

SANKOFA FACT SHEET

January 2004

No. 34

Research Synthesis

HIV RISK BEHAVIOR REDUCTION FOLLOWING INTERVENTION WITH KEY OPINION LEADERS OF POPULATION: AN EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS

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JOURNAL: *American Journal of Public Health.* 81 (2), 168-171

Intervention Goal(s): To determine the effects of a community-level intervention to reduce high-risk behaviors.

Intervention Setting: Gay bars. §

Population: Of the 659 gay men who completed anonymous baseline surveys, 14 percent were African-American or Hispanic, and 86 percent were white. Average age was 29 years.

Description of Intervention: Popular Opinion Leader (POL)

This intervention was based on theories of peer influence, behavioral standards and social norms, and diffusion of innovations. Bartenders at gay clubs in Biloxi, Mississippi; Monroe, Louisiana; and Hattiesburg, Mississippi were enlisted to nominate opinion leaders, i.e., persons who were popular with others. The intervention was delivered in two parts:

Part I. Popular opinion leaders received four sessions, 90 minutes each §, of HIV education and communication strategies. A male and a female co-facilitator conducted each session.

Session 1: Epidemiology of HIV, risk and protective behaviors, and misconceptions.

Session 2: Characteristics of effective health promotion messages. Facilitators described ways to sensitize others to the threat of AIDS, stressed that behavior change can prevent AIDS, used self as example, and personally endorsed the benefits of change.

Session 3: Conversational examples of effective health promotion messages. Facilitators modeled conversations and opinion leader participants role-played similar conversations.

Session 4: Real-life conversations and problem solving. Participants reported outcomes of actual conversations (see Part II). Facilitators helped them plan for additional peer conversations.

Part II. Each opinion leader agreed to have at least 14 conversations with peers in the bars about AIDS risk reduction. Opinion leaders wore buttons with a logo that promoted the project and matched posters located in the bars. Buttons were ambiguous and served to trigger conversations.

Comparison Condition: The intervention was given to comparison participants at a later time.

Behavioral Findings: Men from the community that received the intervention reported a significantly greater reduction in unprotected anal intercourse than the men from the comparison communities.

§ Information obtained from related reports or author.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis Project. Compendium of HIV Prevention Interventions with Evidence of Effectiveness. Atlanta, Ga.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: November 1999, Revised, [1-18].

