

# YARP: Youth Action Research for Prevention

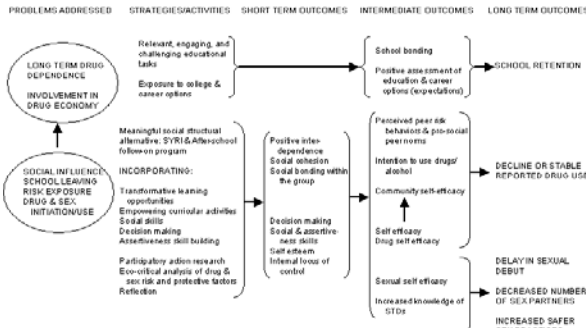
Marlene J. Berg, Principal Investigator/Project Director and Emil Coman, Evaluator  
Institute for Community Research (ICR), Hartford, Connecticut

## INTRODUCTION

Youth Action research for Prevention (YARP) is a research and demonstration project designed to test the efficacy of ICR's Youth PAR model. As a youth-led, adult-supported program YARP aims to decrease and delay the incidence of alcohol and drug use and risky sex, as well as to develop positive peer norms through youth engagement in Participatory Action Research (PAR). Through YARP:

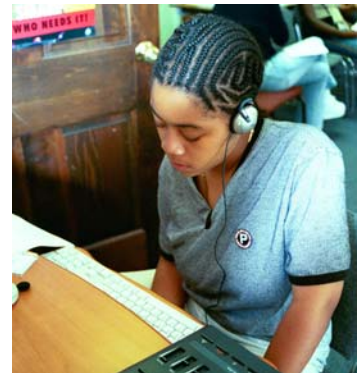
- Youth are situated within youth, neighborhood and community culture.
- Eco-critical thinking exposes teens to multi-leveled issues & solutions.
- Youth conceptualize and reframe norms in culturally appropriate ways.

## YARP LOGIC MODEL



## AIMS

- To decrease and/or delay initiation of alcohol and drug use and associated risks
- To increase positive peer norms among urban adolescents residing in high risk neighborhoods
- To empower youth through the conduct of eco-critical ethnographic research and building local knowledge for community change
- To enhance cognitive development in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving



## METHODS

Three year – 3 cohort intervention with 114 Urban Youth ages 14-17 in PAR hands-on participatory research and action program involving three key components:

- A seven-week, 20 hour/week Summer Youth Research Institute
- A four-hour per week 8 month after school follow-on program in which research is translated into action projects
- Education/career counseling with exposure to colleges and careers

Longitudinal, quasi-experimental study design comparing treatment and matched control group (202 comparison group youth matched on age, income, school performance, ethnic background, and enrollment in similar summer enrichment work opportunities).

Outcome survey and network instrument administered 4 times a year (before and after the summer intervention, midway through and after the school year intervention).

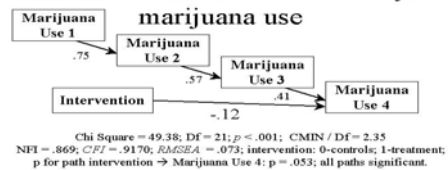
- Survey measures incorporate standardized as well as locally constructed scales which assessed: cognitive and behavioral intermediate and long-term outcomes related to substance use, risky sex, individual and collective efficacy, and educational norms
- Network instrument measures group level interactions and effects including: group structure, social cohesion, bonding, and interdependence

Process evaluation conducted through ethnographic observation of sessions, informal observation of youth interactions, documentation of action project process, staff interviews, youth focus groups, and youth self reflections designed to: assess intervention integrity, acceptability and satisfaction; provide feedback to program staff; and explain outcomes.

## RESULTS

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) demonstrated:

### Effects of intervention on 30 days



- A significant reduction in 30-day marijuana day use at T4.
- Alcohol use decreased in the treatment group as compared to controls at T4 - but not statistically significant.
- Number of sex partners at time 3 reduced - not statistically significant.
- Impact in the intended direction on social-cognitive variables including community self-efficacy and beliefs about peer use of drugs.
  - ✓ Intervention youth shifted from believing that more peers were using drugs at baseline to believing that fewer peers were using drugs at the final test point – significant.
  - ✓ Youth approval of peers' drug use and the educational expectations scale showed changes in the desired direction.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The YARP intervention showed clear indication of reducing drug related risks in the youth who received the treatment program in a single site efficacy trial.

Next steps involve packaging materials and developing a responsive and innovative approach to training and technical assistance, which will be used to adapt ICR's Youth PAR model for Prevention to ensure that it is culturally congruent and test it in four sites around the country.