

Principal Investigator: Raphael Travis, Jr.
Institution: Texas State University – San Marcos School of Social Work
Title of Study: The Austin Youth Development Project

IRB SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSAL

The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AYDP) will examine how out-of-school (OST) programs can serve as important positive developmental settings for young people. Utilizing a mixed methods design and positive youth development framework, the project examines the role and functions of community youth workers as mediators of program quality, purveyors of youth developmental assets and inhibitors of youth risk. Researchers have devoted greater attention to understanding structural and organizational factors influencing the quality and impact of OST programs (Walker & Larson, 2006). Establishment of criteria for program quality and standards is one important step toward assuring that OST programs have the potential to optimize health and development for adolescents. An important next step is the development of process improvement strategies to improve the quality of OST programs. Since community youth workers play an essential role in delivering OST program services, optimizing worker functioning has the potential of facilitating these optimal developmental principles within these positive developmental settings. Better person-environment fit has the potential to help establish high quality and consistent program practice but also to ensure that resources for youth are properly allocated toward individual settings and community-based strategies with potential for long-term positive impact on youth outcomes.

The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT proposes to develop and test options for OST program quality improvement by focusing on the role and function of youth workers. This applied research project will not only measure the role and function of the youth workers, but will simultaneously examine strategies to improve OST quality and performance. Using attribution theory, this project will focus on the nature, type and function of attributions made by youth workers as important mediators of their interpersonal interactions and program performance. The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT will also directly answer critical questions posed by the William T. Grant Foundation including: (a) Does a professional development intervention improve staff relationships with youth in after-school programs? (b) Under what circumstances are evidence-based practices adopted, implemented and sustained in (after) school programs?

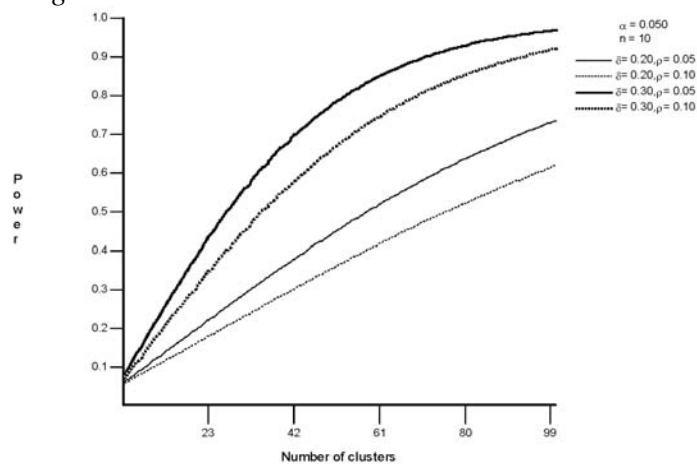
- 1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.**

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GENERAL DATA COLLECTION

Data for the AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT will be collected from multiple sites differentiated by the presence or absence of quality improvement strategies. Approximately 30 total sites will be included in the study, 15 quality improvement sites and 15 comparison sites. At least 5 youth workers and 10 participating youth will be sought per site for a total of 150 youth workers and 300 youth. This multi-site design will not be randomized since sites will self-select into the quality improvement strategy and then the actual study. The use of a multi-level structural equation model will allow the ability to account for variability within and between program sites. Power estimates were calculated for this design according to desired alpha, number of program sites and sample n (Please see Table 1). Calculations were made with an alpha set for .05 and a modest effect size of .20 using Optimal Design software⁶⁶. Despite a broader range, the greatest proportion of recent standardized effect sizes for OST or PYD impact on youth outcomes ranged between .10 and .40^{28, 44}. The anticipated power is relatively low at approximately .3 for 30 sites and a within site sample n of 10 for youth workers.

Table 1: Power Trajectory for Analyses with All Program Sites



An effort will be made to ensure representativeness across ethnicity and gender by targeting African-American and Latino youth in selection efforts within programs. Further, the diversity of Travis County including a large Latino population will help strengthen understanding of OST programs and ethnically diverse youth (Please see Table 2).

Table 2: Anticipated Data Sample Characteristics

Data Sample/Characteristics	QI/YPQA Sites	Comparison Sites
Age Range	13-21	13-21
Gender	Male and Female	Male and Female
Income	Low and Moderate	Low and Moderate
Location	Urban	Urban
Race/Ethnicity	African-American, White, Latino/a, Asian-American/PA	African-American, White, Latino/a, Asian-American/PA
Clusters (Program Sites)	15	15
Total Anticipated Community Youth Worker n	75	75
Total Anticipated Participating Youth n	150	150
Participation Variables (Pre and Post)		
Program Quality (YPQA)	X	
Community Youth Worker Attributions	X	X
Youth Development Assets (CHKS)	X	X
Youth Development Risk Behaviors (CHKS)	X	X

Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

The only special class of subjects is children. The proper protocols for obtaining consent are being followed for this project. Each participant will have to have parental consent if they are less than 18 years of age.

2. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable consent form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

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DATA SOURCES

The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT will use primary data collection to measure program quality, youth worker attributions, youth developmental assets and youth risk affiliated with naturally occurring community change efforts. OST programs are seen as potential catalysts in the positive development of youth in the region and *Quality Counts* is an initiative (funded by the Forum for Youth Investment) in place to strengthen program quality. The two core stakeholders helping to facilitate these change efforts are *Ready by 21 Austin/Travis County* and *United Way Capital Area (Austin, TX)*. Ready by 21 has offered support for pursuit of this project's opportunity to better understand ongoing community youth development efforts in the region. The data collected in the Quality Counts Initiative will be housed with Dr. Travis of Texas State University. United Way Capital Area has also

offered support for pursuit of this opportunity by promoting awareness of AYDP and offering access to UWCA-affiliated OST programs.

Ready by 21 (RB21) is a collaborative group of youth service providers, educators, government agency representatives, and teen advisors helping youth to be (a) ready for higher education and learning, (b) ready for work and career advancement, (c) ready to lead healthy lives and (d) ready for positive social and civic connections and engagement.¹ RB21 is a data driven coalition well versed seeking to strengthen the developmental infrastructure in and around Austin/Travis County. Recent successful efforts include joining the Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21TM Quality Counts Initiative focused on improving the quality and reach of youth programs and strengthening local and state policies that guide resource allocation, accountability and workforce development.² The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT a sample of United Way youth programs will be used as comparison sites for data collection about (a) community youth workers (CYWs) and (b) adolescent participants –but not program quality or quality improvement.

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PLEASE SEE ATTACHED CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

3. Describe the project's methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc. If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

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Four data sources will inform this project: (1) youth program quality, (2) community youth worker attributions (Attribution Breadth Inventory), (3) youth development outcomes and (4) youth risk outcomes. To capture these data, the study design includes collection of: pre and post measures of program quality for quality improvement participants (QI); pre and post measures of community youth worker attributions for quality improvement participants and the comparison group members; pre and post measures of youth development/risk outcomes for all participants.

MEASURES

Program Quality. Program quality will be measured by the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). It was developed by *High Scope Educational Research Foundation* and uses observation and interviews to assess point of service (POS) quality. More specifically, the tool examines engagement of youth, interactions with youth, the provision of a supportive and safe environment, maintaining high expectations, access to these experiences and the presence of youth-centered policies and practices. The tool has modest validity and reliability: (a) safe environment (5 items, $\alpha=.43$), (b) supportive environment (6 items,

¹ www.readyby21austin.org

² <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/qc/home>

alpha=.84), (c) interaction (4 items, alpha=.64) and (d) engagement (3 items, alpha=.70) ⁶⁷ . The tool is particularly valuable because of its consideration of within program differences and activity-specific dynamics.

Community Youth Worker Attribution Breadth. The *Attribution Breadth Inventory (ABI)* is being devised to capture community youth worker attribution breadth. The question pool of measurement items was developed from prior qualitative work examining attributions made by community youth workers in youth development and youth organizing programs ⁶⁵ . The full Attribution Breadth Inventory will not be used for full analysis because it is not fully developed; a complete confirmatory factor analysis has not been completed. However, a subset of 15 items will be used to assess attribution breadth based on frequency (Please see Appendix). Higher scores on these 15 items will reflect greater breadth. Martin et al. (2007) used a similar methodology to capture causal attributions with an 8-item measurement tool that differentiated attributions according to moral/characterological causes and genetic/physiological causes⁶³ .

Youth Developmental Assets (Outcomes). Youth developmental assets will reflect a portion of youth outcomes and will be captured by the Resilience Module B of the *California Healthy Kids Survey* ⁶⁸ . Module B has strong validity and reliability and focuses on identifying internal and environmental resilience assets present for young people. Internal consistency reliability coefficients follow. Environmental resilience assets: school support (.90), school meaningful participation (.78), community support (.95), community meaningful participation (.75), home support (.89), home meaningful support (.78), peer caring relationships (.90), pro-social peers (.74). Internal resilience assets: self-efficacy (.82), empathy (.85), problem-solving (.73), self-awareness (.81).

Youth Risk (Outcomes). Youth risk will reflect a portion of youth well-being outcomes and will be captured by Module C of the California Healthy Kids Survey. Module C has a focus on mental health, and substance use and violence behaviors ⁶⁸ .

Semi-structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with community youth workers. The interview themes and lines of inquiry will be refined based on the results of earlier stages of the project. However, the broad themes will be (1) perceptions of youth need and how to meet those needs and (2) the roles of diversity, identity, equity and justice in youth development. Several more themes will be integrated from earlier quantitative findings. Semi-structured interviews will ensure that topics are covered, but will also allow flexibility to adjust sequencing according to the respondent and situation. The method will also allow comparability because of the consistency of topics.

If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

4. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

First, risk is perceived in the issue of voluntary participation. As is the case with any research involving children, there is an inherent risk that he/she may feel it necessary to proceed in the research, despite their ability to terminate at any time. Without the proper preparation and consideration, the potential psychological risk is noteworthy. However, IRB protocols and common research practices provide strategies and methodologies that greatly minimize this risk. Seemingly, there is no alternative method for minimizing the risk of voluntary participation, as it is an inherent risk that is particularly associated with children/adolescents. To address this risk, we emphasize that there will be no negative repercussions with either their youth program or with Texas State University for choosing not to participate. The same emphasis will be made to program representatives at the time of their invitation for participation.

At the program level, there may be some apprehension based on feeling scrutinized or judged by program quality assessments. Individuals that feel they are being “evaluated” may be sensitive to judgment and feel as though others don’t think they are delivering service at a high quality, even before any data emerge about their “quality.” Further, once data emerges an effort will have to be made to ensure that programs and their leadership understand that this is at its foundation a capacity-building effort.

5. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.

No intrusive measures exist for this study and thus risk is minimal for all involved. The measurement of program quality will be emphasized as a competency building activity to minimize the negative perceptions that often accompany the word “evaluation.” No need for treatment exists.

Confidentiality safeguards will also be in place as a means for minimizing risk. To protect the confidentiality of the participant, access to the actual questionnaire responses will be specifically limited to the researchers. In addition, the research data collection process will include reassigning the subject’s name with an identifying number that will be stored in a “password protected” file that will only be accessible by the researchers. Finally, the analysis of the data will be completed in another “password protected” computer program that is solely accessed by the research team. Neither the computer program nor our final reports will provide any information that will allow the linking of names to specific comments. The survey data will be maintained for a period of ten years following the completion of the initial data analysis, at which time the data will be destroyed. This information is clearly stated in the consent form.

6. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

CONTRIBUTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The ultimate goal of the AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT is to help inform funders, policymakers, and program administration of strategies that help make sure that resources have sufficient impact on short and long-term outcomes for youth. The study will help elucidate the multiple dimensions of OST programs, moving further past general ingredients for PYD. Results will expand empirical work on PYD settings by defining and better specifying the integral role of the youth workers in PYD programs and community-based initiatives. Youth worker cognitions may be a dynamic mediator in the theory of change behind youth well-being models. The AUSTIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT may also provide information to help inform why some evidence-based practices are more or less successful. For example, results may show how two programs utilizing evidence-based strategies may differ significantly in their impact on youth based on variability in youth worker cognitions. Finally, many leadership issues are relevant to this research. Alignment of workers and program culture may be an important hiring or retention factors to some program leaders seeking to optimize youth ↔ context fit. The results from the different components of AYDP will focus more attention on how to increase the quality of positive developmental settings for youth. Further contributions will be discussed in greater detail later in this proposal.

7. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class. Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

Compensation for study participants will be provided *pending project funding*. If the grant proposal to the William T. Grant Foundation is accepted and funded then incentives will be provided as follows:

To encourage study participation, small incentives will be provided for all participants. Gift cards in the amount of \$25 will be provided for all participants. During years 1 to 3 there will be 30 participating sites with approximately 5 youth workers and 10 youth per site. A total of 450 participants will be completing questionnaires at two time intervals. Gift cards in the amount of \$25 will be provided for all participants at time 2. During years 4 and 5 there will be approximately 50 participants for in-depth qualitative interviews. Gift cards in the amount of \$50 will be provided for all participants at the conclusion of the interview.

Years 1 to 3

- Youth workers (n=150; 5 x 30 sites) = \$3750
- Youth (n=300; 10 x 30 sites) = \$7500

Years 4 and 5

- Youth workers (n=50) = \$2500

Incentives Total = \$13,750.00

If no funding is obtained then compensation will be limited to that of any technical expertise and evaluation support that the principal investigator can provide.

8. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.

There are no immediately recognizable risks.

9. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED APPROVAL LETTERS FOR COORDINATING SITES

- Ready By 21 Austin/Travis County
- United Way Capital Area

10. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

NOT APPLICABLE

11. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student's committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

NOT APPLICABLE

12. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

The proposed study has neither sought approval nor been approved by another IRB.

13. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

Partial datasets and analyses will be available to the Ready by 21 Coalition and United Way Capital Area. These data will relate to program quality, since that is the thrust of their work. The two organizations are the primary facilitators of the quality improvement project for this region.

The two principle stakeholders and individuals with access for these two organizations are:

- Suzanne Hershey – Ready by 21
- Laura Garcia – United Way Capital Area

In addition to this synopsis, you are required to submit all relevant documentation for review. This may include, but is not necessarily limited to: 1) recruiting documents (e.g., flyers, letter, e-mails, brochures, etc.), 2) a consent form, 3) an assent form, 4) letters of approval from relevant organization(s), 5) surveys/instruments/questionnaires, esp. those created by the researcher, 6) a list of questions that the researcher may ask (e.g., focus groups questions, questions for qualitative studies, etc.), and 7) all documents in translated versions.

APPENDED DOCUMENTS:

A – MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

B – APPROVAL LETTERS

C – CONSENTS FORMS



The [Austin Youth Development Project](#) seeks to tell the story of the current state of out-of-school programming and their impact on program participants in and around Travis County. The project examines how out-of-school (OST) programs can serve as important positive developmental settings for young people.

Results are expected to contribute to better understanding the network of out-of-school time programs in the region and their quality. Results are also expected to be used in future projects that can help with young people's healthy development and well-being.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!