ISSN: 2690-0726

Research Article

Journal of Educational and Psychological Research

Evaluation of a Brief, School-Based Bystander Bullying Intervention: A Pilot Study Conducted at an Ethnically-Blended, Low-Income School

Aida Midgett[1]*, Diana M Doumas[2], Molly Moran[3], Laura Gallo[4]

Boise State University

***Corresponding author:**
Aida Midgett, Department of Counselor Education, 1910 University Drive, Boise Idaho, 83725.

Submitted: 28 Mar 2020; **Accepted**: 31 Mar 2020; **Published**: 08 Apr 2020

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to adapt a brief, bystander bullying intervention to be culturally appropriate for ethnically-blended schools in low-income communities and to assess the social validity of the adapted intervention. A mixed-methods design with sequential sampling was used to collect qualitative data from focus groups and quantitative survey data. The researchers used Consensual Qualitative Research to analyze qualitative data and chi square analyses and independent sample t-tests to analyzed qualitative data. Students (N = 40) from an ethnically-blended school (i.e., predominantly White and Hispanic students) in a low-income community were trained in the bystander bullying program. The 90-minute training includes a didactic and experiential component. The didactic component includes information about bullying and strategies students can use to intervene when they witness bullying. The experiential component includes small group activities and role-plays in which students practice utilizing the strategies. We used a phased research approach to meet the study aims. In Phase 1, students participated in focus groups after receiving the bystander training. Qualitative themes that emerged from the focus groups included students' experiences with bullying, including types of bullying and reasons why students bully, negative emotions associated with bullying, fears related to reporting bullying to adults, and positive reactions to the intervention. In Phase 2, we adapted the intervention based on information from a literature search and feedback from participants in Phase 1. In Phase 3, we trained a new group of students (N = 63) in the adapted intervention to evaluate the intervention's social validity. Results indicated students perceived the adapted intervention as appropriate and relevant for their school, with no differences between White and Hispanic students. This study serves as a first step in developing a culturally appropriate intervention designed to address bullying-related health disparities for students attending an ethnically-blended school in a low-income community.

Keywords: Bullying, Bystander, STAC, Adaptation, Intervention Cultural Adaptation of a School-Based Bystander Bullying Intervention for Ethnically-Blended, Low-Income Schools

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 [1]. 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 [2]. Rates of physical bullying and bullying related injury peak during middle school and are more prevalent among Hispanic students and students from low-income families [3]. Further, for Hispanic students in low-income communities, being a target of race-related bullying is also associated with health [4], academic [5], and emotional problems [5,6], including depression [7], as well as substance use [8]. Additionally, compared to White students, Hispanic students who repeatedly witness bullying report higher levels of trauma levels [9]. 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 [10-12]. Within school racial disparities regarding student perception of school climate have also been identified in the literature [13]. Specifically, in schools with significant numbers of Hispanic and White students, Hispanic students report lower levels of school safety than White students [13]. These disparities highlight the need for effective antibullying interventions developed specifically for middle schools comprised of predominantly White and Hispanic students in low income communities.

School-Based Bullying Interventions

Research indicates comprehensive, school-based interventions are effective at decreasing bullying and improving socio-emotional outcomes for students [14]. Effective school-based violence interventions need to address the social context in which bullying occurs, including the role of peers [15]. Researchers have identified four roles which student assume when they witness bullying – "assistant," "reinforcer," "outsider," and "defender" [16]. 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 [17] and an increased commitment to intervene in bullying situations [18]. Further, when "defenders" intervene, bullying behavior decreases [19,20]. Thus, training student bystanders to intervene as "defenders" is an important component of comprehensive bullying interventions [21,22]. 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 [23,24].

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 [5]. 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 [25]. 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 [26]. 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 [27]. 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 [28]. 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.

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, schoolwide interventions [29]. 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 reinforce learning and enhance skill acquisition. Researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of the STAC intervention in reducing bullying perpetration [30,31]and victimization [31]. Students trained in the STAC program also report improved emotional outcomes including decreases in anxiety [32] and depression [33], and increases in self-esteem [34].

Although these studies provide support for the STAC program, the intervention was developed for adolescents attending predominantly White schools in affluent communities. 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.

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 [35]. Thus, it is important to culturally situate interventions to the new target audience to increase community ownership, enhance uptake, increase cultural relevance [36], and increase intervention sustainability [37]. Because adapted interventions need to be grounded in the experiences of individuals who belong to the target cultural audience, it is important to include cultural group members as active participants in modifying intervention curriculum to be culturally relevant [35]. Achieving high levels of social validity (e.g., acceptability) is also important when establishing culturally responsive and effective interventions [39].

The ecology validity model provides one approach for helping to guide the adaption of existing interventions to be culturally appropriate [40]. 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 [41]. Further, students participating in social and emotional learning interventions adapted to be culturally appropriate for Hispanic students report positive outcomes [39,42].

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. 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? We used a sequential mixed-methods design to adapt the 90-minute STAC training and to test the social validity of the adapted program [43,44]. We selected a mixed-methods approach as this framework has been recommended for culturally adapting interventions [45].

Objectives

An overview of the methodology is presented in Figure 1. In Phase 1, we used qualitative focus groups to learn about students experiences with bullying and to obtain their feedback about the STAC intervention and how it may need to be adapted to be culturally appropriate. In Phase 2, we incorporated information from a literature search and from Phase 1 data to adapt the STAC intervention to be culturally appropriate for our target population. In Phase 3, we used a between-subjects quantitative design to evaluate the social

validity of the adapted intervention using a new sample from the same school as Phase 1.

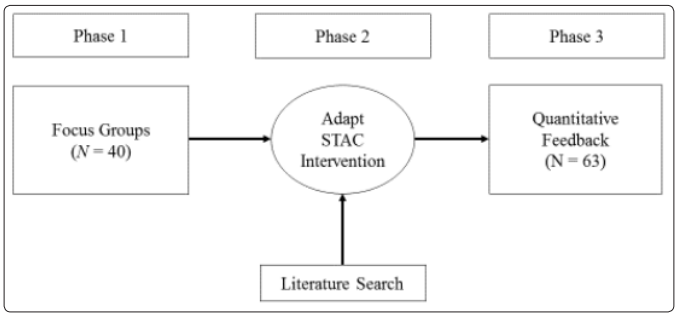

Figure 1: Overview of Study Methodology

Phase 1

Method and Materials

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.

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 participated in the 90-minute existing STAC training and 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, 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. Focus groups were ethnically homogeneous to foster an environment conducive of ethnicity-related bullying discussions [46]. Researchers followed Hill et al.'s recommendation to develop a semi-structured interview protocol (see Interview Questions) [47]. 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.

Interview Questions

We are going to discuss each portion of the STAC training; tell us if you feel that part of the training is relevant to students at your school. Please also keep bullying that may be because of race in mind when you give us feedback so we can incorporate that aspect of bullying into our training. If you feel like we are missing something or getting something wrong both in terms of what we are teaching and how we are teaching, tell us how you would change it to make it relevant:

a. The definition of bullying
b. Facts about bullying
c. What you can do as an advocate
d. The different types of bullying
e. Information about students who bully
f. Information about the role of the bystander
g. The different types of bystanders

Now let's talk about the activities during the presentation. Tell us how you felt about participating in:

a. Finding the leader who had the same shape as you
b. The brown bag activity
c. The ice breaker
d. The Poster Group Activity
e. Snow ball activity

Now let's talk about the STAC strategies. Tell us how you feel about you and your friends using. Is there a way we could improve these strategies to make them better to address bullying that can happen because of race? Let's go through each one:

a. Stealing the show
b. Accompany others
c. Tuning it over
d. Coaching compassion

Without using any names, please tell us about the types of bullying that you see happen at your school. Tell us about any bullying that might happen because of race at your school.

a. Based on what you learned in the STAC training, would you feel comfortable intervening?
b. If not, what would keep you from intervening?

Now let's talk about the Role-Play part of the training. How did you feel about the scenarios? Would you change any of them? Did we miss something important related to bullying that happens in here at your school? If so, tell us about it.

a. How about the conclusion of the training when you sign a petition and get a certificate? How did you feel about participating in those activities? Would you do something differently at the end? If yes, tell us what you would do.
b. Overall, as you think about the entire training?

The STAC Program

The STAC program includes a 90-minute training with didactic and experiential components [29]. The didactic component 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 experiential component includes small group activities and role-plays in which students practice utilizing the STAC strategies. 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.

Data Analysis

Research team members employed Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) analyses to investigate students' experiences being trained in the STAC intervention [47]. 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 Hispanic 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.

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. 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 [47]. An external auditor analyzed the data separately and provided the team with feedback throughout the data analysis process. The researchers also conducted member checks by meeting with the participants as a group [48]. All students who participated in Phase 1 agreed the findings were an accurate representation of their experience.

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 as a deterrent from building a relationship with Hispanic students, 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.

Phase 2

We used the ecology validity model [40]to guide our cultural adaptation of the STAC intervention using information from a literature search on adapting existing programs to be culturally appropriate to a new target population and student feedback from Phase 1 focus groups. Modifications were made in the delivery and didactic content of the intervention. Additionally, 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. Specific adaptations and examples of program changes for each of the eight dimensions of the ecology validity model are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Cultural Adaptations to the STAC Intervention

Dimension	Cultural Adaptation	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	Trainers were intentional about greetings students warmly and fostering connections during the ice-breaker exercise and small group activities
Content	Apply knowledge regarding cultural values, including importance of relationships and connection	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	We emphasized examples of spreading rumors, physical bullying, and name calling during the didactic training and role-plays We emphasized the STAC strategy "Turing it Over" and encouraging students to identify an adult at school who they trust and can go to for help
Goals	Set goals that are consistent with information gathered during focus groups, including the negative emotional experiences associated with bullying	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	We shortened the didactic training by 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	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

Phase 3

Methods and Materials

Participants

The sample consisted of 63 students (n = 36 females [58.1%]; n = 26 males [40.3%]; and n =1 other [1.6%]) recruited from the same school as Study 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.

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 63 students randomly assigned to be trained in the adapted STAC intervention. Students completed surveys immediately post-training. Incentives for the larger study included a "pizza party." All study procedures were approved by the university review board and school district.

Measures

The researchers used a social validity survey designed for this study to assess the social validity of the STAC training. The survey is comprised of 8 items ranked on a 4-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) (see Table 2 for the items). Items are summed for a total score. The survey was based on social validity surveys used to assess the appropriateness of interventions adapted for a new population with demonstrated reliability and validity [42]. Internal consistency for this sample was $\alpha = .98$.

Table 2: Participants Reporting Agreement with Social Validity Items by Ethnicity and Chi Square Analyses

	% Agreement			
Item	**Hispanic (n = 29)**	**White (n = 34)**	**$\chi 2(1)$**	**p value**
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

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) [49]. We controlled for Type 1 error by using the Holm-Bonferroni procedure [50]. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 24.0.

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.

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 Phase 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. This data was used in combination with a literature review to adapt the STAC intervention in Phase 2. Quantitative findings from Phase 3 indicated students trained in the culturally adapted STAC intervention found the program to be appropriate and 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 (i.e., speaking English vs. Spanish) are 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 [3]. 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 [51] and physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied [52]. Additionally, the experiences described by students in this study align with research indicating race-related bullying is associated with clothes [53], political climate [54], and language differences [55].

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 [5, 6]. For example, Mexican-American students within a culturally diverse student body report anxious and depressed feelings related to bullying victimization [5]. Students from diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds also experience anxiety related to ethnic/racial teasing, even though it is normalized and characterized as harmless [6]. 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 [56] and may normalize bullying behaviors [57]. This finding is particularly important because of the relatively high rates of physical bullying and bullying-related injury among Hispanic students and students from low-income families [3]. Because research indicates students are more likely to report bullying when they believe teachers will act and will be effective in intervening, it is important for students to identify an adult at school who they trust and believe will be supportive [58]. These results guided intervention adaptations emphasizing the importance of "turning it over," particularly when witnessing physical bullying [59].

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. In Phase 2, we mapped these qualitative findings onto the eight dimensions of the social ecological model to adapt the program and then tested the social validity of the program with a new group of participants [40]. Quantitative results from Phase 3 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 [39]. 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.

Limitations

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. Further, our findings were based on self-report data. It is possible that students' responses to both the focus group questions in Phase 1 and the survey questions for Phase 3 were influenced by their desire to please the researchers. This may be particularly true for the quantitative data in Phase 2 as some of the team members who trained the students in the adapted STAC intervention were present during post-training data collection. Finally, we 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 [39,41,60].

Recommendations

This study was intended as a first step in the development of a culturally appropriate brief, bullying bystander intervention. Future research on the feasibility of intervention delivery and pilot research in schools with greater diversity are needed. Future studies investigating the efficacy of the adapted intervention through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) are needed to examine the impact of the intervention on bullying behavior and the negative consequences associated with bullying victimization.

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 reported among both targets of bullying and bystanders. Although comprehensive, school-wide bullying programs can be effective time- and labor-intensive resources required for program implementation pose significant barriers for schools, particularly those in low-income communities [61]. 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 ethnically-blended schools in low-income communities, thereby reducing health disparities for this population.

Acknowledgement

Research reported in this manuscript was supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number 1U54GM104944. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

References

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2016) Understanding bullying: Fact sheet 2016.
2. Olweus D, Mortimore P (1993) Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
3. US Department of Education: National Center for Educational Statistics (2015) Student reports of bullying and cyber-bullying: Results from the 2013 school crime supplement to the national crime victimization survey (NCES 2015-056).
4. Rosenthal L, Earnshaw VA, Carroll-Scott A, Henderson KE, Peters (2013) Weight-and race-based bullying: Health associations among urban adolescents. Journal of Health Psychology 4: 401-412.
5. Espinoza G, Gonzales NA, Fuligni AJ (2013) Daily school peer victimization experiences among Mexican-American adolescents: Associations with psychosocial, physical, and school adjustment. Journal of Youth and Adolescence 42: 1775-1788. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3951444/

6. Douglas S, Mirpuri S, English D, Yip T (2016) "They were just making jokes:" Ethnic/racial teasing and discrimination among adolescents. Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology 22: 69-82.
7. Cardosa, Szlyk, Goldbach, Swank, Zvolensky (2018) General and Ethnic-Biased Bullying Among Latino Students: Exploring Risks of Depression, Suicidal Ideation, and Substance Use. J Immigr Minor Health 20: 816-822.
8. Forster, M., Dyal, S.R., Baezconde-Garbanati, L., Chou, C.P., Soto, D.W., & Unger, J. B (2013) Bullying victimization as a mediator of associations between cultural/familial variables, substance use, and depressive symptoms among Hispanic youth. Ethnicity & Health. 18: 415-432.
9. Janson SL, McGrath KW, Covington JK, Cheng SC, Boushey HA (2009) Individualized asthma self-management improves medication adherence and markers of asthma control. J Allergy Clin Immunol 123: 840-6.
10. Agirdag O, Demanet J, Van Houtte M, Van Avermaet P (2011) Ethnic school composition and peer victimization: A focus on the interethnic school climate. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 35: 465-473.
11. Juvonen, J, Nishina, A, Graham, S (2006) Ethnic Diversity and Perceptions of Safety in Urban Middle Schools, Psychological Science 17: 393-400.
12. Vitoroulis I, Georgiades K (2017) Bullying among immigrant and non-immigrant early adolescents: School- and student-level effects. J Adolesc 61: 141-151.
13. Voight AM, Hanson T O'Malley M, Adekanye L (2015) The racial school climate gap: Within-school disparities in students' experiences of safety, support, and connectedness. American Journal of Community Psychology 56: 252-267.
14. Ttofi MM, Farrington DP (2011) Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. Journal of Experimental Criminology 7: 27-56.
15. Farrell A, Mehari K, Mays S, Sullivan TN, Le AT (2015) Participants' perceptions of a violence prevention curriculum for middle school students: Was it relevant and useful? Journal of Primary Prevention 26: 227-246.
16. Salmivalli C, Lagerspet K, Björkqvist K, Österman K, Kaukiainen A (1996) Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. Aggressive Behavior 22: 1-15 https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1996)22:13.0.CO;2-T.
17. Pozzoli T, Gini G (2010) Active defending and passive bystanding behavior in bullying: The role of personal characteristics and perceived peer pressure. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 38: 815-827.
18. Karna A, Voeten M, Little TD, Poskiparta E, Alanen E (2011) Going to scale: A non-randomised nationwide trial of the KiVa anti-bullying program for grades 1-9. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 79: 796-805.
19. Hawkins DL, Pepler DJ, Craig WM (2001) Naturalistic observations of peer interventions in bullying. Social Development 10: 512-527.
20. Salmivalli C, Voeten M, Poskiparta E (2011) Bystanders matter: Associations between reinforcing, defending, and the frequency of bullying behavior in classrooms. Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology 40: 668-676.
21. Porter, James R, Smith-Adcock Sondra (2017) Children's Tendency to Defend Victims of School Bullying, Professional School Counseling 20: 1-13
22. Polanin JR, Espelage DL, Pigott TD (2012) A meta-analysis of school-based bullying prevention programs' effects on bystander intervention behavior. School Psychology Review 41: 47-65.
23. Burns S, Cross D, Maycock B (2010) "That could be me squishing chips on someone's car." How friends can positively influence bullying behavior. The Journal of Primary Prevention 31: 209-222.
24. Burns S, Maycock B, Cross D, Brown G (2008) The power of peers: Why some students bully others to conform. Qualitative Health Research 18: 1704-1716.
25. Evans CBR, Fraser MW, Cotter KL (2014) The effectiveness of school-based bullying prevention programs: A systematic review. Aggression and Violent Behavior 19: 532-544.
26. Bauer NS, Lozano P, Rivara FP (2007) The Effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in public middle schools: A controlled trial. Journal of Adolescent Health 40: 266-27.
27. Menard S, Grotpeter JK (2014) Evaluation of bully-proofing your school as an elementary school antibullying intervention. Journal of School Violence 13: 188-209.
28. Peguero AA (2012) Schools, bullying, and inequality: Intersecting factors and complexities with the stratification of youth victimization at school. Sociology Compass 6: 402-412.
29. Midgett A, Doumas DM, Sears D, Lunquist A, Hausheer R (2015) A bystanderbullying psychoeducation program with middle school students: A preliminary report. The Professional Counselor 5: 486-500.
30. Midgett A, Doumas DM, Trull R, Johnson J (2017) Training students who occasionally bully to be peer advocates: Can a brief bystander intervention decrease bullying behavior? Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling 3: 1-13.
31. Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., & Johnston, A. (2018). Establishing school counselors as leaders in bullying curriculum delivery: Evaluation of a brief, school-wide bystander intervention. Professional School Counseling. 21: 1-9.
32. Midgett A, Doumas DM, Trull R, Johnston A (2017) A randomized controlled study evaluating a brief, bystander bullying intervention with junior high school students. Journal of School Counseling, 15. http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v15n9.pdf
33. Midgett A, Doumas DM (2019)The impact of a brief, bullying bystander intervention on Depressive symptoms. Journal of Counseling and Development 97: 270-280.
34. Midgett A, Doumas DM, Trull R (2017) Evaluation of a brief, school-based bullying bystander intervention for elementary school students. Professional School Counseling 20: 172-183.
35. Colby M, Hecht ML, Miller-Day M, Krieger JL, Syvertsen AK (2014) Adapting school-based substance use prevention curriculum through cultural grounding: A review and exemplar of adaptation processes for rural schools. American Journal of Community Psychology 51: 190-205.
36. Botvin GJ (2004) Advancing prevention science and practice: Challenges, critical issues, and future directions. Prevention Science 5: 69-72.
37. Johnson K, Hays C, Center H, Daley C (2004) Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: A sustainability planning model. Evaluation and Program Planning 27: 135-149.
38. Barrera M, Castro F G, Steiker H (2011) A critical analysis of approaches to the development of preventive interventions for subcultural groups. American Journal of Community

Psychology 48: 439-454.
39. Castro-Olivo SM (2014) Promoting social-emotional learning in adolescent Latino ELLs: A study of the culturally adapted Strong Teens program. School Psychology Quarterly 29: 567-577.
40. Bernal G, Bonilla J, Bedillo C (1995) Ecological validity and cultural sensitivity for outcome research: Issues for the cultural adaptation and development of psychological treatments with Hispanics. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 23: 67-82.
41. Castro-Olivo SM, Merrell KW (2012) Validating cultural adaptations of a school-based social-emotional learning programme for use with Latino immigrant adolescents. Advances in School Mental Health Promotion 5: 78-92.
42. Cramer KM, Castro-Olivo S (2016) Effects of a culturally adapted social-emotional learning intervention program on students' mental health. Contemporary School Psychology 20: 118-129.
43. Creswell JW (2009) Mixed-Methods procedures. In J. W. Creswell, Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed-Methods approaches. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE 203-225.
44. Leech NL & Onwuegbuzie AJ (2010) Guidelines for conducting and reporting mixed research in the field of counseling and beyond. Journal of Counseling and Development 88: 61-69.
45. Napoles-Springer AM, Stewart AL (2006) Overview of qualitative methods in research with diverse populations. Making research reflect the population. Medical Care 44: 5-9.
46. Greenwood N, Ellmers T, Holley J (2014) The influence of ethnic group composition on focus group discussion. BMC Medical Research Methodology 14: 107.
47. Hill CE, Knox S, Thompson BJ, Williams EN, Hess SH (2005). Consensual qualitative research: An update. Journal of Counseling Psychology 52: 196-205.
48. Lincoln YS, Guba EG (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
49. Cohen J (1969) Statistical power analysis for the behavioural sciences. New York: Academic Press.
50. Holm S (1979) A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. Scandanavian Journal of Statistics 6: 65-70.
51. US Department of Education: National Center for Educational Statistics (2016) Student reports of bullying: Results from the 2015 school crime supplement to the national crime victimization survey (NCES 2017-015). https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017015.pdf
52. US Department of Education: National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) Student reports of bullying: Results from the 2017 school crime supplement to the national crime victimization survey (NCES 2017-015). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_230.45.asp
53. Hamarus P, Kaikkonen P (2008) School bullying as a creator of pupil pressure. Educational Research 50: 333-345.
54. Rogers J, Franke M, Yun JE, Ishimoto M, Diera C (2017) Teaching and learning in the age of trump: Increasing stress and hostility in America's high schools. UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access, Los Angeles CA. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED580203
55. Gandara PC, Aldana US (2014 Who's segregated now? Latinos, language, and the future of integrated schools. Educational Administration Quarterly 5: 735-748.
56. Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., Johnston, A., Trull, R., & Miller, R. (2018). Re-thinking bullying interventions for high school students: A qualitative study. Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling. 4: 146-163.
57. Troop-Gordon W, Ladd GW (2015) Teachers' victimization related beliefs and strategies: Associations with students' aggressive behavior and peer victimization. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 43: 45-60
58. Cortes KI, Kochenderfer-Ladd B (2014) to tell or not to tell: What influences children's decisions to report bullying to their teachers? School Psychology Quarterly 29: 336-348.
59. Veenstra R, Lindenberg S, Huitsing G, Sainio M, Salmivalli C (2014) The role of teachers in bullying: The relation between antibullying attitudes, efficacy, and efforts to reduce bullying. Journal of Educational Psychology 106: 1135-1143.
60. Castro-Olivo SM, Preciado J, Le L, Marciante M, Garcia M (2017) The effects of culturally adapted version of First Steps to Success for Latino English language learners: Preliminary pilot study. Psychology in Schools 55: 36-49.
61. Gaffney H, Ttofi M, Farrington D (2019) Evaluating the effectiveness of school-bullying prevention programs: An updated meta-analytical review. Aggression and Violent Behavior 45: 111-133.

Copyright: *©2020 Aida Midgett, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.*