA. For those reporting moderate attachment to parents, SA was not predictive of DV. Several ethnic and gender differences are discussed.

Finally, when the influence of individual, parent, and school contexts was compared using entry in a regression by blocks, SA was no longer a significant predictor of DV, and school variables did not account for a significant portion in the variance of age at first intercourse. Parent attachment was a significant and negative predictor, indicating that other parent, individual, and community variables are more influential. Implications are discussed.

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