

DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF A BRIEF, BYSTANDER BULLYING
INTERVENTION FOR LOW-INCOME, ETHNICALLY-BLENDED MIDDLE
SCHOOLS

by

Molly Elizabeth Moran



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DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

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Molly Elizabeth Moran

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The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student Molly Elizabeth Moran, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Aida Midgett, Ed.D. Co-Chair, Supervisory Committee

Diana M. Doumas, Ph.D. Co-Chair, Supervisory Committee

Regina Moro, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

Claudia Peralta, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the dissertation was granted by Aida Midgett, Ed.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The dissertation was approved for the Graduate College.

DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation includes three individual articles that examine a brief bystander bullying intervention (STAC) culturally adapted for low-income, ethnically-blended middle schools. Chapter One provides a brief introduction to the three articles that comprise this dissertation, the theoretical framework, and the rationale and purpose of this dissertation. Chapter Two includes a mixed-method study examining the development of the culturally adapted intervention. Qualitative data was used to inform the intervention adaptations. Quantitative data provides preliminary support for the cultural validity of the adapted intervention. Chapter Three includes a mixed-method study examining the appropriateness of the culturally adapted intervention. Qualitative data was collected to describe the experiences of the students who participated in the adapted intervention. Quantitative data indicates an increase in knowledge about bullying, confidence to intervene in bullying situations, and use of the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations. Chapter Four evaluates the effectiveness of the culturally adapted interventions on reducing bullying victimization. Quantitative data indicates a decrease in bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization from baseline to the 6-week follow-up. Chapter Five includes a summary of the three articles.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADDI	Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASCA	American School Counseling Association
CDCP	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CQR	Consensual Qualitative Research
GLM	General Linear Model
IVS	Illinois VictimScale
SAPPS	Student-Advocates Pre- and Post-Scale
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
STAC	An acronym for “Stealing the Show,” “Turning it Over,” “Accompanying Others,” and “Coaching Compassion”

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation includes three distinct, yet connected articles describing the adaptation of a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) for low-income, ethnically-blended middle schools. Each Chapter builds upon the findings of the previous study to provide an in depth description of the development and analysis of the culturally adapted intervention. Chapters Two, Three, and Four include articles written for publication in peer-reviewed counseling journals. Each Chapter includes a comprehensive manuscript including an introduction and abstract that provide the context for each individual study. The remainder of this Chapter includes an introduction and a review of the literature that provides the rationale and foundation for each study and dissertation as a whole.

Chapter Two includes a manuscript titled, Cultural Adaptation of a School Based Bullying Intervention. The purpose of this study was to develop a culturally adapted brief, bullying, bystander intervention (STAC), specifically for ethnically-blended, low-income middle schools and assess for cultural validity. This manuscript is a mixed-method study that investigates the development of the culturally adapted intervention. Qualitative data collected from middle school students describing their experiences with bullying along with the eight dimensions of Bernal, Bonilla, and Bedillo's (1995) Ecological Model informed the intervention adaptations. The quantitative data provides preliminary support for the cultural validity of the adapted intervention.

Chapter Three includes a manuscript titled, *A Mixed Method Evaluation of a Culturally Adapted Brief, Bystander Bullying Intervention for Middle School Students*. The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine the appropriateness of a brief, bullying bystander intervention (STAC) adapted for a middle school in a low-income, rural community with a predominantly White and Hispanic student body. Another goal of the study was to investigate the experiences of the students trained in the culturally adapted STAC program. Quantitative analysis suggested that students gained knowledge about bullying, increased their confidence to intervene in bullying situations, and used the STAC strategies to intervene when they witnessed bullying behavior. Qualitative data analyzed by employing Consensual Qualitative Research methodology ([CQR] Hill et al. 2005) revealed four domains in which students a) reported using the STAC strategies across multiple contexts and settings, b) spoke about fears related to intervening in bullying, yet intervened despite those fears, c) described emotional benefits experienced after participating in the intervention and while using the STAC strategies, and d) reported stronger interpersonal relationship after participating in the STAC intervention. This study extends the literature by providing preliminary support for a brief, bystander intervention adapted to address the need for culturally relevant bullying interventions for low-income, rural, ethnically-blended schools.

Chapter Four includes a manuscript titled, *Evaluation of a Brief, Bystander Bullying Intervention (STAC) for Ethnically Blended Middle Schools in Low Income Communities*. In this study, we evaluated a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) adapted for low-income, ethnically-blended middle schools. We examined changes in bullying victimization and racial and/or bias-based bullying victimization among White

students and Students of Color. Students trained in the program reported a decrease in both bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization from baseline to a 6-week follow-up, with no differences between White students and Students of Color. We discuss implications for school counselors.

1.2 Social Learning Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) serves as the theoretical framework for the STAC program. According to Bandura, learning occurs through the development of cognitions that mediate observation and behaviors. Self-efficacy, a critical aspect of the mediating process, is defined as individuals' belief in their ability to organize and execute actions needed to obtain a goal (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy influences the decision making process, the ability to persevere in the face of difficulty, and the amount of emotional distress experienced while completing a difficult task (Bandura, 2012). Because many students report lacking the confidence and efficacy to intervene in bullying (Johnston, Midgett, Dumas, & Moody, 2018), they need opportunities to develop self-efficacy in order to execute the STAC strategies effectively. Bandura (2012) argues that self-efficacy is developed and strengthened through mastery experiences, social modeling, and social persuasion. Mastery experiences allow opportunities for adolescents to persevere and overcome unfamiliar, challenging tasks resulting in the development of self-efficacy and resilience. Through social modeling, when children observe similar peers succeeding or overcoming an obstacle they experience increased beliefs in their own capability, even more so than observing an adult achieve the same task (Bandura, 2012).

Mastery experiences, social modeling, and persuasion are important components of the STAC training; students, instead of adults, are trained to intervene in bullying situations because they are more likely to influence the behaviors of their peers. Observing peers successfully intervene in bullying situations increases the likelihood that student bystanders will intervene in future situations. Findings reported in Chapters Three suggest students gained confidence to intervene in bullying situations after participating in the STAC intervention. The qualitative data reported in Chapter Three also suggests that students intervened in bullying situations despite their fears. This increase in confidence may be attributed to the self-efficacy building opportunities embedded throughout the training. Specifically, mastery experiences included in the role-play activities may provide students with an opportunity to persevere and overcome unfamiliar and/or difficult tasks. Social modeling, which has been linked to increases in personal beliefs of one's own capability (Bandura, 1997), occurs through the presentation of role-plays and allows students to observe similar peers successfully intervening in bullying.

1.3 Prevalence Rates of Bullying Victimization Among School-Aged Students

Bullying is a significant problem for school-aged youth in the United States. Bullying has been defined as repeated, aggressive, and unwanted behavior within peer relationships, typically characterized by a significant imbalance of power between the perpetrator and target (Olweus, 1993). Typically, the target of bullying is unable to stop the behavior on their own (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Examples of bullying behavior includes hitting, threatening others, leaving someone out on purpose, and name-calling (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP],

2019). Approximately 21.2% of students between the ages of 12-18 report being targets of bullying at school (CDCP, 2018). Additionally, 70% of students report witnessing bullying as bystanders (Demaray, Summers, Jenkins, & Becker, 2014; Jones, Mitchell, & Turner, 2015). Although bullying is a significant problem for all levels in K-12 schools (CDCP, 2019), bullying reaches its peak in middle school with 29.5% of sixth grade students reporting being bullied (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Students who identify as a racial or ethnic minority experience elevated rates of bullying victimization, particularly at schools that lack cultural diversity (Agirdag, Demanet, Van, & Van, 2011; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Further, findings from a recent meta-analysis suggest that high levels of economic disparity are associated with higher rates of bullying (Azeredo, Rinaldi, De Moraes, Levy, & Menezes, 2015). The purpose of this dissertation is to add to the literature on culturally appropriate, accessible bullying interventions that reduce bullying victimization.

1.3.1 Negative Consequences Associated with Bullying Victimization

Bullying is associated with a multitude of negative consequences. Students who have been targets of bullying report increased psychological problems (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Nielson, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthieson, & Mageroy, 2015), somatic symptoms (Van Geel, Goemans, & Vedder, 2016), increased future victimization (Adams & Lawrence, 2011), and academic difficulties (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014). Studies investigating the long-term outcomes of bullying victimization suggest adults who experienced bullying during school are at increased risk for mental health challenges such as anxiety disorders (Copeland et al., 2013), depression and suicidality

(Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014), as well as financial difficulties (Brimblecombe et al., 2018) as compared to their non-bullied peers.

1.3.2. Outcomes Associated with Witnessing Bullying as a Bystander

Bullying interventions typically focus on the targets and the perpetrators of bullying (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009), however research suggests that 70-80% of students report witnessing bullying as a bystander (Demaray et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2015). Bystanders are students who witness bullying but are not the target or the perpetrator of bullying (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004). Students who witness bullying report a wide range of mental health outcomes including internalizing problems, substance use, hostility, anxiety, and paranoid ideation (Rivers et al., 2009). Witnessing bullying is also associated with problems such as sadness (Janson, Carney, Hazler, & Oh, 2009), helplessness (Janson et al. 2009, Rivers & Noret, 2013), isolation and guilt (Hutchinson, 2012), depressive symptoms (Midgett & Dumas, 2019a), and suicidal ideation (Rivers & Noret, 2010; Rivers & Noret, 2013). Additionally, even when controlling for the effects of bullying victimization, observing bullying as a bystander can result in negative mental health outcomes (Midgett & Dumas, 2019b; Rivers et al., 2009). However, research suggests that when bystanders are trained to intervene in bullying they report improved mental health outcomes and bullying victimization decreases (Salmivalli, 2014; Williford et al., 2012). Thus, bullying interventions are needed that include a bystander component, specifically interventions that train bystanders to intervene in bullying situations in pro-social ways.

1.3.3 Bullying Outcomes for Racial or Ethnic Minority Students and Students in Low-Income Communities

Studies suggest that students from ethnic and racial minority groups experience elevated rates of bullying with more severe associated outcomes than their White classmates, particularly in low-income schools that lack racial and ethnic diversity (Agirdag et al., 2011; Juvonen et al., 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Self-reported trauma levels for students who repeatedly witness bullying as bystanders are higher among minority students compared to White and African-American students (Janson et al., 2009). Minority students often experience bias-based bullying related to race and/or ethnicity (Walsh et al., 2016). Students who are targets of biased-based bullying report poorer mental health outcomes (Espinoza, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2013), elevated rates of substance use (Forster et al., 2003; Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koenig, 2012), increased depressive symptoms (Cardosa, Szlyk, Goldbach, Swank, & Zylensky, 2018), lower-grades, and decreased school connectedness (Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005) compared to students who are targets of non-biased-based bullying. Further, race-based bullying among low-income Hispanic students is associated with a multitude of negative outcomes including academic and social/emotional difficulties (Espinoza et al., 2013), health concerns (Rosenthal et al., 2013), and increased substance use (Forster et al., 2013).

Students who experience biased-based bullying also report more frequent absenteeism as a result of feeling unsafe (Baams, Talmage, & Russell, 2017) which may have deleterious effects on their academic achievement. Specifically, Hispanic students report experiencing lower levels of safety in school communities that lack diversity or

where biased-based bullying is prevalent (Vervoort, Scholte, & Overbeek, 2010). Additionally, the prevalence rates for missing school due to safety concerns are higher among Hispanic (9.4%) and Black (9%) compared to White students (4.9%) (CDC, 2018). Further, several studies suggest that students in rural, low-income schools experience higher rates of bullying and worse outcomes than students in schools located in urban areas of higher socioeconomic status (Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014).

1.4 Bullying Interventions

Numerous school-wide bullying interventions have been developed and evaluated. Many of these school-wide interventions are comprehensive in nature, requiring engagement from students, staff, administration, and sometimes even parents/guardians (Menard & Grotmeter, 2014; Peguero, 2012). While these programs have been successful at reducing bullying (Farrington, Gaffney, Lösel, & Ttofi, 2017) there are several limitations to these programs and barriers for school-wide adoption. Comprehensive, school-wide programs require significant time and/or resources (Menard & Grotmeter, 2014) making them difficult to implement in low-income and/or rural schools that have limited resources (Peguero, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Because comprehensive, school-wide programs can place a high demand on schools (Menard & Grotmeter, 2014; KIVA Antibullying, 2014), brief and effective interventions may be a promising alternative for this setting. Further, many of these programs lack a bystander component, which is an important factor in bullying reduction (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). As such there is a need for brief programs that place a low-demand on schools for implementation and include a bystander component.

1.4.1 Culturally Appropriate Bullying Interventions

Approximately 15.3% of the public schools in the United States are classified as multi-ethnic (Kena et al., 2016), thus, research is needed to identify culturally appropriate and effective interventions for ethnically-blended schools. There is empirical support for comprehensive, school-wide bullying interventions that suggest a reduction in bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), however these programs have been evaluated in predominantly White schools (Espinoza et al., 2013). As such, these programs may not be culturally appropriate or accessible for schools in low-income, ethnically-blended communities (Evans, Frazier, & Cotter, 2014). In particular, many bullying intervention programs do not focus on race or ethnic-based bullying, limiting the potential impact of these programs for ethnically-blended schools where biased-based bullying is prevalent (Espinoza et al., 2013). This is problematic because to ensure programs are relevant and appropriate they must be situated within the cultural-context of the school (Botvin, 2004; Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2003). The purpose of Chapter Two was to address this gap in literature by developing a bullying intervention that includes bias-based bullying and is accessible and appropriate for low-income, ethnically-blended schools.

1.4.2 Bystander Interventions

Bullying interventions typically focus on students who are targets or perpetrators of bullying, neglecting the important role of the bystander, or students who witness bullying (Polanin et al., 2012). Bystander interventions train students to intervene in bullying situations (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996) and are an important factor in reducing bullying (Polanin et al., 2012; Porter & Smith-

Adcock, 2011). Bullying decreases when students intervene in pro-social ways on behalf of targets (Padgett & Notar, 2013; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011; Salmivalli, 2014). Many students, however, report they lack the skills to intervene (Forsberg, Thronberg, & Samuelsson, 2014). Research suggests that when a bullying bystander intervention is implemented, students report a decrease in victimization and anxiety as compared to students in control schools (Williford et al., 2012). These findings suggest that training students to intervene in bullying situations is an important component in decreasing victimization and the negative consequences associated with witnessing bullying. The qualitative findings reported in Chapter Two suggest numerous positive outcomes for students who utilized the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations, such as feeling good about themselves and developing positive, healthy relationships. Furthermore, the findings from the study included in Chapter Four suggest a decrease in bullying victimization after the implementation of the STAC intervention.

1.4.3 The STAC Intervention

The STAC program is a brief, bystander bullying intervention aimed at training students to act as “defenders” intervening on behalf of targets of bullying (Midgett, Dumas, Sears, Lundquist, & Hausheer, 2015). STAC is an acronym that stands for four bystander intervention strategies that students learn and practice in the training: “stealing the show,” “turning it over,” “accompanying others,” and “coaching compassion.” The program includes a 90-minute didactic and experimental training followed by two, bi-weekly, 15-minute small group follow-up booster sessions (Midgett et al., 2015). During the didactic component of the training, the facilitators define bullying, give examples of different types of bullying, discuss common reasons why students bully, introduce the

four STAC strategies, and provide demonstrations of using the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations. The experiential component include group discussions where students describe bullying situations that they have witnessed at their school and role-play activities where students get an opportunity to practice utilizing STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations. The booster sessions includes a quick review of the STAC strategies and an opportunity for students to share examples of using the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying behavior. Research suggest that students trained in the STAC program report increased knowledge of bullying and confidence to intervene (Midgett et al., 2015; Midgett, Doumas, & Trull, 2017). Students also report learning and utilizing the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations (Midgett, Doumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017). Prior studies indicate that students trained in the program report a reduction in bullying perpetration and victimization (Midgett, Doumas, Trull, & Johnson, 2017).

1.4.4 Cultural Adaptation of the STAC Intervention

Although findings suggest numerous positive outcomes for students trained in the STAC intervention, researchers have primarily investigated the efficacy of the STAC intervention within the context of urban, predominantly White schools. In response to the growing need for culturally relevant and accessible interventions in ethnically-blended, rural, low-income schools, Chapter Two presents an initial study describing the development of the culturally adapted STAC program. As described in Chapter Two, cultural adaptations to the STAC program included: (a) infusion of culturally relevant language; (b) inclusions of culturally relevant bullying experiences and training goals; (c) examples related to the current national climate regarding culture and ethnicity; and (d)

training delivery consistent with cultural values and norms. Preliminary findings reported in Chapter Two support the cultural validity of the adapted STAC program, demonstrating that students perceived the adapted program to be relevant for students attending their school. Chapter Three includes findings that suggest students developed knowledge about bullying and confidence to intervene in bullying situations after participating in the culturally adapted STAC program. Chapter Four includes results that indicate a decrease in bullying victimization after the implementation of the culturally adapted intervention. Thus, these studies together suggest that the culturally adapted STAC intervention is an appropriate and promising approach to decrease bullying victimization at low-income ethnically-blended middle schools.

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CHAPTER TWO: CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF A SCHOOL-BASED BULLYING
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Cultural Adaptation of a School-Based Bullying Intervention

Aida Midgett^a

Diana N. Dumas^{a,b}

Molly Moran^a

Laura Gallo^a

Author Note

^a Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

^b Institute for the Study of Addiction, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Aida Midgett, Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725. E-mail: aidamidgett@boisestate.edu.

Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated the cultural adaptation of a brief, bullying bystander intervention for a predominantly White and Hispanic middle school in a low-income community. Qualitative themes describing students' experiences with bullying informed program modifications. Quantitative data indicated Hispanic and White students perceived the adapted intervention as appropriate and relevant for their school. This study serves as a first step in developing a culturally appropriate intervention designed to address bullying-related health disparities for this population.

Keywords: bullying, bystander, STAC, adaptation, intervention

2.1 Introduction

National statistics indicate bullying is a significant problem for youth in the US, with 21.5% of students between the ages of 12-18 reporting being a target of school bullying (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDCP], 2016). Rates of physical bullying and bullying-related injury peak during middle school and are more prevalent among Latinos/as and students from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Further, Hispanic students report poorer perceptions of safety in schools with significant numbers of White and Hispanic students (Voight, Hanson, O'Malley, & Adekanye, 2015). For Hispanic students in low-income communities, being a target of race-related bullying is also associated with health (Rosenthal et al., 2013), academic (Espinoza, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2013), and emotional (Douglass, Mirpuri, English, & Yip, 2016; Espinoza et al., 2013) problems, as well as substance use (Forester, et al., 2013). Additionally, compared to White students, Hispanic students who repeatedly witness bullying report higher levels of trauma levels (Janson et al., 2009). Researchers have also found that students who belong to ethnic and racial minority groups experience elevated rates of bullying with more severe outcomes than White students, particularly in low-income schools that lack diversity (Agirdag, Demanet, Van, & Van, 2011; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Within-school racial disparities regarding student perception of school climate have also been identified in the literature (Voight et al., 2015). Specifically, in schools with significant numbers of Hispanic and White students, Hispanic students report lower levels of school safety than White students. (Voight et al., 2015). These disparities highlight the need for effective

anti-bullying interventions developed specifically for middle schools comprised of predominantly White and Hispanic students in low-income communities.

2.1.1 School-Based Bullying Interventions

Research indicates comprehensive, school-based interventions are effective at decreasing bullying and improving socio-emotional outcomes for students (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Effective school-based violence interventions need to address the social context in which bullying occurs, including the role of peers (Farrell, Mehari, Mays, Sullivan, & Le, 2015). Researchers have identified four roles which student assume when they witness bullying – “assistant,” “reinforcer,” “outsider,” and “defender” (Salmivalli, Lagerspet, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Students who assume the “assistant” and “reinforcer” role join in or provide positive feedback to the perpetrator, whereas students in the “outsider” role either leave or observe the situation passively. In contrast, students who assume the “defender” role intervene on behalf of the target. When students act as “defenders” they report an increased sense of responsibility toward targets (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010) and an increased commitment to intervene in bullying situations (Karna et al., 2011). Further, when “defenders” intervene, bullying behavior decreases (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). Thus, training student bystanders to intervene as “defenders” is an important component of comprehensive bullying interventions (Porter & Smith-Adcock, 2017; Polanin, Espelage, & Piogott, 2012). Further, enhancing the positive influence of prosocial students and reducing the social status achieved by bullying are important elements of school-based bullying prevention interventions (Burns, Cross, & Maycock, 2010; Burns, Maycock, Cross, & Brown, 2008).

Although there is a need for interventions designed to address the problem of bullying in middle schools in low-income communities with predominantly White and Hispanics students, research in this area is limited. The majority of studies evaluating anti-bullying interventions are conducted with White youth and may not be appropriate for students who are not attending schools in predominately White communities (Espinoza et al., 2013). Although a few studies have evaluated the efficacy of comprehensive, school-wide interventions in diverse middle schools, results of a recent review of school-based bullying prevention programs indicate positive effects are less likely to be found in studies with racially/ethnically diverse samples than homogeneous samples (Evans, Fraser, & Cotter, 2014). Additionally, in one study examining the impact of a widely disseminated bullying prevention program for middle schools students, researchers found that although relational and physical victimization decreased for White students, there were no effects for students from other racial or ethnic backgrounds (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007). These findings suggest that bullying interventions may need to be adapted to be culturally appropriate for schools with a diverse student body.

Additionally, comprehensive, school-wide interventions generally include training all key school stakeholders and take significant time to implement (Menard & Grotzpetter, 2014). Schools in low-income communities, however, may face educational and social disparities that pose obstacles to implementing comprehensive bullying interventions including high faculty and staff turnover, incorporating anti-bullying training into classroom curriculum, and limited resources (Peguero, 2012). Therefore, to help address these disparities there is a need for the development of culturally appropriate, anti-

bullying interventions that reduce barriers for implementation in low-income communities. Adapting existing brief, bystander interventions that require few resources may be a promising approach to bullying prevention for schools in culturally diverse, low-income communities that cannot adopt comprehensive interventions.

2.1.2. The STAC Intervention

The STAC intervention, which stands for “stealing the show,” “turning it over,” “accompanying others,” and “coaching compassion,” is a brief, bystander intervention designed specifically for schools that do not have the resources to implement comprehensive, school-wide interventions (Midgett, Dumas, Sears, Lundquist, & Hausheer, 2015). STAC is comprised of a 90-minute training including didactic and experiential components. The training is followed by two, 15-minute booster sessions that were developed to ensure students are using the STAC strategies correctly. Researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of the STAC intervention in reducing bullying perpetration (Midgett, Dumas, Trull, & Johnson, 2017; Midgett, Dumas, & Johnston, 2018) and victimization (Midgett et al., 2018) Students trained in the STAC program also report improved emotional outcomes including decreases in anxiety (Midgett et al., 2017) and depression (Midgett & Dumas, 2019), and increases in self-esteem (Midgett, Dumas, & Trull, 2017). Although these studies provide support for the STAC program, the intervention was developed for adolescents attending predominantly White schools. To date, there is no research on the appropriateness of this approach, or to our knowledge, any other bystander interventions specifically designed for adolescents in schools with primarily White and Hispanic students in low-income communities.

2.1.3 Culturally Appropriate Intervention Adaptation

When an intervention developed for individuals within a specific cultural group is implemented in a different cultural context, problems of fit can lead to less engagement and motivation from participants (Colby et al., 2013). Thus, it is important to culturally situate interventions to the new target audience to increase community ownership, enhance uptake, increase cultural relevance (Botvin, 2004), and increase intervention sustainability (Johnson, Hayes, Center, & Daley, 2004). Because adapted interventions need to be grounded in the experiences of individuals who belong to the target cultural audience (Barrera, Castro, & Steiker, 2011), it is important to include cultural group members as active participants in modifying intervention curriculum to be culturally relevant (Colby et al., 2013). Achieving high levels of social validity (e.g., acceptability) is also important when establishing culturally responsive and effective interventions (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

The ecology validity model (Bernal, Bonilla, & Bedillo, 1995) provides one approach for helping to guide the adaptation of existing interventions to be culturally appropriate. The model suggests culturally adapting the existing intervention by incorporating culturally sensitive elements on eight dimensions (i.e., language, persons, metaphors, content, concepts, goals, methods, and context). Research based on the ecology validity model has demonstrated the feasibility of implementation and social validity (i.e., acceptability) of culturally adapted evidence-based interventions in the school setting (Castro-Olivo & Merrell, 2012). Further, students participating in social and emotional learning interventions adapted to be culturally appropriate for Hispanic students report positive outcomes (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016).

2.2 The Current Study

The purpose of this study was to apply the ecological validity model to adapt the STAC program to be culturally appropriate for schools in low-income communities with a predominantly Hispanic and White student body. We used a sequential mixed exploratory (Creswell, 2009; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010) mixed-methods design comprised of two studies to adapt the 90-minute STAC training and to test the social validity of the adapted program. We selected a mixed-methods approach as mixed-methods designs are useful in health intervention development (Tariq & Woodman, 2013). Specifically, Tariq and Woodman (2013) suggest that a qualitative approach (e.g., focus groups) may be used to inform intervention development, followed by a quantitative design used to assess various aspects of the intervention. Additionally, Napoles-Springer and Stewart (2006) recommend using a qualitative approach for conducting research with culturally diverse populations. Thus, we utilized a qualitative approach to adapt the STAC intervention to be culturally appropriate for students at a primarily White and Hispanic school (Study 1). We then used a quantitative design to assess the social validity of the culturally adapted intervention (Study 2). The two research questions were: (a) How does the STAC intervention need to be adapted to be culturally appropriate for adolescents attending a predominately White and Hispanic school in a low-income community? and (b) Is the adapted STAC intervention appropriate and relevant for adolescents in this setting?

2.3 Study 1

2.3.1 Participants

Students were recruited from a Northwest public middle school with predominately White and Hispanic students located in a low-income community with a total median household income of \$38,259 and a Hispanic median household income of \$33,843. Within this community, 18.2% of the total population and 29.7% of the Hispanic population fall below the poverty line. Additionally, statistics from the target school indicate 70% of students at the selected school qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The sample consisted of 39 students ($n = 24$ females [61.5%]; $n = 15$ males [38.5%]) ranging in age from 11-14 years old ($M = 12.13$ and $SD = 1.00$), with reported racial backgrounds 51.3% Hispanic, 48.7% White, and 1% other.

2.3.2 Procedures

The school counselor assisted the researchers in selecting a purposive sample of 40 students belonging to different peer groups. The school counselor briefly met with each student to describe the study and send interested students home with a parent/guardian informed consent form (both English and Spanish). All 40 (100%) students returned a signed parent/guardian informed consent form and provided assent to participate in the study. Students first participated in the 90-minute existing STAC training and then were invited to participate in a focus group to describe their experiences with bullying and provide feedback about the STAC training. Of the 40 students trained in the original STAC program, one student was absent from school when the team conducted the focus groups later that week. Thus, 39 (97.5%) participated in one of four 45-minute focus groups the same week. Focus groups were ethnically homogeneous to foster an environment conducive

of ethnicity-related bullying discussions (Greenwood, Ellmers, & Holley, 2014).

Researchers followed Hill et al.'s (2005) recommendation to develop a semi-structured interview protocol. Researchers audio-recorded the groups for transcription purposes and provided students with a "pizza party" to incentivize participation. All study procedures were approved by the university review board and school district.

2.3.3 The STAC Program

The STAC program (Midgett et al., 2015) is comprised of a 90-minute training that includes didactic and experiential components followed by two 15-minute booster sessions to reinforce learning and make sure students are using the STAC strategies appropriately. The training includes an audiovisual presentation with information about bullying, negative associated consequences, bystander roles, and the four STAC strategies students can use to intervene when they witness bullying. The training also includes experiential activities including small group activities and role-plays where students practice utilizing the STAC strategies. Students in this study participated in the existing 90-minute STAC training delivered by counseling graduate students. The four STAC strategies are described below:

"Stealing the Show." "Stealing the show" involves using humor or distraction to turn students' attention away from the bullying situation. Trainers teach student bystanders to interrupt a bullying situation to displace the peer audience's attention away from the target.

"Turning it Over." "Turning it over" involves informing an adult about the situation and asking for help. During the training, students identify safe adults at school who can help.

“Accompanying Others.” “Accompanying others” involves the bystander reaching out to the student who was targeted to communicate that what happened is not acceptable, that the student who was targeted is not alone at school, and that the student bystander cares about them. Trainers teach students to approach a peer after they were targeted, inviting them to spend time together.

“Coaching Compassion.” “Coaching compassion” involves gently confronting the student who bullies either during or after a bullying incident to indicate this type of behavior is unacceptable. Additionally, the bystander encourages the student who bullied to consider what it would feel like to be the target in the situation, thereby raising awareness and fostering empathy toward the target.

2.3.4 Data Analysis

Research team members employed Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) analyses (see Hill et al., 2005) to investigate students’ experiences being trained in the STAC intervention. We chose CQR because it utilizes elements from phenomenology, grounded theory, and comprehensive process and is predominantly constructivist with postmodern influence. This method was a good fit for the project as we were interested in Hispanic and White students’ perspectives to inform cultural modification of the STAC intervention for a school with a White and Latino/s student body. Further, CQR includes a semi-structured interview protocol to promote the exploration of participant’s experiences while allowing for spontaneous probes that can uncover related experiences and insights, adding depth to findings. Additionally, CQR requires a team to reach consensus analyzing complex data.

Three team members (i.e., a faculty member, a doctoral student, and a master's in counseling student) analyzed the data. The faculty member was born in Brazil and moved to the U.S. as a teenager, enrolling in English as Second Language (ESL) courses in high school in the Midwestern United States. Her racial-cultural background is White Latina. Due to her upbringing in South America, she had internalized different racial and ethnic biases and stereotypes than White U.S. teenagers, providing her with unique insights into racial and ethnic power and oppression dynamics between White and Latinos/as in this country. The doctoral student was born and raised in a predominately White Northwestern U.S. state and her racial background is White. She has extensive experience providing school-based programming in low-income, racially blended schools across the United States. Much of this work focused on improving school climate, particularly inclusion with respect to diversity. As a result of her experiences, she gained insight into bullying as it relates to race, socio-economic status, and culture. The master's student was also born and raised in predominately White Northwestern state. Her father is from African American decent and her mother is Caucasian. Being biracial has allowed her to have unique experiences regarding racial dynamics and stereotypes. Growing up she was seen as a black child with a profile of an athlete. Her experiences provided her with a sensitivity to differences and similarities that exist across individuals regarding race, religion, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and cultural views.

Analysts brought different levels of clinical and research experiences related to bullying and working with diverse students to the data analysis process. Team members wrote memos and discussed personal biases and expectations about bullying within the context of a low-income middle school with primarily Hispanic and White students and

agreed to be transparent about personal biases and feeling throughout the process. Further, analysts discussed power differentials and how that could influence the data analysis. The team agreed that each member would share and respond to all domains and core ideas. Additionally, team members decided the doctoral student would lead data analysis meetings to minimize power imbalances and conclusions about the data would be determined based on participant quotations.

For the data analysis, we combined data from the focus groups rather than analyzing the data from White and Hispanic groups separately. The team made this decision as the goal of the study was to create an adapted intervention for all students at schools with predominantly White and Hispanic students, rather than creating separate interventions for White and Hispanic students. After transcribing the data, members individually identified domains and core ideas. Next, the team met three times in the next month to achieve consensus. As recommended by Hill et al. (2015), analysts wrote down all domains on a note card to provide a visual of the data and relied on participant quotes to resolve disagreements, cross-analyze the data, and move into more abstract levels of analysis. An external auditor analyzed the data separately and provided the team with feedback throughout the data analysis process. The researchers also conducted member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by meeting with the participants as a group. All students who participated agreed the findings were an accurate representation of their experience.

2.4 Results

Through CQR analysis, the team and external auditor agreed on five domains with supporting core ideas.

Domain 1: Types of bullying. Participants indicated spreading rumors was the most prevalent type followed closely by physical bullying and name calling. One student shared,

It's kind of about rumors. Especially in school and especially in middle school rumors can spread like wildfire. They're just, one minute one person knows and the next minute everyone knows. You have random people saying this and that, and I'd hear this and this. An you're just like, 'what'?

Another student talked about his experience with physical bullying shared,

So, this is still going on to me, and it's been going on all school year. So, I was just walking in the hall, minding my own business, trying to get to my locker and this one guy went up to me and jumped in my face and yelled in my ear and it hurt and it was just like bad and he kept doing it. Once I was opening my locker talking to my friend and then he grabbed me and started yelling in my ear...

A Hispanic student shared "They call people beaners and stuff like that," while a White student stated, "Some kids call us cracker because we are White."

Domain 2: Reasons students bully. Participants indicated reasons students bully include (a) physical appearance, specifically related to clothes and shoes; (b) racist attitudes related in general and related to the current political climate; and (c) language (i.e., speaking English vs. Spanish). In talking about physical appearance, a student shared, "People usually make fun of your appearance, like you have [national big-box] shoes and they start laughing..." As White students spoke about ethnicity-related tension, a student indicated, "I always see one race against another. I never really see them being

able to mix very well because they don't really see through their skin color." In speaking about the political climate, a Hispanic student shared, "Especially the wall thing, there has been a lot of [mean spirited] jokes about that too." While reflecting on language barriers, a White student shared, "A lot of White people don't like being friends with Hispanics because they talk in Spanish a lot." A Hispanic student spoke about language as a means for bullying, "Yeah, because we speak another language we can say bad stuff about them and they won't know..."

Domain 3: Negative emotions associated with being bullied. Participants indicated that bullying can lead to negative emotional experiences including rumination and thinking about changing oneself to fit in. One student shared, "It can really hurt someone's feelings. Words can hurt a lot..." Another participant stated,

Sometimes somebody will say something like 'your clothes are so ugly why do you wear those all the time?' and then in your head you're going 'I should change myself, I should change what I wear, I should do this and this to myself.' I should change how I am.

A student also spoke, "It's [thoughts about what students are told when they are bullied] almost like a stereo stuck on repeat. It's always in my head..." Another student said, "To the person who they [bullies] said it [insults] to, it can be constantly nagging at yourself."

Domain 4: Fear of Turning It Over. Participants indicated they perceive adults at school seem not to care and minimize bullying. They also talked about fears related to becoming a target or being perceived as an informant if they report bullying to adults. For

example, one student shared, “It seems like teachers don’t really care. If you tell a teacher that someone does that [bullies], they just don’t care.” Another participant stated,

I think it would be hard to turn it over [tell an adult at school] because.... they say that’s.... something you can keep to yourself and let it go. But, I haven’t even said all of it, so they don’t know the details.

Additionally, students talked about being reluctant to report bullying to adults.

For example, a student shared,

So if I turn in the bully he might target me now. He will target me and not them or anybody else just me. They’ll get mad at me.... and I’ll be the one who is getting to be the victim.

Another participant expressed, “At school sometimes if you say anything to the teachers all the kids start calling you a snitch and it makes you feel uncomfortable to even say.”

Domain 5: Reactions to the STAC Intervention. Overall participants talked about liking the training activities because they fostered a connection with peers and appreciating learning about students who bully. Students also provided feedback regarding intervention delivery. A participant shared, “Yeah, it [activity] helped kind of bring us together and helped us see differently because our group was like, whoa we didn’t know we had this much in common.” In talking about the value in learning about students who bully, a student stated,

I also like kinda the bully, what they’re going through too. If they get bullied at home, so they think that is the right think like that what they’re supposed [to do if they] feel upset.

In terms of feedback about intervention delivery a student described negative impressions about a particular activity conducted at the beginning of the training called “brown bag activity,”

Yeah, it was really hard to see [inside brown bag] because they [the trainers] flash it in front of your face and then they move it on to the next person. So me, I caught a tiny little glimpse of it and then it was gone, and I was like, ‘wait, what?’

Another participant provided feedback for how to improve the delivery of the training by grouping students into smaller groups and by age to encourage inclusion,

I think I kind of would have liked it better if it was a smaller group too. And, if it was kind of like just 8th graders, and 7th graders, and 6th graders in the group because in my opinion like you kinda have 8th graders who kind of just talk to each other and it left the rest of us out of it.

2.5 Study 2

2.5.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 62 students ($n = 36$ females [58.1%]; $n = 26$ males [40.3%]; and $n = 1$ other [1.6%]) recruited from the same school as Phase 1. Participants ranged in age from 11-15 years old ($M = 12.5$ and $SD = 1.0$), with reported racial backgrounds of 56.5% White and 43.5% Hispanic.

2.5.2 Procedures

This study was completed as part of a larger study designed develop and test the efficacy of the adapted STAC intervention. For the larger study, the researchers randomly selected 360 students using stratified proportionate sampling by grade and ethnicity,

excluding participants from Study 1. School personnel sent a pre-notification informational letter to parents/guardians followed by a letter containing the parent/guardian consent form and a project-addressed, stamped envelope. School personnel also sent reminder letters via mail and home with the students. Researchers provided information to parents/guardians in both Spanish and English. We obtained signed parent/guardian informed consent from 142 (39.4%) students. Of those students, 12 were absent the day of data collection and the remaining 130 provided assent to participate in the study for a final response rate of 36.1%. The sample for the current study consisted of 62 Hispanic and White students randomly assigned to be trained in the adapted STAC intervention. Students completed baseline and immediate post-training surveys. Incentives for the larger study included a “pizza party.” All study procedures were approved by the university review board and school district.

2.5.3 Culturally Adapted STAC Program

We based our cultural adaptation of the STAC program on feedback from students in Study 1 and the ecology validity model (Bernal et al., 1995). Adaptations and examples for each of the dimensions are provided in Table 1. Similar to the original STAC program, the adapted program includes a 90-minute training comprised of a didactic component to teach students about bullying, negative associated consequences, bystander roles, and the STAC strategies and an experiential component that includes role-plays to practice the STAC strategies. Specific adaptations, domains that informed modifications, and examples of program changes for each of the eight dimensions of the ecology validity model are described in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, we adapted language and concepts to be culturally appropriate, including changing terms (e.g. “defender” vs “advocate”) and using both Spanish and English forms for

parents/guardians due to the school's demographic composition. We also recruited a racially and ethnically diverse group of trainers who spoke English and Spanish. Based on data from the focus groups, we worked with trainers to emphasize the importance of being intentional about fostering connections with and between students. We also divided students into smaller groups for experiential activities to encourage participation and relationship building.

For the didactic training, focus group data informed the examples we used for types of bullying (i.e., spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling), and reasons students bully (i.e., physical appearance, racist attitudes, and language). In particular, information from Domains 1 and 2 informed information presented that incorporated a description and examples of race-related bullying. We also asked students if they could identify at least one adult at school by name who they felt they could trust when they needed to use the strategy "turning it over," particularly in cases of physical bullying. Based on information gathered during Study 1 on the negative effects of bullying, trainers and students established a collaborative goal to reduce bullying. We also eliminated the "brown bag activity" and shortened the didactic component to allow more time for students in small group activities.

For the experiential component of the training, we were intentional about revising the role-plays to reflect the types and content of bullying discussed in the focus groups, including race-related bullying. These modifications included race-related language students used when describing their experiences (e.g., "beaners" and "cracker"). Additionally, we revised the role-play scenarios where students practice utilizing the STAC strategies to include bullying experiences students described during the focus

groups. Examples included the following role-play scenarios: (a) “In the hallway, you overhear some girls talking about another girl’s clothes and hair. You hear them make fun of the girl telling her things like, ‘Can’t you afford a brush? Nice’ clothes’ with a sarcastic and mean tone. The girl looks pretty upset and does not say anything back;” (b) “During break, for a few weeks now you hear a group of boys make fun of another boy in Spanish and then tell him he can’t play soccer with them. The boy who gets picked on walks away and spends the rest of lunch on his own,” (c) “For a few weeks during lunch, when a student sits down to eat, a group of girls are mean to her saying that she needs to go back to Mexico and that she does not have papers to be in the United States.”

2.5.4 Measures

To assess the appropriate and relevance of the STAC training, the researchers adapted a social validity survey used in prior research examining the social validity of a school-based intervention adapted for a new population (Doumas, 2015). The original survey is comprised of 7 items ranked on a 4-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) and has demonstrated reliability and validity (Doumas, 2015).

Modifications for this study included changing the “program” to “the STAC training” and combining the questions “The program was easy to use” and “The program was easy to read” into one question: “The STAC training was easy to understand.” We retained the following questions: “The program was useful,” “The program was interesting,” “I learned something from the program,” and “I would recommend the program to other students at my school.” We also added three questions to directly assess the relevance of the program for the target population: “The STAC training information was relevant for mixed-raced schools like my school,” “The STAC training examples of bullying were

relevant for mixed-raced schools like my school,” “The STAC strategy role-plays were relevant for mixed-raced schools like my school.” Internal consistency for this sample was $\alpha = .98$.

2.5.5 Power Analysis

We conducted an a priori power analysis with the G*Power 3.1.3 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) to determine an adequate sample size to detect a medium effect size for the larger efficacy study. Results of the power analysis indicated that or the chi square test, a sample size of 65 students is needed for power = 0.80 to detect a medium effect size of .35 with an alpha level of .05. For an independent sample t-test, a sample size of 128 is needed for power = 0.80 to detect a medium effect size of .5 with an alpha level of .05. Based on these analyses, we recruited 360 students, anticipating a 45% response rate and 10% attrition rate for a final sample of 145. The sample in the current study consisted of White and Hispanic students in the intervention group only ($n = 62$). Thus, for this study, we had an adequate sample size to detect a medium effect size of .35 at power = .80 with an alpha level of .05 for the chi square analyses. For the independent sample t-test, however, our sample size allowed for the detection of a medium to large effect size of .7 at power = .80 with an alpha level of .05.

2.5.6 Data Analysis

We conducted a series of chi square analyses to test for differences between Hispanic and White students on each item. We combined “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” and “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” to create the percent agreement categories for each item. We also ran an independent sample *t*-test to assess differences between White and Hispanic students on the total social validity scale score. We used an alpha

level of $p < .05$ to determine statistical significance and Cohen's d to measure effect size with magnitude of effects interpreted as follows: small ($d = .20$), medium ($d = .50$), large ($d = .80$) (Cohen, 1969). We controlled for Type 1 error by using the Holm-Bonferroni procedure (Holm, 1979). All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24.0.

2.6 Results

Percent agreement and results from the chi square analyses for the social validity survey items are reported in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, the majority of students perceived the intervention was appropriate and relevant for students at their school, with no differences between Hispanic and White students. Similarly, results from the independent samples t -test indicated no difference between Hispanic ($M = 25.04$, $SD = 8.67$) and White ($M = 26.29$, $SD = 7.23$) students, $t(60) = -0.62$, $p = .54$, Cohen's $d = .13$, on the total social validity score.

2.7 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how an existing bullying bystander intervention needed to be adapted for a predominantly White and Hispanic school in a low-income community and to assess the social validity of the adapted intervention. Qualitative data from Study 1 resulted in five domains that informed the cultural adaptation of the STAC program: types of bullying, reasons why students bully, negative emotions associated with being bullied, fear of "turning it over," and reactions to the STAC intervention. Quantitative findings from Study 2 indicated students trained in the culturally adapted STAC intervention found the program to be relevant for students at their school, with no differences between Hispanic and White students.

Qualitative data revealed students perceived physical bullying, spreading rumors, and name calling as the most frequent types of bullying occurring at their school. Students also identified physical appearance, racist attitudes, and language barriers as the primary reasons why students at their school bully. These findings parallel national statistics indicating physical bullying is more prevalent among Latinos/as and students from low-income families (US Department of Education, 2015). Findings are also consistent with national data demonstrating that among Hispanic and White students, spreading rumors and name calling are the most prevalent forms of bullying (US Department of Education, 2016) and physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied (US Department of Education, 2016). Additionally, the experiences described by students in this study align with research indicating race-related bullying is associated with clothes (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008), political climate (Rogers et al., 2017), and language differences (Gandara & Aldana, 2014).

Students also discussed negative emotional consequences experienced as a result of being a target of bullying. Studies have shown students report a variety of negative emotional outcomes related to bullying victimization in culturally diverse, low-income schools (Douglass et al., 2016; Espinoza et al., 2013). For example, Mexican-American students within a culturally diverse student body report anxious and depressed feelings related to bullying victimization (Espinoza et al., 2013). Students from diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds also experience anxiety related to ethnic/racial teasing, even though it is normalized and characterized as harmless (Douglass et al., 2016). Findings from this study add to the literature identifying rumination and negative self-perception as negative emotional consequences resulting from being the target of bullying.

Additionally, students indicated they were afraid to use the strategy “turning it over” because they perceive adults may minimize bullying. This concern is consistent with research indicating students believe teachers do not care enough about bullying to take action (Midgett, Doumas, Johnston, Trull, & Miller, 2017) and may normalize bullying behaviors (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015). This finding is particularly important because of the relatively high rates of physical bullying and bullying-related injury among Latinos/as and students from low-income families (US Department of Education, 2015). Because research indicates students are more likely to report bullying when they believe teachers will act (Cortes & Kochenderfer Ladd, 2014) and will be effective in intervening (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014), it is important for students to identify an adult at school who they trust and believe will be supportive. These results guided intervention adaptations emphasizing the importance of “turning it over,” particularly when witnessing physical bullying.

In addition to sharing experiences regarding bullying and the impact of bullying on students’ in their school, students also provided specific feedback for the training delivery including the use of culturally appropriate language, fostering connections between students, and the importance of smaller groups for experiential exercises. For Study 2, we mapped these qualitative findings onto the eight dimensions of the social ecological model (Bernal et al., 1995) to adapt the program and then tested the social validity of the program with a new group of participants. Quantitative results from Study 2 supported the social validity of the adapted STAC intervention. The majority of students (> 80%) reported the adapted intervention was appropriate and relevant for students at their school, with no significant differences between Hispanic and White

students. Results are similar to research demonstrating the social validity of culturally adapted existing school-based interventions (Castro-Olivo, 2014). Thus, this study represents a first step in developing culturally appropriate brief, bullying bystander intervention for this population and adds to the literature supporting the social validity of culturally adapted school-based interventions.

2.7.1 Limitations and Future Research

Although this study contributes to the literature, limitations must be considered. First, because our study focused on middle school students attending a predominately Hispanic and White school, we cannot generalize our findings to students in school with greater culturally diversity or a different ethnic or racial composition. Additionally, although we collected focus group data in Study 1 from racially homogeneous groups, we did not analyze the qualitative separately for White and Hispanic groups. Thus, findings from this study do not address differences between White and Hispanic students' perceptions of bullying. Instead, we combined the data to achieve the goal of creating an adapted intervention for all students at schools with predominantly White and Hispanic students, rather than creating separate interventions for White and Hispanic students.

Further, our findings were based on self-report data. It is possible that students' responses to both the focus group questions in Study 1 and the survey questions for Study 2 were influenced by their desire to please the researchers. This may be particularly true for the quantitative data in Study 2 as some of the team members who trained the students in the adapted STAC intervention were present during post-training data collection. We also assessed social validity using a measure that we modified for this study rather than using an established measure. It is, however, common practice for studies assessing

social validity to use measures modified from prior surveys or developed specifically for the intervention being adapted (e.g., Dumas, 2015; Castro-Olivo & Merrell, 2012; Castro-Olivo, 2014; Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Le, Marciante, & Garcia, 2017).

Additionally, the internal consistency of our modified measure was excellent ($\alpha = .98$).

Another limitation to this study is that although we conducted an a priori power calculation for Study 2, we based our sample size on having adequate power for the larger efficacy study. Because the sample for the current study was comprised of White and Hispanic students in the intervention group only, we did not have adequate power to detect a medium effect size ($d = .5$) at the $p < .05$ level for the independent sample t-test for the social validity scale. Results of the independent sample t-test in Study 2, however, revealed a small effect size ($d = .13$). Examination of the means between White ($M = 25.04$) and Hispanic ($M = 26.29$) students on the total social validity score suggests that even had we had adequate power to detect a small effect size, the mean difference between the two groups was not clinically significant.

Finally, this study was intended as a first step in the development of a culturally appropriate brief, bullying bystander intervention. As such, we did not assess bullying victimization or perpetration outcomes. Therefore, future studies investigating the efficacy of the adapted intervention on bullying using a randomized controlled design are needed to determine the efficacy of the culturally adapted STAC intervention. Additionally, including objective measures of observable behaviors, in addition to self-report measures, would strengthen future research.

2.7.2 Implications for Counselors

This study has implication for counselors working within and outside the school setting. Counselors working within predominately Hispanic and White middle schools in low-income communities need to be aware that higher rates of physical bullying, ethnicity-based bullying, and negative emotional well-being, including rumination and negative self-perception, are associated with bullying at schools in this setting. For counselors working in schools in these communities, it is important to be aware that student bystanders are hesitant to report bullying to adults, which is concerning considering the higher rates of physical bullying and bullying-related injury at these schools. To address this problem, counselors could provide training to school personnel that focuses on how to foster emotional safety for bystanders who report bullying, including promoting a school climate that does not minimize or normalize bullying behavior. Due to large student caseloads, school counselors are not typically able to provide individual counseling to students who have been negatively impacted by bullying, despite the severity of mental health outcomes that may demand individualize counseling. Counselors working with adolescents in these communities in other settings also need to be aware of the emotional impact bullying can have on adolescent clients and to assess clients' involvement with bullying as part of their work with youth. Personal counseling offers an opportunity for adolescents to process their experience and explore internal resources that might assist in defusing, avoiding, or intervening in future bullying situations. Further, counselors can help encourage adolescents who witness bullying to identify a safe adult at school to whom they can report these incidents. It is important for counselors to clearly communicate to adolescents that bullying is

unacceptable to counteract the minimizing and normalizing of bullying students' report experiencing by adults at school.

2.8 Conclusion

Results of this study provide preliminary support for a brief, bullying bystander intervention adapted for a middle school with a predominantly Hispanic and White student body in a low-income community. Developing culturally appropriate interventions for students in these schools is particularly important due to the high prevalence of physically bullying and associated injury, as well as the emotional consequences reported among both targets of bullying and bystanders. Although comprehensive, school-wide bullying programs can be effective (Gaffney, Ttofi, & Farrington, 2019) time- and labor-intensive resources required for program implementation pose significant barriers for schools, particularly those in low-income communities. As schools become increasingly overcrowded and understaffed nationally, a brief, standalone, school-wide bullying intervention may be a cost-effective solution to reducing bullying on a large scale. This study serves as a first step in developing a culturally appropriate intervention for reducing bullying and improving socio-emotional outcomes for students in culturally diverse schools in low-income communities, thereby reducing health disparities for this population.

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Table 2.1 Cultural Adaptations to the STAC Intervention

Dimension	Cultural Adaptation	Domain(s) Informing Modification	Examples
Language	Use of language that is culturally appropriate	-	Use of the term “defender” rather than using the terms “defender” and “advocate” interchangeably Use of both Spanish and English forms for parents (e.g., invitation letter and consent form)
Persons	Be aware of trainer and student relationships	-	Trainers were racially diverse, including Spanish speaking Hispanic males and females
Metaphors	Focus on helping students feel welcome to the training and comfortable	Domains 4 and 5	Trainers were intentional about greetings students warmly and fostering connections with and between students during the ice-breaker exercise and small group activities
Content	Apply knowledge regarding cultural values, including importance of relationships and connection	Domain 5	We divided students into groups of 6 instead of 12 students to allow for deeper discussions and a greater level of participation
Concepts	Include bullying experiences shared by students during focus groups	Domains 1, 3, and 4	We emphasized examples of spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling during the didactic training and role-plays We talked about students’ negative experiences with bullying We asked students if they were able to identify one safe adults at school to utilize the STAC strategy “turning it over” when they need help with a bullying situation

Goals	Set goals that are consistent with information gathered during focus groups, including the negative emotional experiences associated with bullying	Domain 3	Trainers engaged students by asking them to raise their hands if they were willing to act as “defenders” to establish a collaborative goal to reduce bullying at school and to reduced negative emotional consequences for targets of bullying
Methods	Adapt delivery methods to be consistent with cultural values such as peer connections	Domain 5	We shortened the didactic training, eliminating the brown bag activity and decreasing the amount of information presented to focus on information students shared during focus groups and to spend more time in small group activities
Context	Include issues related to discrimination and immigration shared by students during focus groups	Domain 2	We included examples of specific racial slurs, bullying based on physical appearance, and current issues related to immigration (for Hispanic students) to the didactic training and role-plays

Table 2.2 Participants Reporting Agreement with Social Validity Items by Ethnicity and Chi Square Analyses

Item	% Agreement			$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i> value
	Hispanic (<i>n</i> = 29)	White (<i>n</i> = 34)			
The STAC training was easy to understand.	81.5	91.4	1.32	.25	
The STAC training was useful.	81.5	88.6	0.62	.43	
The STAC training was interesting.	81.5	85.7	0.20	.65	
The STAC training information was relevant for culturally diverse schools like my school.	81.5	88.6	0.62	.43	
The STAC training examples of bullying were relevant for culturally diverse schools like my school.	81.5	88.6	0.62	.43	
The STAC strategy role-plays were relevant for culturally diverse schools like my school.	81.5	88.6	0.62	.43	
I learned something from the STAC intervention.	81.5	85.7	0.20	.65	
I would recommend the STAC intervention to other students at my school.	81.5	88.6	0.62	.43	

CHAPTER THREE: A MIXED METHOD EVALUATION OF A CULTURALLY
ADAPTED, BRIEF, BULLYING BYSTANDER INTERVENTION FOR MIDDLE
SCHOOL STUDENTS

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A Mixed Method Evaluation of a Culturally Adapted, Brief, Bullying Bystander
Intervention for Middle School Students

Molly Moran^a

Aida Midgett^a

Diana Doumas^{a,b}

Sherise Porchia^a

Steven Moody^c

Author Note

^a Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

^b Institute for the Study of Addiction, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

^c Department of Counseling, Idaho State University, 921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8120, Pocatello, ID 83209, USA.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Molly Moran, Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725. E-mail: mollymoran@u.boisestate.edu.

Abstract

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine the appropriateness of a brief, bullying bystander intervention (STAC) adapted for a middle school in a low-income, rural community with a predominantly White and Hispanic student body. We were also interested in understanding the experiences of the students who participated in the intervention. Quantitative analysis suggested that students gained knowledge about bullying, increased their confidence to intervene in bullying situations, and used the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying behavior. Analyzing the qualitative data using Consensual Qualitative Research methodology ([CQR] Hill et al., 2005) revealed four domains in which students a) reported using the STAC strategies across multiple contexts and settings, b) spoke about fears related to intervening in bullying, yet intervened despite those fears, c) described emotional benefits experienced after participating in the intervention and while using the STAC strategies, and d) reported stronger interpersonal relationship after participating in the STAC intervention. This study extends the literature by providing preliminary support for a brief, bystander intervention adapted to address the need for culturally relevant bullying interventions for low-income, rural, ethnically-blended schools.

Keywords: bullying, bystander intervention, STAC, cultural adaptation, middle school

3.1 Introduction

Bullying is a significant problem for youth in the United States. Researchers have defined bullying as repeated, aggressive, and unwanted behavior within peer relationships, typically characterized by a significant imbalance of power between the perpetrator and target (Olweus & Mortimore, 1993). While national statistics suggest 21.2% of students age 12-18 report being targets of bullying at school (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP], 2018), a recent study found that less than 31% of students reported bullying incidents (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry, & Green, 2018), suggesting that prevalence rates are actually higher than national statistics may suggest. Additionally, 70% - 80% of students report witnessing bullying as bystanders (Demaray, Summers, Jenkins, & Becker, 2014; Jones, Mitchell, & Turner, 2015). Although bullying is a significant problem for youth beginning as early as pre-school and continuing through high school, bullying reaches its peak in middle school (CDCP, 2018).

3.1.1 Negative Consequences for Students Associated with Bullying

Research suggests that students who have been a target of bullying or who have observed bullying as a bystander experience a variety of negative consequences. Students who have been targets report increased psychological problems (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013; Nielson, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthieson, & Mageroy, 2015), somatic symptoms (Van Geel, Goemans, & Vedder, 2016), and academic difficulties (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014). While the majority of researchers have focused on investigating the negative consequences of bullying for the targets, there is a growing body of literature that demonstrates students who witness bullying also report a wide range of mental health risks including internalizing problems, substance use, hostility,

anxiety, and paranoid ideation (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009). Research also indicates witnessing bullying is associated with problems such as sadness (Janson, Carney, Hazler, & Oh, 2009), helplessness (Janson et al. 2009, Rivers & Noret, 2013), isolation and guilt (Hutchinson, 2012), depressive symptoms (Midgett & Doumas, 2019a and suicidal ideation (Rivers & Noret, 2010; Rivers & Noret, 2013). Additionally, researchers have found that observing bullying as a bystander is associated with mental health symptoms, even when controlling for the effects of bullying victimization (Midgett & Doumas, 2019b; Rivers et al., 2009).

3.1.2 Bullying Among Hispanic Students and Students in Low-Income and Rural Communities

Studies suggest that students from ethnic and racial minority groups experience elevated rates of bullying with more severe outcomes than their White classmates, particularly in low-income schools that lack diversity (Agirdag, Demanet, Van, & Van, 2011; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Further, compared to White students, Hispanic students report increased rates of physical bullying and bullying-related injuries during middle school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Additionally, self-reported trauma levels for students who repeatedly witness bullying as bystanders are higher among Hispanic and other minority students compared to White and African-American students (Janson et al., 2009). One explanation for these differences may be explained, in part, by Hispanic students' exposure to biased-based or race-related bullying (Walsh et al., 2016). Hispanic students who report being a target of bias-based harassment are at higher risk of negative health outcomes including depressive symptoms (Cardoso, Szlyk, Goldbach, Swank, & Zvolensky, 2018). Further, race-based

bullying among low-income Hispanic students is associated with a multitude of negative outcomes including academic and social/emotional difficulties (Espinoza, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2013), health concerns (Rosenthal et al., 2013), and substance use (Forster et al., 2013).

Hispanic students also report experiencing lower levels of safety in school communities that lack diversity or where biased-based bullying is prevalent (Vervoort, Scholte, & Overbeek, 2010). For example, in schools with a predominantly White and Hispanic student body, Hispanic students report lower levels of school safety than White students (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009; Voight, Hanson, O'Malley, & Adekanye, 2015). Additionally, the prevalence rates for missing school due to safety concerns are higher among Hispanic students (9.4%) compared to White students (4.9%) (CDC, 2018). Further, several studies suggest that students in rural, low-income schools experience higher rates of bullying than students in schools located in urban areas of higher socioeconomic status (Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014).

3.1.3 Culturally Appropriate Bullying Interventions

Because approximately 15.3% of the public schools in the US are classified as multi-ethnic with predominantly Hispanic and White students (Kena et al., 2016), research is needed to identify culturally appropriate interventions for schools with this demographic profile. Although there is empirical support for comprehensive, school-wide bullying interventions (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), these programs are often inaccessible or culturally inappropriate for schools in low-income, rural communities with diverse populations (Evans, Frazier, & Cotter, 2014). Comprehensive, school-wide programs require significant time and resources from schools (Menard & Grotzpetter,

2014; Peguero, 2012) posing barriers for implementation. Further, most studies that evaluate the efficacy of anti-bullying programs have been conducted in urban, predominantly White schools (Espinoza et al., 2013) and may not be appropriate for students in ethnically blended schools in rural areas (Evans et al., 2014). In particular, many bullying interventions do not focus on race or ethnic-based bullying, limiting the potential impact of these programs for students who experience biased-based bullying (Espinoza et al., 2013).

Additionally, the majority of bullying interventions focus primarily on students who are targets or perpetrators, neglecting the role of the bystander (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). Bystander interventions, which train students to act as “defenders” (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996), are an important factor in reducing bullying (Polanin et al., 2012; Porter & Smith-Adcock, 2011). Researchers have found that bullying decreases when bystanders intervene on behalf of targets (Padgett & Notar, 2013; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011; Salmivalli, 2014). Many students, however, report they lack the skills to intervene (Forsberg, Thronberg, & Samuelsson, 2014). At schools in which comprehensive, school-wide programs with a bystander component are implemented, students report a decrease in victimization and anxiety relative to students at control schools (Williford et al., 2012). These findings suggest that training students to intervene as “defenders” may decrease both victimization and the negative consequences associated with witnessing bullying.

3.1.4 The STAC Intervention

The STAC program is a brief, stand-alone bystander bullying intervention developed to train students to act as “defenders” on behalf of targets of bullying (for

details please see Midgett, Dumas, Sears, Lundquist, & Hausheer, 2015). STAC is an acronym that stands for four bystander intervention strategies: “stealing the show,” “turning it over,” “accompanying others,” and “coaching compassion.” The STAC program was originally developed for predominantly White middle schools in urban settings (Midgett et al., 2015). The program includes a 90-minute training with a didactic component and experiential activities followed by two, bi-weekly, 15-minute small group booster sessions. Prior studies indicate students trained in the STAC program report increased knowledge and confidence to intervene (Midgett, Dumas, & Trull, 2017; Midgett, Dumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017; Midgett et al., 2015) and utilize the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations (Midgett, Dumas, Johnston, Trull, & Miller, 2017). Further, researchers have found that students trained in the program report a reduction in bullying perpetration (Midgett, Dumas, Trull, & Johnson, 2017; and victimization (Midgett, Dumas, & Johnston 2018). Additionally, results of a series of randomized controlled studies demonstrate the efficacy of the STAC intervention in improving socio-emotional functioning, including decreased depressive symptoms (Midgett & Dumas, 2019a), decreased anxiety (Midgett, Dumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017), increased self-esteem (Midgett, Dumas, & Trull, 2017), and increased psychological sense of school belonging (Midgett & Dumas, 2019a). In qualitative studies, students trained in the program have described feeling a positive sense of self (Midgett, Moody, Reilley, & Lyter, 2017) and empowerment (Johnston et al., 2018) when intervening in bullying using the STAC strategies.

3.1.5 Cultural Adaptation of the STAC Intervention

In response to the growing need for relevant and accessible interventions in ethnically-blended, rural, low-income schools, the researchers adapted the STAC program to be culturally appropriate for this population (Midgett, Dumas, Moran, & Gallo, under review). The cultural adaptations to the STAC program included: a) infusion of culturally relevant language; b) inclusion of culturally relevant bullying experiences and training goals; c) examples related to culture and ethnicity; and d) training delivery consistent with cultural values and norms. Specifically, researchers used the term “defender” instead of “advocate” throughout the training, recruited ethnically diverse, and bi-lingual graduate student trainers who spoke English and Spanish. Further, trainers were encouraged to be intentional about fostering connections with and between students to promote relationship building. Trainers divided students into smaller groups than the original intervention for experiential activities to help students feel more comfortable engaging in discussions, as well as to promote rapport among students. Based on data from focus groups (Midgett et al., under review), the researchers revised the didactic component of the training to include types of bullying (i.e., spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling) and reasons students bully (i.e., physical appearance, racist attitudes, and language) that were specific to the target school. Additionally, the researchers modified role-plays to reflect content and types of bullying students talked about experiencing. Preliminary findings support the cultural validity of the adapted STAC program, demonstrating that students perceived the adapted program to be relevant for students attending their school and that the language and

examples were reflective of what they observe at their school (Midgett et al., under review).

3.2 The Current Study

The purpose of this study is to extend the literature on bullying interventions for students in ethnically-blended schools in low-income, rural communities by evaluating the appropriateness of the culturally adapted STAC intervention and exploring the participants experience in the program. To achieve this aim, we used a mixed-methods research design to answer the following research questions: (a) Do students trained in the adapted STAC intervention report an increase in knowledge and confidence to intervene as “defenders?” (b) Do students trained in the culturally adapted STAC intervention use the STAC strategies when they observe bullying? (c) Were there differences in outcomes between White and Hispanic students? and (d) What were students’ experiences participating in the culturally adapted STAC intervention and using the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations?

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Mixed Research Design

Researchers used a mixed method design to collect data from students who participated in the 90-minute, culturally adapted STAC program. We measured students’ knowledge and confidence before and immediately following the training and assessed students’ use of the STAC strategies at a 6-week follow-up. We also conducted focus groups at the 6-week follow-up to understand students’ lived experiences acting as a “defender.” We chose a mixed method design to gain a deeper understanding of students’ experiences being trained in a culturally adapted intervention that would only be partially

explained by quantitative or qualitative data alone (Cresswell, 2013). Qualitative data enhanced and supplemented quantitative findings. We used a partially mixed, sequentially-nested design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010). We collected quantitative data using a single group repeated measures design and employed CQR (Hill et al., 2005) to analyze the qualitative data.

3.3.2 Participants

Researchers recruited students from one low-income, predominately White and Hispanic middle school in the northwestern United States. The school was located within a rural community with a population of approximately 11,636 residents and an economy driven by agricultural and farming industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Further, 18.2% of the community's residents fell below the poverty line and approximately 70% of the school's population qualified for free or reduced lunch. Our sampling design was sequential-nested (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010), with a subgroup of participants completing both the follow-up survey and the focus groups. The sample for the quantitative study ($n = 63$) included 36 females (57.1%), 26 males (41.3%), and one student who identified as other (1.6%). Participants ranged in age from 11-15 years old ($M = 12.5$, $SD = 1.0$), with reported ethnic backgrounds of White ($n = 34$, 55.4%) and Hispanic ($n = 29$, 44.6%) reflecting the school's student population. A subset ($n = 23$) of the quantitative sample was selected to participate in a qualitative focus group interview. The qualitative sample included 15 females (65.0%) and 8 males (35.0%) with reported racial backgrounds of White ($n = 15$, 65.0%) and Hispanic ($n = 8$, 35.0%).

3.3.3 Procedures

The current study was part of a larger study designed to develop and evaluate the culturally adapted STAC intervention (Midgett et al., under review). Researchers used a stratified sampling procedure, randomly selecting 360 students by ethnicity and grade. The researchers obtained active parental consent for 140 students (38.9%) and randomly assigned 75 students to be trained in the culturally adapted STAC program. Of these 75 students, 63 (84%) participated in the 90-minute training and completed the baseline assessment and immediate post-training survey. At the 6-week follow up, 55 students (87%) completed a quantitative follow-up assessment and a subset of 23 students participated in a qualitative focus group. Two counselor education students (i.e., a doctoral and a masters student) conducted three, 45-minute, semi-structured focus groups. The researchers audio-recorded the focus groups for the purpose of transcribing the data verbatim. The team provided participants with a “pizza party” as an incentive after the 6-week follow-up. The university’s institutional review board and the school district approved all study procedures.

3.3.4. Measures

Knowledge and Confidence to Intervene. The researchers used the Student-Advocates Pre- and Post-Scale (SAPPS; Midgett et al., 2015) to measure students’ knowledge of bullying, knowledge of the STAC strategies, and students’ confidence to intervene in bullying situations. The questionnaire is comprised of 11-items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from a 1 (*I totally disagree*) to a 4 (*I totally agree*). Examples of items include “I know what relationship bullying looks like,” “I know how to reach out to the student being bullied,” and “I feel confident in my ability to do something to do

something helpful to decrease bullying at my school.” All items were summed to produce a total scale score. The SAPPs has established content validity and internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .75 -.81 for middle school students (Midgett et al., 2015; Midgett et al., 2017). Cronbach’s alpha for this sample was .78.

Use of STAC Strategies. Students rated the use of each STAC strategy using a single item. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*more than 5 times*). Students were asked, “How often would you say you have used these strategies to stop bullying in the past month?” (a) Stealing the Show; (b) Turning it Over; (c) Accompanying Others; and (d) Coaching Compassion. This scale has been used to measure use of the STAC strategies use in previous studies with elementary school (Midgett et al., 2017), middle school (Midgett et al., 2017), and high school (Doumas, Midgett, & Watts, 2019) students.

Participants’ Experience. Researchers conducted focus groups to investigate students’ lived experiences participating in the culturally adapted STAC program. The researchers used Hill et al.’s (2005) recommendations to develop a semi-structured interview protocol to answer the following question: “What were students’ experiences participating in the culturally adapted STAC program and using the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations in a predominantly White and Hispanic middle school located in a low-income, rural community?” The team developed the interview protocol based on a review of the literature and findings from previous studies (Johnston et al., 2018; Midgett, Doumas, Johnston, Trull, & Miller, 2017). Questions and prompts included: 1) Please share about your experience using the STAC strategies.; 2) Can you think of ways you used the strategies to intervene in situations that had to do with race-

related bullying?; 3) Can you share how using the STAC strategies made you feel about yourself?; 4) How did being trained in the STAC program affect your relationships at school?; 5) Can you please talk about your fears related to using the strategies in different bullying situations?; and 6) Overall, what was it like to be trained in the STAC program and use the STAC strategies?

3.3.5 STAC Program

Students participated in a 90-minute training to learn to act as a “defender” in bullying situations (for details please see Midgett et al., 2015). Following the initial training, students participated in two, bi-weekly, 15-minute booster sessions to review the strategies, share their experiences using the strategies, and brainstorm ways to be more effective.

Didactic Component. The didactic component included ice-breaker exercises, an audiovisual presentation, and hands-on activities to engage students in the learning process. Based on participant feedback from a pilot study (Midgett et al., under review), students learned about (a) reasons students bully (e.g., physical appearance related to clothes and shoes, racist attitudes, and language barriers); (b) different types of bullying; (c) characteristics of students who bully, including the likelihood they have been bullied themselves, to foster empathy; (d) negative associated consequences of being a target bullying; (e) bystander roles and the importance of acting as a “defender;” (f) perceived barriers to acting as a “defender;” and (g) the STAC strategies used for intervening in bullying situations described below.

“Stealing the show.” “Stealing the show” involves using humor to interrupt a bullying situation. “Defenders” are trained to interrupt bullying situations by telling jokes or stories, therefore, getting the attention off of the bullying situation and target.

“Turning it over.” “Turning it over” involves getting help from an adult to help intervene in bullying situations. Students are trained to “turn it over” anytime they witness physical bullying, cyberbullying, or any type of bullying they do not feel comfortable directly intervening in. During the training students identify safe, trusted adults that they can go to for help.

“Accompanying others.” “Accompanying others” involves befriending and offering support to the target of bullying. Students are taught to approach and comfort the target of bullying by asking if they need help, inviting them to spend time together, and/or communicating that the bullying they are experiencing is not acceptable.

“Coaching compassion.” “Coaching compassion” involves gently confronting the student who was bullying. Students are taught how to safely approach the student who was bullying and engage in a conversation aimed at raising awareness about the impact of bullying and developing empathy for targets of bullying. The “defender” is also taught to communicate that bullying behavior is never acceptable and encourage the student who is bullying to change their behavior.

Experiential Component. Students participated in role-plays to practice each of the four STAC strategies in small groups. Trainers provided students with scenarios based on students’ reported experiences with bullying at a low-income, rural, predominately White and Hispanic middle school (Midgett et al., under review). Scenarios comprised different types of bullying (e.g., spreading rumors,

physical bullying, and name calling), including ethnic and race-based bullying (e.g., use of derogatory language directed at a students' ethnicity or race and excluding students based on ethnicity or race), and teasing based on physical appearance and perceived socioeconomic status. In small groups facilitated by masters in counseling students, participants practiced utilizing all four STAC strategies. This training component concluded with each group presenting a role-play. After each presentation, the facilitator provided students with feedback.

3.3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative. The researchers conducted a priori power analysis with G*Power 3.1.3 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). For a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), results of the power analysis indicated we needed a sample size of 34 for power of ≥ 0.80 to detect a medium effect size for the main effect of time with an alpha level of .05. For a chi square, we needed a sample size of 50 and 32 students for power > 0.80 to detect a medium or large effect size, respectively, with an alpha level of .05. For an independent sample *t*-test, we needed a sample size 52 students for power > 0.80 to detect a large effect size with an alpha level of .05. Of the 55 students who completed the 6-week follow-up surveys, 42 reported witnessing bullying in the past month. The sample size met the requirement to provide adequate power for the ANOVA and chi-square analyses, but not for the independent sample *t*-tests. Thus, we dichotomized the STAC strategy frequency items into a categorical variable by classifying "never" as not using the strategy and collapsing the remaining response choices as using the strategy. Creating a dichotomous variable allowed us to analyze the adequately powered chi square analyses.

Prior to conducting statistical analyses, the researchers examined data for outliers and normality and all variables were within the normal range for skew and kurtosis. The researchers conducted a General Linear Model (GLM) ANOVA to test for significant changes in knowledge and confidence across time and by ethnicity. The two fixed effects were Time (baseline; follow-up) and Group (White; Hispanic). To evaluate the reported use of the STAC strategies, we computed descriptive statistics to examine the use of each strategy at the follow-up assessment. We then conducted a series of chi square analyses to determine differences in reported use of strategies between White and Hispanic students. The authors considered analyses significant at $p < .05$. We controlled for Type 1 error by using the Holm-Bonferroni procedure (Holm, 1979). The authors used partial eta squared (η^2) as the measure of effect size for the ANOVA and the phi coefficient (Φ) for the chi square analyses with the magnitude as follows: Small ($\eta^2 \geq .01$; $\Phi = .10$), medium ($\eta^2 \geq .06$; $\Phi = .30$), large ($\eta^2 \geq .14$; $\Phi = .50$) (Cohen, 1969; Richardson, 2011). All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24.0.

Qualitative. The researchers utilized CQR (Hill et al., 2005) to analyze qualitative data describing students' experiences participating in the culturally adapted STAC program. The team utilized CQR because it is a rigorous methodological approach that utilizes elements from phenomenology, grounded theory, and comprehensive process analysis (Hill et al., 2005). This approach was a good fit for this project because it allows for spontaneous follow-up questions and probes among participants that often uncover nuanced experiences, adding depth to participants' description. Because we were interested in describing the unique experiences of students who participated in the adapted STAC program, the constructivist nature of CQR

provided a platform for students to describe while making meaning of their experiences. Additionally, CQR requires a team of researchers to reach consensus when analyzing complex data.

The team followed Hill et al.'s (2005) recommendations for employing CQR. A doctoral student transcribed the interviews verbatim, and a faculty member, doctoral student, and master's student analyzed the data. All team members had previous experience conducting qualitative research. Team members analyzed the data individually identifying domains and core ideas before meeting to discuss initial findings. During the first meeting, each analyst wrote down their initial domains on a note card to provide a visual representation of the data. The team met three times over the course of one month to achieve consensus on domains and core ideas. The team resolved discrepancies by relying on participants' quotes. The team provided the data to an external auditor and the team incorporated the auditor's minor revisions into the final results.

Trustworthiness. The team utilized several strategies to increase trustworthiness as recommended by Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins (2016). The team used reflexivity before collecting data to develop awareness and monitor personal biases and assumptions. Prior to data collection, team members completed a memo (Creswell, 2013), recording assumptions related to bullying within the context of this particular school setting, the cultural characteristics of the participants, and/or beliefs about the impact of the training. The researchers discussed the content of the memos as a team throughout the data analysis process to decrease the impact of our assumptions and expectations on the interpretation of the data. We provided the data to an external auditor

with expertise in qualitative research to increase the credibility of our findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.4 Findings

3.4.1 Quantitative

Knowledge and confidence. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and statistical contrasts for knowledge and confidence. As seen in Table 1, only the main effect for Time was significant ($p < .001$), indicating all students reported a gain in knowledge and confidence from baseline to immediate follow-up. The interaction effect Time x Ethnicity was not significant, indicating no significant difference between White and Hispanic students at the immediate follow-up.

Use of the STAC strategies. At the 6-week follow-up, 73.7% ($n = 42$) of students reported witnessing bullying in the previous month. Results from a chi squared analysis indicated no significant difference for witnessing bullying between White (66.7%) and Hispanic (81.5%) students, $\chi^2(1) = 1.61, p = .21, \Phi = .17$. Of the 42 students who reported witnessing bullying, 95.2% reported using at least one STAC strategy to intervene, with no significant differences between White (90%) and Hispanic students (100%), $\chi^2(1) = 2.31, p = .13, \Phi = .24$. As seen in Table 2, results indicated Hispanic students used the strategy “stealing the show” more frequently than White students, with no significant differences between White and Hispanic students for the other three strategies.

3.4.2 Qualitative

We identified four domains and associated core ideas: (1) awareness and implementation, (2) barriers to intervening, (3) emotional benefits, and (4) strengthening interpersonal relationships.

Domain 1: Awareness and Implementation. Students ($n = 11$ [47.8%]) spoke about an increase in awareness about bullying and reported using all four strategies to intervene across multiple settings and contexts. Students spoke about utilizing all four of the STAC strategies, but most commonly utilizing “turning it over” and “accompanying others.” One student shared:

So there was this girl who was in my neighborhood she was pushing me and... telling me to stop being a weirdo... And I told my mom that she was bullying me and then she threatened me and then... my mom told her mom to let her know that she needs to stop because if this keeps going on she's going to go there and she's going to talk to the girl.

Another student shared:

Today in science these two boys were making fun of the girls because of her race and she was working on her test and she started crying because she didn't get to test and because the boys were calling her names. So I went to go talk to her and I helped her on her test.

Students also spoke about utilizing the STAC strategies at home, with siblings, and at the

Park. For example, one student stated:

I was taking my sisters to the park... and we saw this little kid like maybe eight, seven at most, just sitting there getting verbally bullied by a group of [students]... about my age, height, build, all that. So I did the “stealing the show”... I just walked over there and started cracking jokes and being a goofball and the little kid, he, he seemed to enjoy it. He was laughing and smiling and trying to create jokes himself it was kind of sweet.

Domain 2: Barriers to Intervening. Although some students discussed fears as a barrier for intervening, many students used the STAC strategies despite their fears ($n = 9$ [39%]). For example, students spoke about the fear of retaliation as a barrier for intervening in bullying situations. One student shared “[I am afraid] to do stealing the show because I don’t know what the bully will do. If he would do something to me... or punch someone... Stealing the show can be scary.” However, despite fears of retaliation, many students talked about feeling like they can use the STAC strategies to intervene. One students shared, “Coaching compassion [is scary] because I’m afraid they might start bullying me, but then after the training I felt like I could use that.” Another student talked about her experience using a strategy despite feeling scared, “It’s a little scary to use the strategies, but I feel happier that I helped somebody and got rid of the bullying.”

Domain 3: Emotional Benefits. After using the STAC strategies students ($n = 13$ [56.5%]) reported feeling good about themselves, confident, and feeling like they could better recognize bullying and make a difference at their school. Several students spoke about their newfound awareness of bullying and confidence to intervene, for example, one student shared:

It kind of makes me feel like I guess equipped. I know what to do in certain situations and... it helps me to see bullying more because at first I'm like 'oh I don't think that there's that much bullying in the school,' and then once I actually paid attention to it I was like, 'oh, okay there is some' and then I can use some of these strategies and that gave me a little bit of a confidence knowing I can help out with this.

Another student shared:

I can recognize it [bullying] a little bit better and so that helps me feel a little bit more confident in being able to use the strategies that I've learned rather than kind of guessing and thinking how I can help the people instead, but now I have different strategies to use.

Many students shared that being trained increased their knowledge of bullying and confidence to make a difference. One student indicated, "I'm normally very hard on myself... but these things [knowledge gained in the training and using the strategies] make me feel like, hey I'm not so bad, I've tried to help people in the world." Another student shared, "I feel great and I feel awesome because of doing this training I've realized how I can see what type of bullying it is, I know how to deal with it, I feel more confident."

Domain 4: Strengthened Interpersonal Relationships. Students ($n = 10$ [43.4%]) reported that since participating in the training and using STAC strategies they are making new friends, building stronger relationships, and becoming more discerning in friendships. One students shared:

I feel like the relationships with your friends have been stronger because if you help them out they don't just see you, they'll never forget that you helped them. And they don't just see you as a friend but somebody you can trust.

Several students also spoke about discerning between healthy and unhealthy friendships. One student shared, "I've been realizing which ones are the toxic relationships and which ones are not..." Some students also spoke about making new friends after utilizing strategies. For example, a student shared, "I think I've made more new friends since I kind of accompanied them and I feel good about the relationships."

3.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the appropriateness of a brief, bullying bystander intervention (STAC) adapted for a middle school in an ethnically-blended, low-income, rural community. We were also interested in understanding the experiences of the students who participated in the intervention. Overall, quantitative data indicated both White and Hispanic students responded positively to the adapted STAC intervention, reporting an increase in knowledge and confidence, as well as use of the STAC strategies. Qualitative data supported these findings, providing examples of how students experienced the training and how the training impacted their decision to intervene in bullying. Students also shared how the training positively impacted their emotions and peer relationships.

Consistent with prior research with middle school students (Midgett, Doumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017), quantitative data demonstrated an increase in knowledge, confidence, and use of the STAC strategies post-training. Qualitative findings supported these results, suggesting students were better equipped to identify bullying and felt

empowered to intervene. Further, consistent with prior qualitative studies (Midgett, Moody, Reilley, & Lyter, 2017), although students indicated they often felt nervous about intervening, they discussed having gained the confidence to intervene despite feeling scared. Students also expressed that the STAC training had a positive impact on them emotionally and interpersonally. These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that the students trained in the STAC program report decreases in internalizing symptoms (Doumas et al., 2019), depression, and an increased sense of school belonging (Midgett & Doumas, 2019a). Based on qualitative findings, it is likely that increased confidence and the decision to intervene may have been impacted by the positive emotional effects of the training, coupled with the development of new friends and stronger relationships. Adolescents with support from friends are more likely to engage in defending behaviors (Evans & Smokowski, 2015).

A total of 73.7% of students reported witnessing bullying at the 6-week follow-up, which parallels national statistics suggesting 70% to 80% of students witness bullying (Demaray et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2015). Of the students who reported witnessing bullying, 95.2% reported using at least one STAC strategy to intervene, which is consistent with research that indicates middle school students trained in the STAC program utilize the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations (Johnston et al., 2018; Midgett, Doumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017). Although students reported using each of the four STAC strategies, White students reported using “stealing the show” significantly less (50%) than Hispanic students (86.4%). This finding is not consistent with prior research conducted in a predominately White middle school, in which 89% of students reported using “stealing the show” (Midgett, Doumas, Trull, & Johnston, 2017).

One explanation for the lower rates of use of this strategy by White students in this sample may have to do with the “stealing the show” practice scenario used in the culturally adapted STAC training. The practice scenario included an example of biased-based relational bullying directed specifically at a Hispanic student. Thus, it is possible that White students felt less connected to the example than Hispanic students. When an intervention is grounded in the experiences of the target cultural audience (Barrera, Castro, & Steiker, 2011) and is high in cultural relevance, increased responsiveness and participation from that audience is more likely (Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004).

3.5.1 Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides support for the culturally adapted STAC program, there are several limitations to consider. We did not include a control group for this study and as such, we cannot determine that changes in knowledge and confidence and use of STAC strategies are due to the STAC training. Also, we did not control for other factors, such as school-wide behavior initiatives, bullying policies, or school climate, further limiting the study’s internal validity. Furthermore, we relied on student self-report for quantitative and qualitative data collection, which may have been impacted by social desirability. Student responses, particularly in the focus groups, may have been influenced by their desire to please the researcher or impress fellow peers. Thus, observation and/or teacher reports, and inclusion of a social desirability measure would strengthen future studies.

3.5.2 Practical Implications

This study provides important implications for school counselors and counselors working with adolescents in rural, low-income, Hispanic communities. Not only did

students learn to intervene in bullying situations, but they also talked about experiencing positive emotional outcomes and developing supportive relationships when acting as “defenders.” These findings are encouraging for school counselors because they have the opportunity to train and empower students to act as “defenders” using the STAC strategies. Through implementing the culturally adapted STAC program, school counselors can help students become aware of and equipped to intervene in bullying situations that are specifically relevant to low-income, rural, ethnically-blended schools. Additionally, it is important for school counselors to assess for feelings of isolation, fear, and low self-esteem, in students who have been involved with or witnessed bullying. Counselors working with adolescents from low-income, rural communities should also be aware of the associated impacts of bullying on adolescents and be equipped to empower clients to address these issues. Counselors can help clients develop self-efficacy and confidence to intervene in bullying situations by providing information about bullying, discussing how to identify bullying at school, and introducing and practicing the STAC strategies through mock scenarios or role-play activities during sessions.

3.6 Conclusion

Bullying is a significant problem for middle-school students, particularly students in rural, ethnically-blended schools in low income communities. This study provides preliminary support for a culturally adapted STAC program that is appropriate for this type of school setting. Specifically, both White and Hispanic students who participated in the program reported increased confidence to intervene and utilize the STAC strategies post-intervention. Further participating in the intervention was associated with an

increase in awareness about bullying, intervening as “defenders” despite fears, emotional benefits, and developing healthy relationships with peers.

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Table 3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics and Statistical Contrasts for Knowledge and Confidence to Intervene by Ethnicity

	White (n = 34)		Hispanic (n = 29)		Total (n = 63)		Time		Time x Ethnicity			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	WL	F(1,62)	p	η^2p	WL	F(1,62)	p	η^2p
Knowledge and Confidence					.32	127.43	<.001	.68	.95	1.19	.28	.02
Baseline	35.15 (4.67)	33.16 (4.73)	34.23 (4.56)									
Immediate Post	40.44 (4.78)	39.59 (4.35)	40.05 (4.57)									

Note. WL = Wilks' Lambda.

Table 3.2 Number of Students Reporting Use of Strategies by Ethnicity and Statistical Contrasts

Strategies	White (<i>n</i> = 20)		Hispanic (<i>n</i> = 22)		χ^2	<i>p</i>	Φ
	Reported Yes	Reported No	Reported Yes	Reported No			
Stealing the Show	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	19 (86.4%)	3 (13.6%)	6.48*	<.01	.39
Turning it Over	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	15 (68.2%)	7 (31.8%)	0.02	.90	.02
Accompanying Others	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	18 (81.8%)	4 (18.2%)	0.22	.88	.02
Coaching Compassion	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	15 (68.2%)	7 (31.8%)	0.02	.90	.02

**p* < .05

CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION OF A BRIEF, BYSTANDER BULLYING
INTERVENTION (STAC) FOR ETHNICALLY-BLENDED MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN
LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

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Evaluation of a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) for ethnically-blended middle schools in low –income communities.

Molly Moran^a

Aida Midgett^a

Diana D Dumas^{a,b}

Author Note

^a Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

^b Institute for the Study of Addiction, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725, USA.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Molly Moran, Department of Counselor Education, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725. E-mail: mollymoran@u.boisestate.edu.

Abstract

The authors evaluated a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) adapted for low-income, ethnically-blended middle schools. Researchers examined changes in bullying victimization and racial and/or bias-based bullying victimization among White students and Students of Color. Students trained in the program reported a decrease in both bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization from baseline to a 6-week follow-up, with no differences between White students and Students of Color. We discuss implications for school counselors.

Keywords: STAC, bullying, bystander, middle school, bias-based bullying, bullying victimization

4.1 Introduction

Bullying is the most frequently reported discipline issue at public schools in the United States, with 1 in 5 students reporting being a target of bullying over the course of the school year (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP], 2019). This number, however, is likely an underestimate of the actual prevalence of bullying as data from a recent study indicate approximately 70% of students do not report bullying incidents (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry, & Green, 2019). The rates of bullying peak in middle school, with as many as 29.5% of sixth grade students reporting being a target of bullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Further, students who identify as belonging to racial and/or ethnic minority groups report elevated rates of bullying victimization, especially in low-income schools that lack racial and/or ethnic diversity (Agirdag, Demanet, Van, & Van, 2011; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Additionally, findings from a recent meta-analysis suggest that high levels of economic disparity are associated with higher rates of bullying (Azeredo, Rinaldi, De Moraes, Levy, & Menezes, 2015). Specifically, poverty, as measured by the proportion of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, is significantly associated with bullying. Several studies also suggest that students attending low-income schools experience elevated rates of bullying compared to students attending more affluent schools (Evans, Smolowski, & Cotter, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

4.1.1 Negative Outcomes Associated with Bullying Victimization

There are a wide range of both short- and long-term negative consequences associated with being a target of bullying. For example, students who are targets of bullying report elevated psychological distress, such as feeling irritable, being tearful,

losing motivation, and experiencing sleep difficulties (Arseneault, 2018), as well as increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Moore et al., 2017). Bullying in childhood is also associated with negative consequences that extend into adulthood (Arseneault, 2017). For example, researchers have found that cumulative bullying victimization in childhood and adolescence is negatively associated with self-esteem and future optimism at the end of high school (Evans, Smokowski, Rose, Mercado, & Marshall, 2019). Additionally, adults who report being bullied in school are at greater risk for anxiety disorders including agoraphobia, generalized anxiety, and panic disorder (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013), as well as increased risk for depression and suicidality (Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014) in adulthood. Researchers have also found that adults who report experiencing repeated victimization during childhood report lower earnings, underemployment, and less accumulated wealth in adulthood than their non-bullied peers (Brimblecombe et al., 2018).

Additionally, findings from several studies indicate outcomes associated with bullying victimization for ethnic and/or racial minority students are more severe than for European American students (Agirdag et al., 2011; Juvonen et al., 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). This may be because many racial and/or ethnic minorities often experience biased-based bullying (Toomey & Storlie, 2016; Walsh et al., 2016). Students who are targets of biased-based bullying report poorer mental health outcomes (Espinoza, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2013), elevated rates of substance use (Forster et al., 2003; Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koenig, 2012), increased depressive symptoms (Cardoso, Szlyk, Goldbach, Swank, & Zyolensky, 2018), lower-grades, and decreased school connectedness (Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005) compared to students who are targets

of non-biased-based bullying. Students who experience biased-based bullying also report more frequent absenteeism as a result of feeling unsafe (Baams, Talmage, & Russell, 2017) which may have deleterious effects on their academic achievement. Specifically, significantly more Hispanic (9.4%) and Black (9%) students miss school daily due to safety concerns compared to their White (4.9%) classmates (CDCP, 2018). Similarly, in schools with predominantly European American and Hispanic students, Hispanic students report significantly lower levels of safety than their European American classmates (Voight, Hanson, O'Malley, & Adekanye, 2015). This is particularly concerning as approximately 15% of schools in the United States are classified as ethnically blended with a predominantly European American and Hispanic student body (Kena et al., 2016).

4.1.2 School-Based Interventions

According to the American School Counseling Association ([ASCA], 2019), school counselors play an important role in addressing bullying through the development of anti-bullying policies, and the implementation of comprehensive, school-wide programs aimed at decreasing bullying. School-wide, comprehensive interventions are efficacious in decreasing bullying perpetration (Farrington, Gaffney, Lösel, & Ttofi, 2017). These types of interventions, however, often require a significant amount of time and resources to implement with fidelity (Menard & Grotper, 2014; Peguero, 2012). The majority of these school-wide intervention programs involve training all school staff, families, and students (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012) which may be costly for schools with limited resources.

Although many school-wide interventions have been effective in reducing bullying perpetration in urban, predominantly European American schools (Jiménez-

Barbero, Ruiz-Hernández, Llor-Zaragoza, Pérez-García, & Llor-Esteban, 2016), these same interventions may not be effective or appropriate in ethnically-blended, low-income communities with different sociocultural factors (Evans, Fraser, & Cotter, 2014). As schools are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, school counselors have a responsibility to offer culturally responsive interventions that promote a safe learning environment for all students (ASCA, 2019). Further, there is limited research on school-based bullying interventions for low-income, ethnically-blended schools (Espinoza et al., 2013). Additionally, many of the existing bullying programs do not focus on the role of bystanders in bullying intervention (Polanin et al., 2012). When students who witness bullying (i.e., bystanders) act in prosocial ways to defend targets of bullying, researchers have found that victimization decreases (Padgett & Notar, 2013; Salmivalli, 2014; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011;). Thus, there is not only a need for bullying intervention programs that are appropriate for middle schools that are ethnically-blended in low-income communities, but also for programs that focus on the role of the bystander.

4.1.3 The STAC Intervention

STAC (Midgett, Doumas, Sears, Lunquist, & Hausheer, 2015) is a brief, bullying bystander intervention aimed at training students to intervene as “defenders” in bullying situations. STAC is an acronym that stands for the four strategies student bystanders can use to act as “defenders” on behalf of targets of bullying: “stealing the show,” “turning it over,” “accompanying others,” and “coaching compassion.” The intervention includes a 90-minute training with didactic and experiential components followed by two, 15-minute booster sessions. The STAC program was designed to shift program implementation from teachers to school counselors (Midgett et al., 2015), establishing

school counselors as leaders in anti-bullying program delivery, helping students manage emotions, and engage in prosocial interpersonal skills (ASCA, 2019). Research conducted with predominantly European American samples supports the efficacy of the STAC program in decreasing bullying victimization (Midgett, Dumas, & Johnston, 2018) and bullying perpetration (Midgett, Dumas, Trull, & Johnson, 2017; Midgett et al., 2018) in schools with a predominantly European American student body.

4.1.4 Cultural Adaptation of STAC

Although research supports the efficacy of the STAC intervention, the program was originally designed for European American students and may not be appropriate for students in ethnically-blended schools in low-income communities. In addition to addressing bullying behaviors through policy and comprehensive programming, school counselors are expected to contribute to creating a safe, respectful, and nondiscriminatory school environment (ASCA, 2019). To help meet these standards and guidelines, school counselors are in a position to take the lead on culturally appropriate, anti-bullying curriculum delivery. In accordance with ASCA guidelines, researchers adapted the original STAC intervention to be culturally appropriate for ethnically-blended (i.e., predominantly European American and Hispanic students) middle schools in low-income communities. Researchers made modifications based on Bernal, Bonilla, and Bedillo's (1995) ecological model and focus group data collected from middle school students attending a school with this demographic make-up (Midgett, Dumas, Moran, & Gallo, 2019). Intervention adaptations included incorporating culturally relevant language, bullying examples, and role-plays based on students' experiences related to bullying based on ethnicity. The researchers also adapted intervention delivery by dividing students into

smaller groups to increase engagement and recruited ethnically and racially diverse, bilingual graduate student trainers to conduct the program. Preliminary findings support the cultural appropriateness of the adapted STAC intervention for students at an ethnically-blended middle school in a low-income community (Midgett et al. 2019). Research also suggests that both European American and Hispanic middle school students trained in the intervention report increased knowledge about bullying, increased confidence to intervene in bullying situations, and using the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying behavior post-training (Moran, Midgett, Doumas, Porchia, & Moody, 2020).

4.2 Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to extend the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of the culturally adapted STAC intervention on reducing bullying victimization, including biased-based ethnic and/or racial victimization, among students attending an ethnically-blended middle school in a low-income community. We were also interested in examining ethnicity as a moderator of intervention effects to determine if the program is effective for both White students as well as Students of Color. To achieve this aim, we utilized a single group, repeated-measures design. Graduate students implemented the STAC intervention with all sixth grade students enrolled in an ethnically-blended middle school in a low income community. Graduate students also provided surveys measuring bullying victimization and biased-based ethnic and/or racial victimization at baseline and a 6-week follow-up. We were interested in the following research questions: 1) Did students report a decrease in bullying victimization from baseline to 6-week follow-up? 2) Did students report a decrease in biased-based bullying victimization from baseline to 6-week follow-up? and 3) Was ethnicity a moderator of

intervention effects (i.e., where there differences in the rates of bullying victimization between European American and Students of Color)?

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Research Design

We were interested in evaluating the effectiveness of the STAC intervention in reducing bullying victimization and biased-based victimization among sixth grade students within one middle school. We used a single group, repeated-measures design to examine changes in bullying victimization at baseline and 6-week follow-up and to examine the ethnicity as a moderator of intervention effects.

4.3.2 Participants

Researchers recruited sixth grade students from one middle school in the northwestern United States with a predominantly European American and Hispanic student body. The school was located in a low-income community with a population of approximately 46,000 residents and an economy driven by agricultural and farming industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The total enrollment of the school was 841 students with reported ethnic backgrounds as 56% European American, 40% Hispanic, 2% Multiracial, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. Approximately 68% of the school's population qualified for free or reduced lunch. All sixth grade students ($N = 380$) were recruited to participate in the study. A total of 146 (38.4%) students returned a signed parent-guardian consent form, assented to participate, and completed the baseline survey. As we were interested in ethnicity as a moderator of intervention effects, we only included the students who reported their ethnic background in the study ($n = 140$). Of the participants in the sample, 60% reported their gender as female ($n = 84$), 39.3% reported

as male ($n = 55$), and 0.7% did not report gender ($n = 1$). Participants ranged in age from 11-12 years old ($M = 11.45$, $SD = .50$), with reported ethnic or racial backgrounds of 56.4% European American ($n = 79$), 34.3% Hispanic ($n = 48$), 2.1% African American ($n = 3$), 1.4% Asian American ($n = 2$), and 5.7% other ($n = 8$).

Of the 140 students who completed baseline assessment and the STAC training, 93.6% ($n = 131$) completed the 6-week follow-up survey. There were no demographic differences or differences on outcome variables between students who completed follow-up measures and those who did not complete follow-up measures at the 6-week follow-up.

4.3.3 Procedures

The researchers collaborated with the school counseling team to conduct the study procedures. With the permission of the principal, the school counselors adopted the STAC intervention for all sixth grade students as part of the school counseling program. The principal sent all parents/guardians of sixth grade students an informational letter explaining the school's plan to implement a brief intervention to address school bullying, as well as inviting their student(s) to participate in a study evaluating the intervention. The principal also sent parents/guardians an informed consent form for them to sign if they agreed to their child's participation in the study. The school counselors followed up by providing students with the same information to hand deliver to parents/guardians. The research team provided the school with English and Spanish materials to send home to parents/guardians. School personnel reminded students to return parent/guardian informed consent forms during morning announcements. Students returned signed consent forms to their homeroom teacher who then provided the returned forms to the

school counselors. Homeroom teachers provided students who returned a signed consent form with a small candy to incentivize participation.

Although graduate students trained all sixth grade students in the program, only students who returned a signed parent/guardian consent form and assented were eligible to participate in the study. The study procedures consisted of students completing a pre- and 6-week post-intervention assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Researchers collected all data in the form of paper/pencil, self-report survey during classroom time taking approximately 30 minutes to complete. Researchers distributed packets to students containing either the study survey or crossword puzzles. Next, researchers conducted the assent process and supervised students while they completed the packets. The University Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures.

4.3.4 Measures

Bullying Victimization. We utilized the Illinois Victim Scale (IVS; Espelage & Holt, 2001) to measure bullying victimization. The IVS is a 4-item self-report measure designed to assess how often students experienced bullying victimization within the past 30 days. The items include: “Other students called me names,” “I got hit and pushed by other students,” “Other students picked on me,” and “Other students made fun of me.” Items are rated on a seven-point Likert Scale ranging from (*never*) to (*more than 7*). The researchers summed responses across items to provide a total scale score indicating the number of bullying victimization instances each student reported. This scale has been normed on middle school students and researchers have reported adequate validity and reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha = .88 (Espelage & Holt, 2001). For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Ethnic and/or Racial Bias-Based Bullying Victimization. We measured ethnic and/or race bias-based bullying victimization using a modified version of Peer Discrimination Distress Subscale of the Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index (ADDI; Fischer, Wallace, & Denton, 2000). The ADDI is a 15-item scale originally developed to measure the distress levels of adolescents associated with instances of perceived racial and/or ethnic-based discrimination encountered in educational contexts. The Peer Discrimination Subscale consists of 5 items. For this study, we were interested in race and/or ethnic based-bullying in the school setting. We were also interested in assessing the four types of race and/or ethnic based-bullying described in the program (i.e., physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying). As such, we modified the questions to include the school context and combined two questions assessing relationship bullying by using the term “activities” instead of “games” and “clubs” that were in the original subscale.

We used the following four items to assess how often students report race and/or ethnic-based bullying in the past 30 days: “Kids at your school did not include you in activities because of your race or ethnicity,” “You were called insulting names by kids at your school because of your race or ethnicity,” “You were threatened at your school because of your race or ethnicity,” and “Kids at your school posted something negative about you online because of your race or ethnicity.” Items are rated on a 10-point Likert Scale ranging from (*never*) to (*more than 10 times*). The researchers summed responses across items to provide a total scale score indicating the number of bullying victimization instances each student reported. The ADDI was originally normed on an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents between 13 and 19 years old, but has also been used in

multiple studies with middle school students (e.g., Darwich, McClure, & Hymel, 2016; Grossman & Liang, 2008; Juvonen, Lessard, Schacter, & Suchilt, 2017). The measure has demonstrated construct validity and the Peer Discrimination Distress Scale has good test-retest reliability ($r = .75$) and adequate inter-item reliability ($\alpha = .60$) (Fisher et al., 2000). For the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha was .69.

4.3.5 The Culturally Adapted STAC Intervention

The STAC intervention consists of a 90-minute training followed by two, bi-weekly, 15-minute interactive booster sessions.

Didactic Component. The didactic component includes ice-breaker exercises, a slide show presentation, and experiential activities to engage students in learning about bullying. Topics include a) the complex nature of bullying in ethnically-blended schools, including race-related bullying; b) different types of bullying (i.e., physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying) with a focus on spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling; c) characteristics of students who typically bully; d) reasons students bully, including physical appearance, racist attitudes, and language; e) negative consequences associated with being a target, perpetrator, and/or bystander; e) the role of a bystander and the importance of acting as a “defender;” f) perceived barriers for intervening; and g) the STAC strategies, which are described below.

“Stealing the show.” “Stealing the show” is a strategy aimed at interrupting a bullying situation by using humor or story-telling to get the attention off of the bullying situation and target. The trainers teach students how to identify bullying situations that are appropriate to intervene using humor and/or storytelling. Students are trained not to use “stealing the show” to intervene during physical and/or cyberbullying.

“Turning it over.” “Turning it over” involves seeking out adult support to intervene in difficult bullying situations. Trainers teach students how to identify bullying situations that require adult intervention, specifically physical bullying, cyberbullying, and/or any bullying situation they do not feel comfortable with intervening. During the training students also identify safe, trusted adults that they can access to support with intervening.

“Accompanying others.” “Accompanying others” is a strategy aimed at offering support to the target of bullying. Trainers teach students to comfort those who are targeted either directly by asking them if they would like to talk about the incident or indirectly by spending time with them.

“Coaching compassion.” “Coaching compassion” is a strategy aimed at helping the perpetrator of bullying to develop empathy for students who are targets. Trainers teach students to safely and gently confront those who are perpetrators by engaging them in conversation about the impacts of bullying and communicating that bullying behavior is never acceptable. Trainers also teach students to use this strategy only when they are friends with the perpetrator, older, or they believe they have higher social status and will be respected.

Experiential Component. Students participate in small group role-plays to practice each of the four STAC strategies across a variety of bullying scenarios. Scenarios are based on students’ reported experiences with bullying at a low-income, ethnically-blended school with predominantly European American and Hispanic middle school students (Midgett et al., 2019). Scenarios include different types of bullying, such as spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling, as well as examples of ethnic

bias-based bullying such as derogatory language directed at a student's ethnicity, or leaving a student out based on their perceived ethnicity. Trainers lead small groups where participants practice utilizing all four STAC strategies. Each small group presents a role-play to the larger group and trainers provide both positive and constructive feedback to help students use the strategy more effectively in the future.

Booster Sessions. Students participate in two, bi-weekly booster sessions during which trainers review the STAC strategies, encourage students to share their experiences using the strategies, and brainstorm ways to help students be more effective when using the strategies to intervene in bullying situations. The trainers also invite students to share bullying situations that they have observed, but did not intervene and then provide suggestions for how to intervene in these types of situations in the future.

4.3.6 Power Analysis

We conducted an a priori power analysis with G*Power 3.1.3 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) to ensure we had an adequate sample size to detect a medium effect size for each analysis. For a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), the results of the power analysis indicated that a sample size of 34 was needed for power of ≥ 0.80 to detect a medium effect size for the interaction effect of Time x Ethnicity with an alpha level of .05. With a final sample size of 131, we met the requirement for adequate power to detect a medium effect size.

4.3.7 Statistical Methods

Prior to statistical analysis, researchers examined the data for outliers and normality at baseline and follow-up assessments and we adjusted outliers to 3.3 SD above the mean before conducting analyses (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). We used general linear

model (GLM) repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the intervention effects across time and ethnicity as a moderator of intervention effects across time for the outcome variables. The two fixed effects were Time (baseline; 6-week follow-up) and Group (European American; Students of Color) for both analysis. The authors considered analyses significant at $p < .05$. The authors used partial eta squared (η^2) as the measure of effect size with the magnitude as follows: small ($\eta^2 \geq .01$), medium ($\eta^2 \geq .06$), large ($\eta^2 \geq .14$) (Cohen, 1969; Richardson, 2011). All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24.0.

4.4 Results

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and statistical contrasts for the analyses. As seen in Table 1, students reported a decrease in bullying victimization from baseline to the 6-week follow-up ($p < .01$). The effect size was medium ($\eta^2 = .07$). The interaction effect of Time x Ethnicity was not significant ($p = .95$), indicating no difference in bullying victimization between European American students and Students of Color at the 6-week follow-up. Similarly, students also reported a decrease in bias-based bullying victimization from baseline to 6-week follow-up ($p < .03$). The effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .03$). The interaction effect of Time x Ethnicity was not significant ($p = .81$), indicating no differences in bias-based bullying victimization between European American students and Students of Color at the 6-week follow-up.

4.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to extend the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of the culturally adapted STAC intervention in reducing bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization. Because nearly one third of sixth

grade students report being a target of bullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), it is important to implement effective programs to reduce bullying among this age group. Further, because the majority of anti-bullying programs have been developed for predominately European American schools (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2016), it is important to develop and evaluate bullying interventions that are culturally appropriate for ethnically-blended schools. Overall, results of the current study indicate that the adapted STAC program is a promising approach for reducing bullying victimization, including ethnic and/or race-based bullying, among sixth grade students attending an ethnically-blended middle school in a low-income community.

In addressing the first research question, the results indicate students reported a decrease in bullying victimization from baseline to the 6-week follow-up. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests bystander interventions are effective in reducing bullying (Williford et al., 2012). When bystanders act in prosocial ways to defend targets of bullying, victimization decreases (Padgett & Notar, 2013; Salmivalli, 2014; Salmivalli et al., 2011). Further, this finding is also consistent with prior research demonstrating the STAC program is effective in reducing bullying victimization among European American students (Midgett et al., 2018).

Regarding the second research question, students reported a decrease in ethnic and/or race biased-based bullying victimization from baseline to 6-week follow-up. This is an important finding because research suggests students who are targets of biased-based bullying report poorer mental health outcomes (Cardoso et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2013; Forster et al., 2003; Russell et al., 2012) and school-related problems (Baams et al., 2017; Nishina et al., 2005) compared to students who are targets of other types of

bullying. Further, most bullying prevention programs have been developed for urban, affluent schools with a predominantly European American student population (Espinoza et al., 2013). The culturally adapted STAC intervention includes content that is relevant for students attending ethnically blended, low-income middle schools. Thus, findings suggest that the culturally adapted STAC intervention may be a promising approach to decrease bias-based bullying and improve outcomes for students in these settings.

Finally, we did not find evidence for ethnicity as a moderator of intervention effects. That is, there were no differences in the reduction of bullying victimization or bias-based bullying victimization between White students and Students of Color. We examined ethnicity as a moderator as the culturally adapted STAC program is a modified version of a program that was not originally designed for ethnically-blended schools. Thus, we wanted to verify that the program would be effective not only for White students in an ethnically-blended school, but also for Students of Color. Findings indicate that the culturally adapted STAC intervention is effective for both White students and Students of Color, suggesting the modifications to the original STAC intervention were appropriate for all students, not just students of one racial/ethnic background.

4.5.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the results of this study support the effectiveness of a culturally adapted bystander bullying interventions for ethnically-blended middle schools in low-income communities, several limitations must be discussed. First, the lack of a comparison group is the most notable limitation of this study. In the absence of a control group, we cannot assume that reductions in bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization

occurred as a result of the STAC intervention. It is possible that other variables were related to the outcomes of the study. For example, social desirability may have impacted the results as it is possible that students reported a decrease in victimization in an effort to please the researchers. As such, future studies utilizing a randomized controlled design are needed to examine the efficacy of the culturally adapted intervention on reducing bullying victimization. Second, we did not control for school effects, such as bullying or behavior policies and positive behavior initiatives, that may have impacted bullying victimization. Finally, although this study was conducted in an ethnically-blended school, our study sample consisted of predominately European American and Hispanic students. Thus, we cannot generalize our findings to students in schools with a different ethnic or racial composition. Additionally, because of the small numbers of students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds, we combined all Students of Color into one group. Being a target of ethnic and/or racial bullying may affect certain minority students more than others (Rodriguez-Hidalgo, Ortega-Ruiz, & Zych, 2014). Thus, future studies with larger samples and greater ethnic and racial diversity are needed to examine intervention effects.

4.5.2 Implications

This study provides several practical applications for middle school counselors working in ethnically-blended schools in low-income communities. With the changing ethnic and racial demographics in the United States, it is imperative that school counselors make concerted efforts to help all students feel safe in ethnically-blended schools. The STAC intervention provides school counselors with a culturally responsive program to address bullying. The adapted STAC intervention aligns with ASCA's model

for a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes a safe learning environment for all students and embraces ethnic and racial diversity (ASCA, 2019). The culturally adapted STAC intervention is a promising school-wide intervention that places a low demand on schools, requiring relatively little time and few resources to implement. To help reduce bullying, school counselors can deliver the STAC intervention through a 90-minute training, followed by two booster sessions. Counselors can also modify implementation to suit the needs of their school. For example, school counselors could implement the initial 90-minute program in shorter 30-minute segments. Further, booster sessions could be conducted monthly during the school year to encourage students to continue utilizing the four STAC strategies.

Additionally, negative outcomes associated with bullying (Arseneault, 2018; Moore et al., 2017) and ethnic and/or racial bias-based bullying (Cardoso et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2013; Forster et al., 2003; Nishina et al., 2005; Russell et al., 2012) can be deleterious and often require individualized mental health support beyond the scope and/or capacity of what school counselors can offer. Further, mental health resources can be scarce in low-income communities (Guo, Wu, Smokowski, Bacallao, Evans, & Cotter, 2015; Hodgkinson, Godoy, Beers, & Lewin, 2017; Thomas, Ellis, Konrad, Holzer, & Morrissey, 2009), and therefore, difficult for students to access. Thus, introducing a proactive approach to training students to act as “defenders” to reduce bullying could potentially decrease the negative associated outcomes and the need for mental health resources for students in these communities.

4.6 Conclusion

This study evaluated a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) adapted for ethnically-blended middle schools in low-income communities. This is the first study to examine the effectiveness of the culturally adapted STAC program for reducing bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization. Results indicated sixth grade students reported a decrease in bullying victimization and ethnic and/or race-based bullying victimization after participating in the STAC intervention. These findings provide preliminary support for the culturally adapted STAC intervention as a promising counselor-delivered approach to reduce bullying victimization and foster a safe learning environment for students in ethnically-blended schools in low-income communities.

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Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Statistical Contrasts for Bullying Victimization and Bias-Based Victimization

	White Students (<i>n</i> = 58)	Students of Color (<i>n</i> = 73)	Total (<i>n</i> = 131)	Time		Time x Ethnicity				
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i> (1, 129)	<i>p</i>	<i>WL</i>	η^2_p	<i>F</i> (1,129)	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
Bullying Victimization										
Baseline	2.92 (3.64)	1.69 (3.32)	2.37 (3.51)	.93	9.21	<.003	.07	1.00	0.00	.95
6-Week Follow-Up	2.25 (3.09)	1.05 (1.99)	1.71 (2.72)							
Bias-Based Victimization										
Baseline	0.49 (1.07)	0.36 (.93)	0.44 (1.01)	.97	4.55	<.03	.03	1.00	.06	.81
6-Week Follow-Up	0.34 (.79)	0.24 (.66)	0.30 (.73)							

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Summary

Bullying is a significant problem for middle school students with a variety of negative associated outcomes. Students who attend low-income schools experience elevated rates of bullying (Azeredo, Rinaldi, De Moraes, Levy, & Menezes, 2015). Further, ethnic and racial minority students also experience elevated rates of bullying, with worse outcomes than their White classmates (Agirdag, Demanet, Van, & Van, 2011; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2006; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017). Most bullying intervention programs have been developed and evaluated in predominately White, urban, affluent schools and are likely not appropriate for low-income, ethnically blended schools (Evans, Frazier, & Cotter, 2014). Thus, there is a need for culturally appropriate and accessible bullying interventions for low-income, ethnically blended schools. The purpose of this dissertation's body of work was to address this need by developing and evaluating a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) adapted specifically for ethnically blended middle schools in low-income communities.

Chapter Two includes a mixed-method study examining the development of the culturally adapted STAC intervention. Qualitative data collected from middle school students describing their experiences with bullying along with the eight dimensions of Bernal, Bonilla, and Bellido (1999) Ecological Model informed the adaptations to the STAC intervention. Quantitative data provides preliminary support for the cultural validity of the adapted intervention. Findings from this study provide preliminary

support for the acceptability of the adapted STAC intervention among students at ethnically-blended, low-income middle schools.

Chapter Three extend this work by utilizing a mixed-method study design to examine the appropriateness of the culturally adapted STAC intervention. Qualitative data were collected to describe the experiences of the students who participated in the adapted intervention. Quantitative data indicated an increase in knowledge about bullying, confidence to intervene in bullying situations, and use of the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying situations. This study provides further support for the implementation of the culturally adapted STAC program in ethnically-blended middle schools in low-income communities.

Chapter Four built upon these preliminary studies by evaluating the effectiveness of the culturally adapted STAC intervention on reducing rates of bullying victimization post-program implementation. Quantitative data indicated a decrease in bullying victimization and bias-based bullying victimization from baseline to a 6-week follow-up. This study suggests that the culturally adapted STAC program is a promising approach to decreasing bullying victimization in ethnically-blended middle schools in low-income communities.

In conclusion this dissertation provides a collection of studies that address the need for culturally appropriate bullying interventions for ethnically blended middle schools in low-income communities. While there are limitations in these studies, findings suggest that the culturally adapted STAC program is a promising approach that is accessible and appropriate for ethnically-blended, low-income middle schools. These

studies build upon one another and provide the foundation for future large-scale studies examining various outcomes.

5.2 References

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APPENDIX

Culturally Adapted STAC Scenario

Scenario 1

In the hallway, you overhear some girls talking about another girl's clothes and hair. You hear them make fun of the girl telling her things like, "Can't you afford a brush?", "nice" clothes" with a sarcastic and mean tone. The girl looks pretty upset and does not say anything back.

Scenario 2

During break, for a few weeks now you hear a group of boys make fun of another boy in Spanish and then tell him he can't play soccer with them. The boy who gets picked on walks away and spends the rest of lunch on his own.

Scenario 3

For a few weeks during lunch, when a student sits down to eat, a group of girls are mean to her saying that she needs to go back to Mexico and that she does not have papers to be in the United States.

Scenario 4

For the past few weeks you have noticed a group of students who stand in the middle of the hallway and yell in another student's ear as he walks by. You also see that group of students slam his locker closed when he is trying to get things for class.

Scenario 5

Your friends are hanging out at your house after school, looking through Facebook. One friend decided to friend request a girl from school that they do not like, and then posted mean comments on each of her pictures in an embarrassing way. This is not the first time your friend has done something like this.

Scenario 6

As you wait for the bus you over hear a group of girls gossiping about another girl in your grade. They plan to start spreading a rumor about her dating someone that she is not. They plan to tell as many people as they can and they start telling people right at the bus stop.