

The Sociometrics Program Archives: Promoting the Dissemination of Evidence-Based Practices Through Replication Kits

Josefina J. Card

Reprinted from *Research on Social Work Practice*
Volume 11, No. 4, July 2001, pp. 521-526
© 2001 Sage Publications
Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

The Sociometrics Program Archives: Promoting the Dissemination of Evidence- Based Practices Through Replication Kits

Josefina J. Card

Sociometrics Corporation, Los Altos, CA

It is important that psychosocial interventions that have been shown to be effective in changing risky behavior be disseminated, so that they can be replicated and their effectiveness evaluated in a new setting. This article describes an innovative method for promoting the dissemination of evidence-based practice through replication kits. Three problem-focused collections of promising prevention programs, the Program Archive on Sexuality, Health and Adolescence, the HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Archive, and the Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Program Archive, are used to illustrate this technique for improving information exchange between social work research and practice. The productive research-to-practice feedback loop described in this article can be generalized to any other content area for which standard intervention protocols or curricula have been or could be developed.

The importance of ensuring that effective human service interventions are replicated and adapted has been highlighted in recent years (Card, 1999; Kelly et al., 2000). How can social work researchers and practitioners be encouraged to traverse the productive research-to-practice feedback loop, as partners, so that research informs practice and practice informs research? This article describes an innovative method for promoting the dissemination of effective interventions through the creation, dissemination, and field testing of intervention replication kits. The research-to-practice concepts and methods we espouse are illustrated in three topically focused intervention archives, all of which seek to prevent or reduce risky sexual or substance abuse-related behavior. However, they can be generalized to any other content area for which standard intervention protocols or curricula have been or could be developed.

The Program Archive on Sexuality, Health, and Adolescence (PASHA), the HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Archive (HAPPA) and the Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Program Archive (YSAPPA) are topically focused

Author's Note: Correspondence may be addressed to Josefina J. Card, Sociometrics Corporation, 170 State Street, Suite 260, Los Altos, CA 94022; e-mail: jjcard@socio.com.

Research on Social Work Practice, Vol. 11 No. 4, July 2001 521-526
© 2001 Sage Publications

collections of effective prevention programs. Together, these collections compose the Sociometrics Program Archives. In this article, we use the terms *program* and *intervention* interchangeably to mean a specific curriculum or protocol aimed at changing risky behavior that can be described, packaged, and replicated with fidelity at multiple sites. PASHA, HAPPA, and YSAPPA each consist of a set of program replication kits containing all the materials required to replicate, or creatively adapt, an intervention that has been deemed effective by an independent scientist expert panel. Typical replication kits contain a user's guide to the program, a teacher's or facilitator's manual, a student or participant workbook, one or more videos, and forms for "homework" assignments or group exercises. Table 1 illustrates the scope of the Sociometrics Program Archives.

Although many other investigations have identified effective prevention programs, most have limited the dissemination of their findings to evaluation reports, literature reviews, or meta-analyses in journal articles and book chapters not typically read by social work practitioners. In contrast, the Sociometrics Program Archives make the innovative leap from research to practice by going beyond the scholarly article to the acquisition, packaging, and dissemination of effective interventions to practitioners who are in a position to replicate or adapt the interventions. We try to make these intervention kits available from a single repository so that practitioners can readily choose the one(s) most in line with their communities, clinics, schools, or other target populations. We coordinate field tests of the intervention replication kits at independent sites around the country to study their usefulness in promoting the replication of effective programs, help us improve the kits based on user reports, and test whether the interventions continue to be effective in new sites. Once the original developer has approved the kit for public distribution, we sell it at a cost (typically \$100 to \$300) sufficient to cover production and ongoing technical assistance. Our work demonstrates that program archives can become financially self-sustainable, once the initial development cost of their constituent replication kits has been covered via a grant or contract.

In the following sections, we describe the four-step process that we have used to create the Sociometrics Program Archives.

STEP 1. RESEARCH: SELECTION OF PROMISING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

At the inception of each archiving project, we invite four to six nationally recognized experts in the field to serve on the project's scientist expert panel,

TABLE 1: The Collections Composing the Sociometrics Program Archives**PASHA: The Program Archive on Sexuality, Health and Adolescence**

Sponsoring agency: National Institute on Child Health and Human Development,
Office of Population Affairs

Number of interventions selected as effective by scientist expert panel: 36

Number of effective interventions available from the Sociometrics Program Archives (SPA): 25

Number of effective interventions available from other distributors (not SPA): 8

HAPPA: The HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Archive

Sponsoring agency: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Centers
for Disease Control and Prevention

Number of interventions selected as effective by scientist expert panel: 18

Number of effective interventions available from the Sociometrics Program Archives (SPA): 10

Number of effective interventions available from other distributors (not SPA): 7

YSAPPA: The Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Program Archive

Sponsoring agency: National Institute of Drug Abuse

Number of interventions selected as effective by scientist expert panel: 11

Number of effective interventions available from the Sociometrics Program Archives (SPA): 9

Number of effective interventions available from other distributors (not SPA): 0

charged with selecting effective intervention programs for the collection. Nationally recognized experts in the field of teen pregnancy prevention research serve on the panel for PASHA, experts in HIV/AIDS prevention research on the panel for HAPPA, and experts in drug abuse prevention research on the panel for YSAPPA.

We use three sets of objective criteria to select the effective interventions: content relevance, methodological rigor, and evidence of effectiveness. In assessing evidence of effectiveness, PASHA uses 13 outcome variables relating to prevention of teen pregnancy and teen STD/HIV/AIDS. These include delay of first sexual intercourse, reduction in the number of partners, reduction in the frequency of sexual intercourse, and use of contraception or prophylactic during intercourse. HAPPA uses 12 outcome variables relating to the prevention of HIV/AIDS in adults, including 8 variables relating to reduction in high-risk sexual behaviors (e.g., unprotected anal sex or sex with high-risk partners) and 4 variables relating to reduction in drug-injection related high-risk behaviors (e.g., reuse of drug injecting needles). YSAPPA uses 6

indicators of reduction in illegal and legal drug use such as abstinence from the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs (e.g., in past week, month); decreased frequency of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; decreased intensity of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; and refusal of offer to use, purchase, or obtain alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

To qualify as a candidate for inclusion in a Sociometrics Program Archive, an intervention must be described in at least one evaluation-related paper or publication documenting, in scientifically acceptable fashion, the candidate program's effectiveness in changing one or more of the targeted behavioral outcome variables. For each candidate intervention, we provide scientist expert panel members with the original journal article or book chapter detailing the scientific evidence for the intervention's effectiveness, plus a briefing document summarizing key points related to program description and evaluation methodology and results. Panelists are then asked to rate each candidate intervention program on a scale from 1 to 10, with a median score of 7 or higher distinguishing the candidate program as one to include in the effective program archive.

STEP 2. PRACTICE: PACKAGING AND DISSEMINATION OF PROMISING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

We then make the innovative leap from research to practice by acquiring, packaging, and disseminating—from a single, central dissemination source—the set of promising interventions. After panelists have chosen which programs represent the highest standard of effectiveness, we attempt to acquire the necessary intervention materials from the original developers of the selected programs. Table 1 shows that, in all three of the program archives created to date, we have had an extremely high success rate in acquiring selected programs from their original developers. Our few acquisition failures have been for programs already available from another commercial distributor; we have given these programs lower priority for acquisition and processing because they are already publicly available.

We then package each acquired program in an attractive and engaging box (the program package or intervention replication kit) containing everything needed to replicate the intervention: a complete set of program materials (e.g., curriculum guidebook, student workbook, teacher's or facilitator's manual, photocopy masters for student or participant exercises, and videos). We reformat the original materials, on an as needed basis, to increase their visual appeal. We also prepare, for each kit, a user's guide describing the program and its original evaluation, and providing tips and guidelines for implement-

ation. Finally, we include in the kit a starting point for reevaluating the promising intervention in the form of two accompanying evaluation packets—the original evaluation instrument and a short, generic evaluation questionnaire measuring the archive's targeted outcome variables—in printed and machine-readable formats. (Card, Benner, Feinstein, & Shields, 2001; Card, Niego, Mallari, & Farrell, 1996:)

STEP 3. RESEARCH: REPLICATION AND REEVALUATION OF PROMISING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

As we complete development of the intervention program kits, we launch the next cycle of new research on their effectiveness through a field test, replication, and reevaluation of the intervention. We are currently coordinating national field tests of the usability, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the Sociometrics intervention replication kits. Process evaluation data from the first 19 replication sites for the PASHA archive indicate that the kits facilitate faithful replication of effective interventions (Niego, Park, Kelley, Peterson, & Card, 1998). HAPPA and YSAPPA field tests are still in progress.

The field tests also enable us to reconsider the effectiveness of each intervention when it is implemented in a new setting, with a different target population. We have developed brief, standard prevention program evaluation questionnaires—one each for PASHA, HAPPA, and YSAPPA—that are being administered to participants in program and comparison sites at three points in time (preprogram, immediate postprogram or 3 months postprogram, 6 months postprogram). Analyses will compare the two groups on each archive's outcome variables.

STEP 4. PRACTICE: SHARPENING OF INTERVENTION PROGRAM PACKAGES BASED ON THE REPLICATION AND REEVALUATION STUDIES

We use results of the field test, replication, and reevaluation studies to edit, clarify, and thereby strengthen the intervention kits. Finally, as the archives disseminate program archive materials to social work practitioners across the nation, we develop compendia describing each intervention in each collection to assist practitioners in choosing the package that is most appropriate for the clients in their community, school, or clinic. (Card, Becker, & Hill, 1998; Sociometrics Corporation, 2000) The programs are also described on the Sociometrics Web site (<http://www.socio.com/program.htm>). As of this

writing, we have completed development of the first batch of intervention replication kits: 23 PASHA kits, 10 HAPPA kits, and 9 YSAPPA kits have been completed to date. These program packages have been sold to, and are now being implemented in, more than 275 schools, community-based organizations, and clinics across the country. We hope to work with these sites on a fresh round of replication research.

SUMMARY

The development and dissemination of program archives (collections of replication kits for effective interventions) can advance social work practice by (a) packaging the most promising interventions to enhance their usability; (b) facilitating low-cost access to, and widespread awareness of, these interventions; (c) encouraging additional rigorous tests of the intervention's effectiveness in a variety of populations; and (d) demonstrating the value of, and providing a model for, the research-to-practice feedback loop. It is through this feedback loop that research-based tools for practitioners are developed, field tested, and modified through researcher and practitioner collaboration in an ongoing effort to make research findings more useful to practice.

REFERENCES

- Card, J. J. (1999). Teen pregnancy prevention: Do any programs work? *Annual Review of Public Health, 20*, 257-285.
- Card, J. J., Becker, S., & Hill, D.M.K. (Eds.) (1998). *The PASHA program sourcebook: Promising teen pregnancy and STD/HIV/AIDS prevention programs*. Los Altos, CA: Sociometrics Corporation.
- Card, J. J., Benner, T., Feinstein, N., & Shields, J. (2001). The HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Archive (HAPPA): A collection of promising prevention programs in a box. *AIDS Prevention and Education, 13*, 1-28.
- Card, J. J., Niego, S., Mallari, A. & Farrell, W. S. (1996). The Program Archive on Sexuality, Health & Adolescence: A collection of promising prevention programs-in-a-box. *Family Planning Perspectives, 28*, 210-220.
- Kelly, J. A., Somlai, A. M., DiFranceisco, W. J., Otto-Sahaj, I., L., McAuliffe, T. L., Hackl, K. L., Heckman, T. G., Holtgrave, D. R., & Rompa, D. (2000). Bridging the gap between the science and service of HIV prevention: Transferring effective research-based HIV prevention interventions to community AIDS service providers. *American Journal of Public Health, 90*, 1082-1088.
- Niego, S., Park, M. J., Kelley, M. S., Peterson, J. L., & Card, J. J. (1998). *The PASHA field test: A window on the world of practitioners*. Los Altos, CA: Sociometrics Corporation.
- Sociometrics Corporation. (2000). *PASHA information and order packet*. Los Altos, CA: Program Archive on Sexuality, Health & Adolescence.