

Youth Action Research for Prevention (*YARP*): A multilevel Participatory Action Research Intervention

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The Youth Action Research for Prevention Intervention

Youth Action Research for Prevention (YARP) a research and demonstration intervention that uses youth empowerment as the cornerstone of a **multi-level intervention** designed to *reduce and/or delay onset of drug and sex risk, while increasing individual and collective efficacy and educational expectations and outcomes*

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Key Concepts and Terms

- **"Translational"— Ethnography Deeply rooted understanding of:**
 - the issue (theoretical and through lens of affected population)
 - The population
 - The setting
- **Local/Community Efficacy Study**
 - Develops and Tests Intervention Model
 - Generates evidence relative to model
 - Creates new knowledge regarding Implementation and Evaluation
- **Dissemination Study**
 - Requires significant research capacity
 - Multiple sites, New settings, Different Communities and Populations
 - Tests effectiveness of the intervention
 - Studies process (fidelity and fit)
 - Generates manuals (formative ethnography, adaptation and implementation)
 - Develops and uses refined assessment instruments and protocols, researches the evaluation process and instruments, develops simplified, cost-effective set of assessment tools and protocols for use in non-research based settings
- **Diffusion – Wide Scale dissemination**

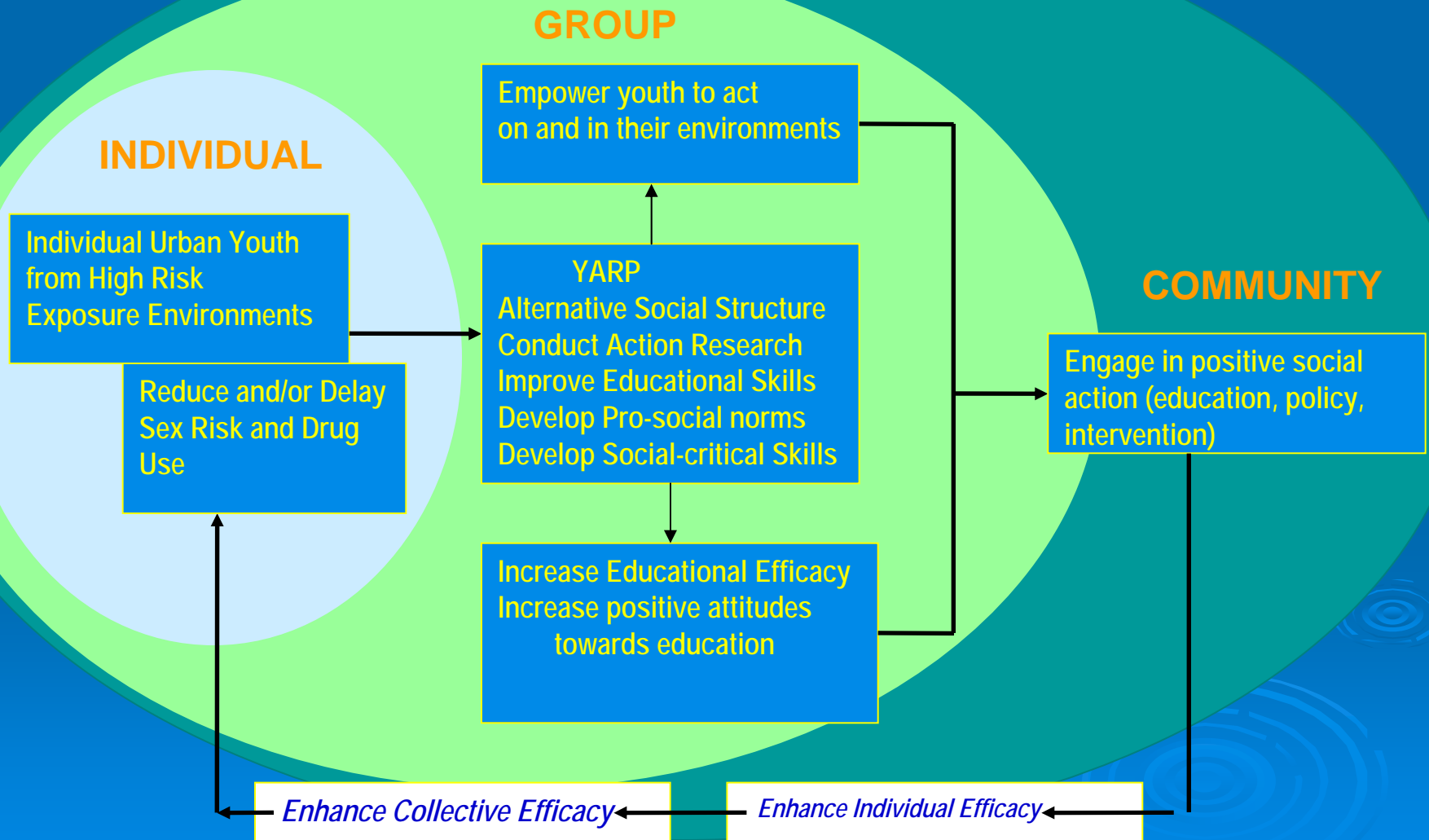
What makes YARP a multi-level intervention?

- a. At the individual level YARP is designed to:
 - 1) Increase positive attitudes toward education
 - 2) Develop critical social analytic skills
 - 3) Instill self efficacy and a sense of hope and empowerment to act
 - 4) Reduce and/or delay drug and sex risks

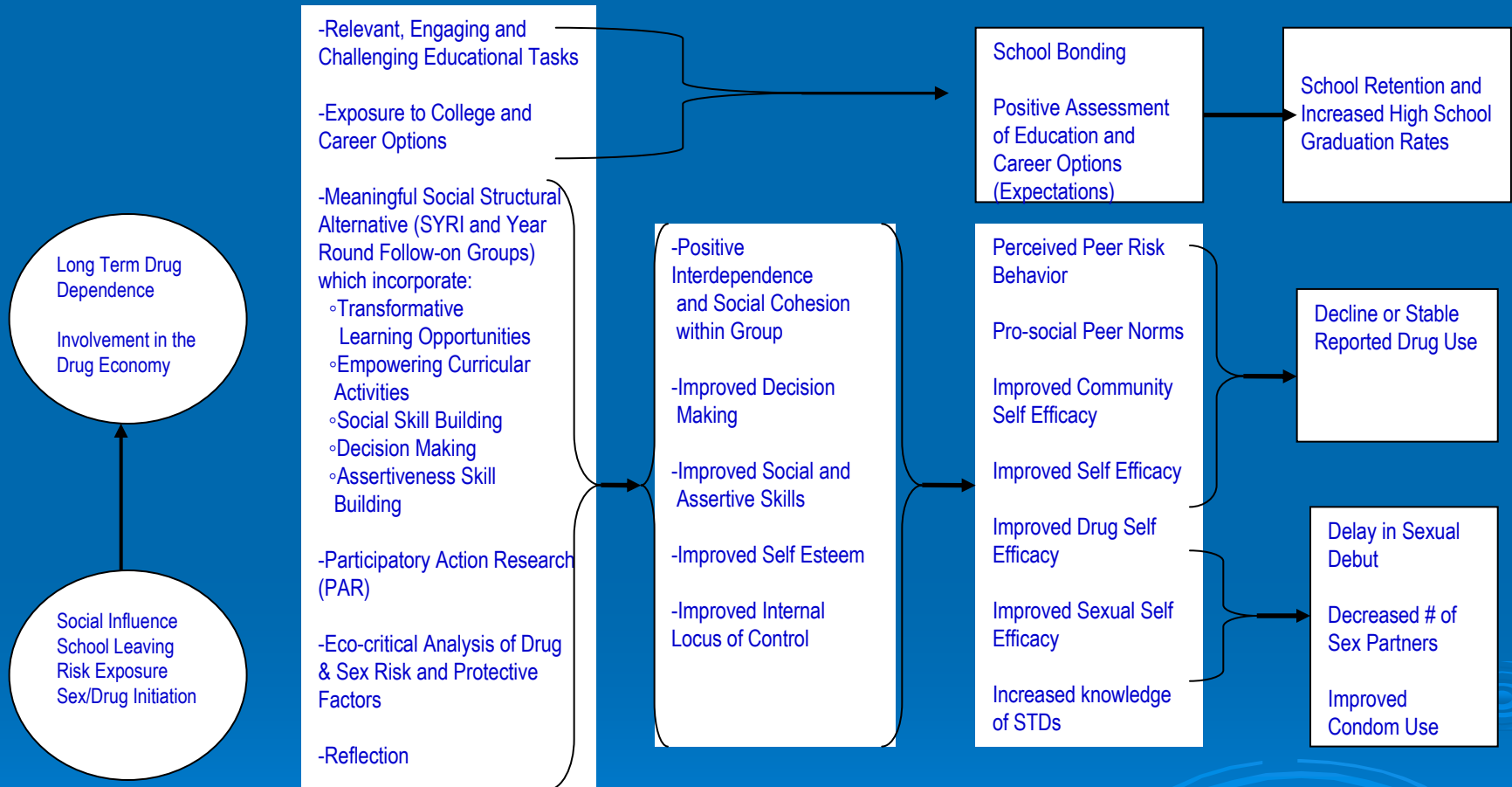
- b. At the group level YARP aims to:
 - 1) Develop group cohesion
 - 2) Develop group prosocial norms
 - 3) Foster collective efficacy – Youths' ability to act effectively upon the world (i.e. their communities) as a group

- c. At the community level YARP, via youth advocacy and action, seeks to bring about community level change in policies and institutions that affect youth.

YARP reflects an Interactive Ecological Research Intervention Design



YARP LOGIC MODEL



ENVIRONMENT

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

SHORT-TERM INFLUENCES

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Study Population and Setting

- Urban, African and Caribbean American and Puerto Rican/other Latino/a males and females
- In high school
- Ages 14 – 18 (mean age 15.6 years)
- At risk
- Low income
- School performance issues
- Residing in high risk exposure neighborhoods
- Attending poorly resourced schools

MAJOR PROGRAMMATIC SUBCOMPONENTS

The Summer Youth Research Institute (SYRI) which introduces participating youth to action research for prevention.

The *school-year after-school program* enables youth to translate their prevention research results into actions and interventions designed to promote positive peer norms and to have an effect on other youth and the broader community.

Educational and career counseling and mentoring, designed to expose youth to educational and career options and opportunities, are embedded in both the summer and school-year program

Core Elements

ICR Youth PAR (YARP) Model

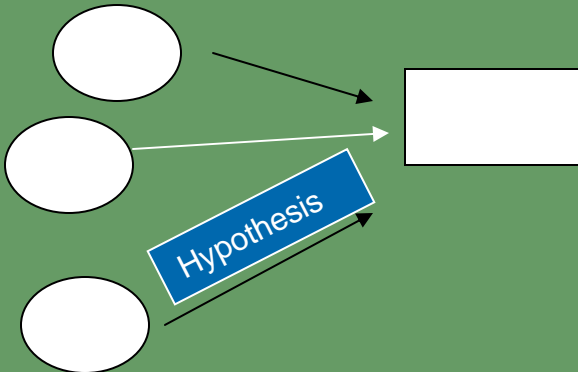
- Addressing identity formation using an interdisciplinary constructivist perspective including multiple intelligences and culturally specific social, emotional and cognitive competencies
- Building a strong sense of group identity and affiliation through valuing multiple perspectives and by bridging differences;
- identifying and reflecting upon environmental and personal stressors and supports, risk and protective factors for prevention and growth, using an eco-critical analysis;
- Establishing priorities for research and action through generating a grounded theory of “causality” and change;
- Learning and conducting ethnographic research methods as the basis for personal growth, social analysis and social action;
- Integrating PAR activities with learning skills in mathematics, social studies; communications (reading, writing, speaking), critical thinking and problem solving; and
- Implementing new social roles as Youth-PAR advocates for social change.

BUILD FOUNDATION

- Identity Development
- Ecological Perspective
 - Critical Analysis
- Cooperative Learning
- Social Construction

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

CONSTRUCT A RESEARCH MODEL



LEARN & USE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODS

- Interview
- Survey
- Visual Research/PhotoVoice
- Observation
- Pilesorting
- Mapping

IMPLEMENT THE RESEARCH

- Select the sample
- Collect data
- Conduct analyses

USE RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR CHANGE

- Advocacy
- Education
- Intervention

Mixed Method Process & Outcome Evaluation Design for Measurement at Multiple levels

Individual:

- Self-administered outcome evaluation instrument
- Treatment and Matched Comparison Group
- Four time points (pre and post the intensive summer intervention, mid point and end of the school year extension intervention)

Group:

- Network analytical techniques
- Gathered through individual assessments by participants using scales related to social cohesion and bonding
- Qualitative observation of a sample of activities within intervention sessions

Community:

- Qualitative documentation of advocacy and related actions
- Results over times

Evaluation: Examples at Multiple levels

- **Individual:** Increase in educational expectations (*quantitative outcome instrument/repeated measures*)
- **Group:** Increase in group cohesion (*network*) and Increase in collective efficacy (*quantitative outcome instrument/repeated measures*)
- **Community:** Successful action strategies (in collaboration with other youth adult allies results in \$6 million state funding for youth employment (*qualitative documentation* through *observation* and *interviewing*))
- **Interaction among the levels—After** success in organizing and taking action at the community level there is a decrease in reported marijuana use at the individual level (*SEM* examination of pathways to change)

Methodological Challenges for Dissemination of Multilevel Interventions

- Learning emerges both in practice (intervention) and evaluation (research), during the efficacy trial which needs to be studied further during the dissemination (or effectiveness) study.
 - **Challenge**: retaining original measures and creating and testing new measures in the dissemination study.
- Awareness of multi-level effects on the individual recognized in the original design; however, resource constraints led to focusing assessment and measurements on the individual and to a lesser degree on the group level.
 - **Challenge**: Developing measures geared directly to each level including analytical plans and techniques that facilitate intersecting data from each of the levels.

Methodological Challenges for Dissemination of Multilevel Interventions

- Definition of the “community level” is variable. For example a community could be defined as a school, as a neighborhood, as a city. When working with youth, the community that you/they are trying to affect may not be known at the beginning of the study.

Challenge: “Community” might change with each cohort and in a multi-site study across communities.

- Specific to PAR--through evaluation research, we learned that the issue youth choose to research (in one instance risky teen sex, in another teen drop outs) affected outcomes in a positive direction. However Participatory Action Research approach is predicated on youth having a major say in topic selection

Challenge: to predetermine issues so that appropriate measures can be included at baseline. Even greater difficulty emerges when conducting intervention at multiple sites.

Dissemination Challenges and Issues

- Finding the right partners and settings
- Adapting the intervention to different settings (e.g. university/community partners; schools) that have their own sets of issues and constraints
- Understanding and adapting the intervention to different populations
- Funding the research and intervention at multiple sites
- Difficulties of patching funding together—different requirements—confound research
- Special Challenges of intensive, small “n” interventions—require multiple cohorts—scheduling differences