

SOCIOMETRICS PROJECT NO. 2

CONTRACEPTIVE DECISION-MAKING

This grant transferred from the American Institutes for Research to Sociometrics Corporation upon transfer of the principal investigator, Dr. J. J. Card. The project developed a model focusing on the additional contributions of “process factors” over the more-studied “content- or substantive-factors” in determining sexual and contraceptive decisions. Salient process factors were specified and operationalized, in the (illustrative) context of sexual debut and concomitant contraceptive use.

Items were created to measure the following components of the sexual-and-contraceptive-debut decision-making process: (1) the problem-formulation process, including identification of goals, barriers, and facilitators; (2) the information-gathering process, including sources of information considered, sources of information approached, and the information received from each source; (3) the information-integration process, including alternatives perceived and values attached to each alternative, and heuristics for probability assessment and choice; and (4) the implementation process, in the form of the study’s dependent variables of interest: sexual and contraceptive debut.

Several higher-level constructs characterizing the decision-making process were also delineated and operationalized: (1) the partner- and parent-interaction process, including decision allocation, communication, conflict resolution, and interpersonal influence; (2) the preconditions for entry into active decision-making mode; (3) the length of time in active mode and in each of its components (problem formulation, information-gathering, information-integration); (4) the amount of thought given to the decision; the level of consciousness at each stage of the process; and the relative emphases given to each stage.

A model integrating each of these constructs was developed.

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