

A Theory-Based Review of African-American Adolescents' Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

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Introduction

- The U. S. has had the highest rates of STIs in the industrialized world for over a decade (CDC,1998).
- Early sexual initiation among American adolescents represents a major public health problem.
- National health objectives outline increasing the proportion of adolescents who abstain from sexual intercourse or use condoms if currently sexually active (CDC, 2004).

Introduction continued...

- Approximately 3 million adolescents are infected with STIs (Bachanas, Morris, Lewis-Gess, Sarett-Cuasay, Sirl, Riles, & Sawyer, 2002).
- African-American adolescents report earlier age of sexual initiation, which places them at an increased risk of negative health outcomes (Escobar-Chaves, Tortolero, Markham, Low, Eitel, & Thickstun, 2005).

Purpose

- Understanding the influences of risky sexual behavior among African American adolescents can ultimately improve their health and contribute to reaching national health objectives.
- The purpose of this paper was to apply the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to the sexual attitudes, beliefs, and intentions of African American adolescents.

Methods

- A comprehensive literature review was conducted using the following:

- Medline - Pubmed - Google Scholar

- Terms Queried

- Adolescents - African Americans - TRA
- Sexual Behaviors - Sexual Initiation - Sexual Outcomes



- Studies were reviewed based on identified use of the TRA or TRA constructs, and if sexual behavior or a related outcome was addressed.

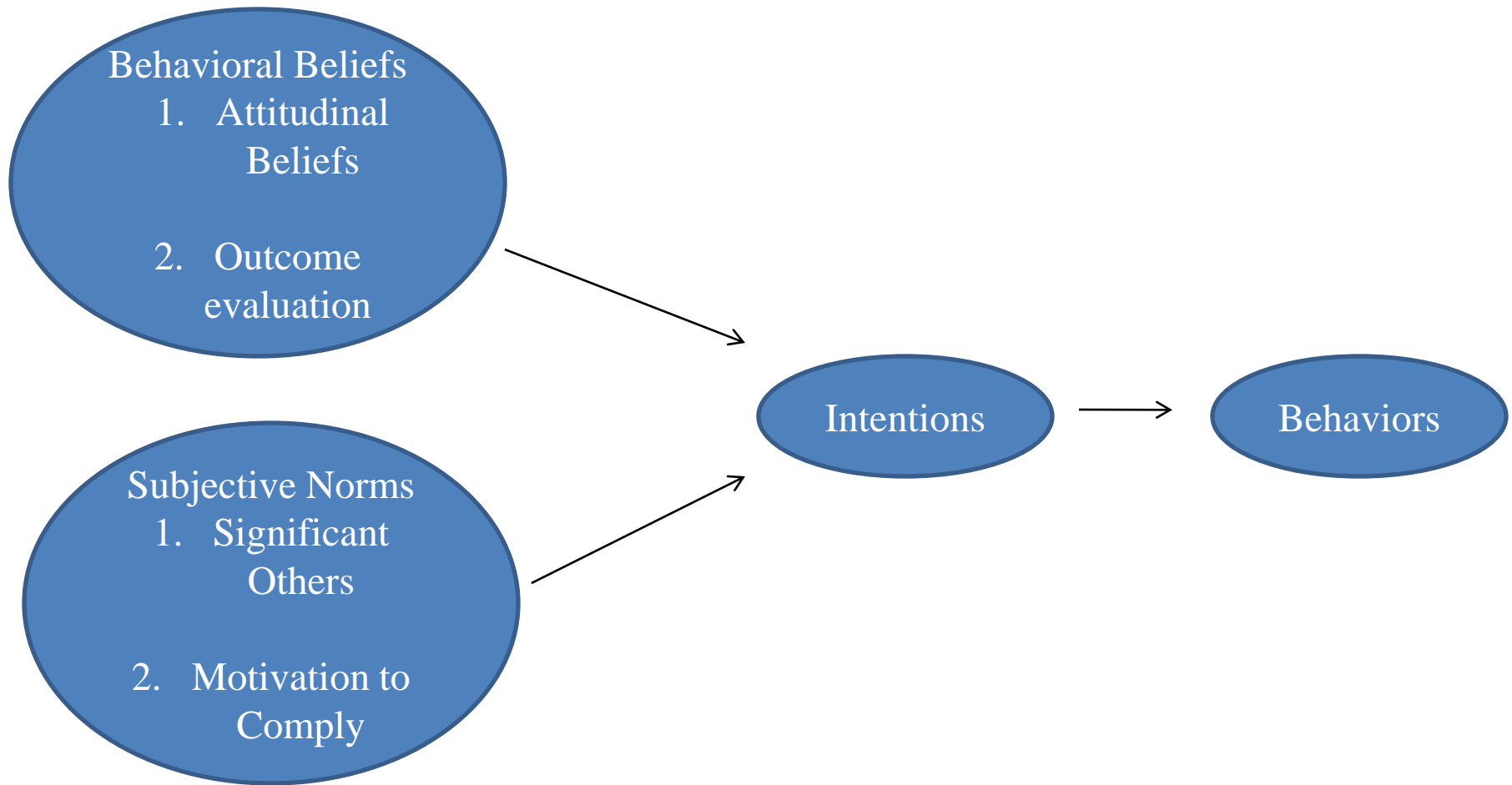
Results

- Most studies have focused on the influence of sociodemographic and family factors (Gillmore, Archibald, Morrison, Wilsdon, Wells, Hoppe, Nahom, & Murowchick, 2002).
- Carvajal and colleagues (1999) noted that such a focus has resulted in a lack of knowledge of the more proximal factors that influence adolescents' sexual decision making.
- The TRA may be appropriate to identify possible factors that influence adolescent sexual behavior.

Results continued...

- The TRA was originally developed by Martin Fishbein in 1967 (Fishbein, 1967) and later refined with the assistance of Icek Ajzen.
- The TRA was developed through an effort to understand the relationship between attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).
- TRA has been used to determine the weight of attitudes and subjective norms on the intentions to perform behaviors such as drinking alcohol, mammography use, and sun protection.

Graphic Depiction of the TRA, adapted from Ajzen, 1967



Conclusions

- TRA has been successfully used to predict adolescents' sexual behavior and intentions, adolescent's AIDS preventive behaviors and other health behaviors (Carvajal et al., 1999; Flores, Tschann, & Marin, 2002; Perko et al., 2000; Fisher, Fisher, & Rye, 1995).
- Applying the TRA may assist in developing tailored interventions to delay early onset of sexual initiation among African-American adolescents.

Implications

- Health educators and practitioners must incorporate health education theory such as TRA when addressing risky sexual behaviors of adolescents.
- Health interventions addressing risky sexual behavior should seek to include younger audiences and at-risk minority populations.
- To facilitate healthy attitudes toward delaying sexual activity, interventions must focus on generating attitudes consistent with favorable ideas regarding delayed sexual activity.