

Original article

The Strong African American Families Program: Longitudinal Pathways to Sexual Risk Reduction

Velma McBride Murry, Ph.D.^a, Cady Berkel, Ph.D.^{b,*}, Gene H. Brody, Ph.D.^a,
Meg Gibbons, Ph.D.^c, and Frederick X. Gibbons, Ph.D.^c

^aCenter for Family Research, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

^bBehavioral Interventions and Research Branch, Division of STD Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia

^cDepartment of Psychology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

Manuscript received May 9, 2006; manuscript accepted April 11, 2007

See Editorial p. 317

Abstract

Purpose: To identify the mechanisms by which intervention-induced increases in adaptive parenting were associated with a reduction in sexual risk behavior among rural African American adolescents across a 29-month period.

Methods: African American families ($N = 284$) with 11-year-old children in nine rural Georgian counties participated in the 7-week Strong African American Families (SAAF) project. Counties were randomly assigned to intervention or control conditions. The program was evaluated via pretest, posttest, and long-term follow-up interview data collected in the families' homes. The current paper tests a hypothetical model of program efficacy, positing that intervention-induced changes in parenting behaviors would enhance in youth self-pride, which in turn would forecast changes in sexual behaviors measured 29 months after pretest.

Results: Compared with controls, parents who participated in SAAF reported increased adaptive universal and racially specific parenting. Furthermore, intervention-induced changes in these parenting behaviors were associated indirectly with sexual risk behavior through adolescent self-pride, peer orientation, and sexual intent.

Conclusions: Culturally competent programs, developed through empirical and theoretical research within affected communities, can foster adaptive universal and racially specific parenting, which can have a long-term effect on adolescent sexual risk behavior. Effective strategies for designing and implementing culturally competent programs are discussed. © 2007 Society for Adolescent Medicine. All rights reserved.

Keywords:

Adolescents; African Americans; Rural; Parenting; Racial Socialization; Sexual Risk Behavior; Cultural Competence; Preventive Intervention; Program Evaluation

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) are among the most critical issues facing rural African American youth, and disparities in transmission continue to grow. Of the 43,704

AIDS cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2003, 48% occurred among African Americans, who account for 13% of the United States population [1]. This disparity is even higher among youth under age 15, with African Americans representing 66% of new male cases and 72% of new female cases in this age group. Reduction efforts have focused mainly on urban areas, with few attempts to slow transmission in rural areas [2]. Rural youth, however, are as likely to engage in sexual risk behaviors as their urban counterparts [3]. Furthermore, be-

*Address correspondence to: Cady Berkel, Ph.D., Behavioral Interventions and Research Branch, Division of STD Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1600 Clifton Road, Mailstop E44, Atlanta, GA 30333.

E-mail address: cberkel@cdc.gov

cause of poverty and low population densities, rural areas lack the resources available in urban communities, placing their constituents at particular risk.

The Strong African American Families (SAAF) program, a preventive intervention to deter adolescent sexual risk behavior, was designed with consideration of the unique context of rural African American communities [4,5]. Conceptualization of SAAF was informed by the primary investigators' program of research with rural African American families. Their findings demonstrate that factors protecting children from risky behaviors originate in the family, particularly in adaptive parenting practices, which foster positive youth development.

The SAAF program was designed to protect rural African American adolescents from early sexual debut and alcohol use through adaptive parenting [4,5]. To evaluate the program's efficacy, investigators used a randomized control group design with multi-informant, longitudinal data. This design allows researchers to construct hypothetical structural equation models through which to evaluate both program outcomes and underlying theoretical relationships. Murry et al [5] conducted a preliminary evaluation of SAAF, using pre- and posttest data, and found an increase in adaptive parenting strategies among SAAF participants. These parenting strategies were associated with enhancement of positive identity, including self-esteem, racial identity, and body image. Noteworthy is that the influence on early sexual debut was not determined, as most of the youths had not yet engaged in sexual activity. Completion of the long-term follow-up provides an opportunity to determine whether program-induced changes in parenting would deter sexual debut as youth transition into early adolescence, when risk opportunities may escalate. Thus, in the current study, we extend the model of Murry et al to examine SAAF's distal effects on sexual risk behaviors, including sexual activity, number of partners, and condom use. In the following section, we review previous research

that contributed to the development of our hypothesized model of program effects (Figure 1).

Literature review

Upchurch et al [6] noted that, although African American adolescents are at elevated risk for HIV, social processes are better predictors of risk behavior than race or SES. Despite the risk that poverty and racism pose to African American youth, many grow up to lead healthy and productive lives [7]. Many rural African Americans direct their parenting processes toward enhancing their children's resilience, enabling them to withstand the challenges associated with "growing up Black in America" [8]. Prevention researchers must consider ways to promote African American families' protective capacities. SAAF targets parenting processes that have implications for adolescents' positive development. These practices can be categorized as universal (i.e., strategies that are considered important for all groups) and as racially specific (i.e., strategies that are especially important for African American families). In the paragraphs that follow, we will review previous literature on universal and racially specific parenting, as well as youth mediators that might explain the relationship between parenting and adolescents' sexual outcomes.

Universal parenting: Involvement and parent-child communication

Prior research demonstrates the importance of parental involvement and communication in reducing adolescent sexual risk behavior across many racial groups [9]. Positive adolescent identity may mediate this relationship. Prior non-experimental studies demonstrate that instrumental and emotional support from parents buffer adolescents from stressful life events by fostering positive self-perceptions [10]. Moreover, a supportive, communicative family environment, in which expectations regarding risk are clearly articulated, encourages adolescents to internalize their parents' values and norms and to avoid risky behaviors [11].

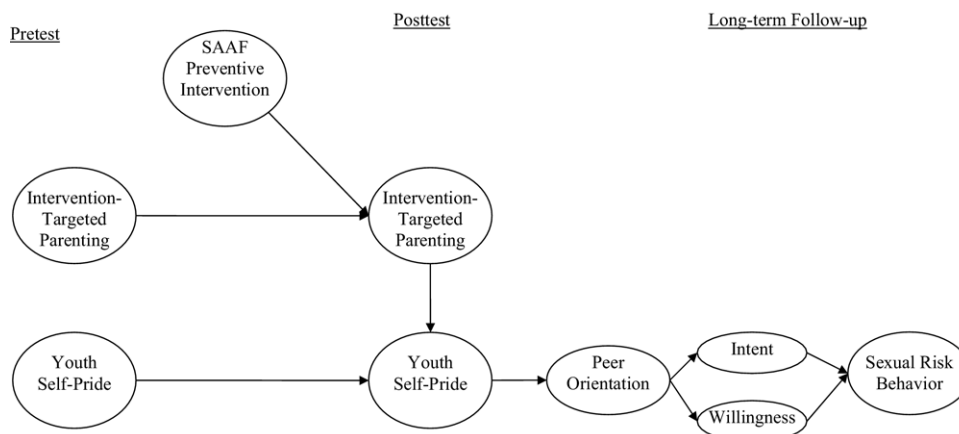


Figure 1. Hypothetical model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1081063>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1081063>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)