



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

The STAC Intervention: Teaching Elementary and Middle School Students Strategies for Acting as “Defenders” in Bullying Situations

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Today's Presentation

- Overview of bullying – definition, prevalence, and negative associated consequences
- Bystander responses to bullying
- STAC school-based intervention
- Results from two randomized control trials supporting the efficacy of the STAC intervention in reducing bullying perpetration and reducing internalizing symptoms
- Implications for school mental health professionals

Definition of Bullying?

- Repeated negative, unwanted, aggressive behavior by one student or a group of students
- The student who is bullied can't stop it by himself or herself
- The bully has more power than the target
- If an incident is sufficiently traumatic – it does not need to be repeated to be considered bullying



What Isn't Bullying?

- Teasing between friends
- Someone is grumpy because they are having a bad day
- Play fighting when all students are in agreement (could be rough or inappropriate)
- Saying no to hanging out with a peer who is not a positive influence, is rude, etc.
- Getting mad at a peer of higher status who is constantly antagonistic





Bullying Prevalence Rates

About 1 in 4 students report being bullied at school and 11.5% report being targets of cyberbullying¹

About 80% of students report they witness school bullying as bystanders²

Far more students report witnessing bullying than being either a target or perpetrator, but the majority of researchers focus on outcomes for targets and perpetrators³



Negative Socio-Emotional Consequences Associated with **Witnessing** Bullying

Research shows that students who witness bullying report internalizing symptoms, including depression and anxiety⁴⁻⁷

This is the case even after researchers statistically account for students previous experiences with victimization and perpetration^{4,7}

A similar trend is emerging for students who witness cyberbullying^{8,9}

Four Bystander Roles

- ❖ “Assistants” 20%
- ❖ “Reinforcers” 20%
- ❖ “Outsiders” 40%
- ❖ “Defenders” 20%

Many students report that they do not intervene because they do not know what to do¹¹

However, when bystanders “defend”
- bullying behavior decreases¹²
- bystanders experience positive social-emotional outcomes¹³

Therefore, providing bystander interventions that help students act as “defenders” decreases bullying and may protect them against internalizing symptoms associated with witnessing bullying

Comprehensive School-Wide Programs are Considered Best Practice



Comprehensive, school-wide programs can place a high demand on schools¹⁵⁻¹⁸

- Training all key school stakeholders
 - Licensed expert
- Extensive classroom time

Training students to intervene is important,⁹ but not a focus for most bullying programs²⁰

Brief, bystander interventions that require few resources may be a promising approach

The STAC Program²¹

Brief, bystander bullying intervention

90 minute training with 2, 15-minute boosters

- Didactic component with experiential activities followed by role-plays
- Bystanders are taught four intervention strategies they can use to act as “defenders” on behalf of targets:
 - “Stealing the Show”
 - “Turning it Over”
 - “Accompanying Others”
 - “Coaching Compassion”



Definitions of Bullying

Physical Bullying⁵

Hurting someone's body or possessions



Examples Include:

- Hitting, kicking, pinching
- Spitting
- Tripping/Pushing
- Taking or breaking some things

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Verbal Bullying⁵

Saying or writing mean things



Examples Include:

- Name-calling
- Teasing
- Inappropriate comments
- Taunting
- Threatening to cause harm

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Definitions of Bullying

Relationship Bullying⁵

Hurting someone's relationships or reputation

Examples Include:

- Leaving someone out of purpose
- Telling other children or friends with someone
- Spreading rumors
- Embarrassing someone in public



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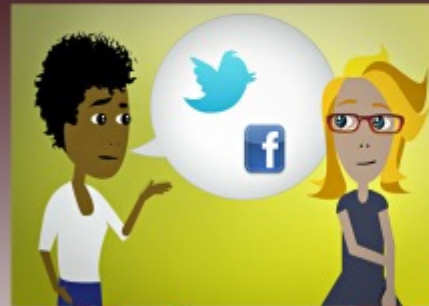
Cyberbullying⁵

(cell phones, computers, tablets, social media, texting, chat, websites, etc.)

Using electronic technology to hurt someone

Examples Include:

- Text messages or emails
- Rumors on social networking sites
- Embarrassing pictures/videos
- Fake profiles



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STAC STRATEGIES

STAC Strategies

- **Stealing the show** (using humor or distraction to get the attention off of student being bullied)
- **Turning it over** (asking for help from a trusted adult at school)
- **Accompany others** (reaching out to the student who was bullied)
- **Coaching compassion** (letting students who bully know that it is not okay to bully and helping them learn to be more caring)

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Role Plays

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.

How can you use your STAC Strategies here?



Role Plays

Bullying Type: Verbal

Stealing the Show

- You could say something like, "Did you guys see how funny I looked when I tripped in PE today?! I was laughing pretty hard at myself."

Turning it Over

- Let a hallway aid or adult at school you trust know what is going on.

Accompanying Others

- You can say to the girl, "I heard what those girls were saying and that was really rude and not cool. How are you doing?"
- Or you can just go up to the girl and hangout with her so that she knows she has someone who cares about her at school.

Coaching Compassion

- If you are friends with the group of girls or if you are in a higher grade and think they will respect you, after the fact you can say, "Hey, I just wanted to say that it's not cool to make fun of people like that. Let's just stop and leave her alone."

Pledge Against Bullying

Conclusion



- I can do something important.
- I can lead by example!
- **“The end of bullying begins with me!”**
- (sign petition)

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Intervention Outcomes

Results of multiple studies indicate students trained in the STAC intervention report:



Increased in knowledge



Increased in Confidence to intervene



Using the STAC strategies

STAC Increases Knowledge and Confidence to Intervene and Students Use STAC Strategies	Sample	Findings
Midgett, A., & Doumas, D. M. (2020). Acceptability and short-term outcomes of a brief, bystander bullying program implemented in an ethnically-blended school in low-income community. <i>Contemporary School Psychology</i> , 1-10.	Middle School, Low-Income, Rural	Students trained in the culturally adapted STAC program found the program to be acceptable, reported a significant increase in knowledge and confidence (p < .001), and reported using the program strategies.
Moran, M., Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., Porchia, S., & Moody, S. (2020). A mixed method evaluation of a culturally adapted, brief, bullying bystander intervention for middle school students. <i>Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling</i> , 5, 221-238.	Middle School, Low-Income, Rural	Quantitative data showed students gained knowledge about bullying, increased their confidence to intervene in bullying situations (p < .001), and used the STAC strategies to intervene in bullying behavior.
Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., Sears, D., Lunquist, A., & Hausheer, R. (2015). A bystander bullying psychoeducation program with middle school students: <i>A preliminary report. The Professional Counselor</i> , 5(4), 486-500.	Middle School, Urban	Students reported an increase in their ability to identify what different types of bullying look like (p < .001), knowledge of bystander intervention strategies (p < .001), and general confidence intervening post-STAC training (p < .001).
Midgett, A., & Doumas, D. M. (2016). Training elementary students to intervene as peer-advocates to stop bullying at school: A pilot study. <i>Journal of Creativity in Mental Health</i> , 11, 353-365.	Elementary School, Urban Low-Income, Rural	Students reported an increase in their ability to identify what different types of bullying look like (p < .001), knowledge of bystander intervention strategies (p < .001), and general confidence intervening as peer-advocates (p < .01).
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. <i>Professional School Counseling</i> , 21, 1-9.	Elementary School, Low-Income, Urban	Students trained in the program reported an increase in perceived knowledge and confidence to act as “defenders” (p < .001) and utilizing the STAC strategies when they observed bullying at a 4-month follow-up.
Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., & Trull, R. (2017). Evaluation of a brief, school-based bullying bystander intervention for elementary school students. <i>Professional School Counseling</i> , 20, 172-183.	Elementary School, Low-Income, Urban	Students in the intervention group reported an increase in knowledge and confidence to intervene (p < .001).

Intervention Outcomes (cont)

- Results from multiple studies indicate that students trained in the STAC intervention report reductions in:
 - bullying perpetration,
 - bullying victimization, and
 - bias-based bullying victimization



STAC Reduces Bullying	Sample	Findings
<p>Midgett, A., & Doumas, D. M. (2020). Acceptability and short-term outcomes of a brief, bystander bullying program implemented in an ethnically-blended school in low-income community. <i>Contemporary School Psychology, 1-10.</i></p>	<p>Middle School, Rural, Low-Income</p>	<p>Students trained in the culturally adapted STAC program reported a significant decrease in bullying behavior (p < .01) at a 6-week follow-up.</p>
<p>Moran, M., Midgett, A., & Doumas, D. M. (2020). Evaluation of a brief, bystander bullying intervention (STAC) for ethnically-blended middle schools in low-income communities. <i>Professional School Counseling, 23(1), 1-12.</i></p>	<p>Middle School, Rural, Low-Income</p>	<p>Students reported a significant decrease in bullying victimization (p < .01) and bias-based bullying victimization (p < .05) at the 6-week follow-up.</p>
<p>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. <i>Professional School Counseling, 21, 1-9.</i></p>	<p>Elementary School, Urban, Low-Income</p>	<p>Students trained in the program reported a decrease in bullying victimization (p < .01) and perpetration (p < .05) at a 4-month follow-up.</p>
<p>Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., Trull, R., & Johnson, J. (2017). Training students who occasionally bully to be peer advocates: Can a brief bystander intervention decrease bullying behavior? <i>Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling, 3, 1-13.</i></p>	<p>Elementary School, Urban, Low-Income</p>	<p>Students in the STAC intervention group reported a significantly lower level of bullying perpetration (p > .001) compared to students in the control group.</p>



Elementary School Study

Midgett, A., Dumas, D. M., 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.

Study Purpose:

Evaluate the impact of the STAC intervention on reducing bullying perpetration on students who occasionally bully their peers through a randomized control study

Methods

- **Participants ($N = 54$)**
 - 33.3% females and 66.7% males enrolled in 4th
 - 5th grade
 - 9-12 years old ($M = 10.12$ and $SD = .97$)
 - 62.3% White, 11.3% Hispanic, 7.5% African-American, 5.7% Asian-American, 3.8% Native American, 7.5% Mixed Race, and 1.9% Other

Methods (cont)

- **Procedures**

- Active Parental Consent
- Students were identified by the school counselor and teachers
- Inclusion:
 - history of bullying other students occasionally (i.e., less than once a week)
 - lacking impulse control
 - lacking effective social skills
- Students were randomized into the intervention or control group
- Participants completed baseline and 30-day follow-up assessments during classroom time
- Students in the intervention group completed STAC immediately after the baseline assessment and 2, 15 minute bi-weekly boosters
- Students in the control group returned to their classrooms

Methods (cont)

Measures

- **Bullying Perpetration.** *10-item* Forms of Bullying Perpetration Scale (FBS-P)¹⁴
- “I tried to hurt someone by leaving them out of a group or by not talking to them”

Statistical Analyses

- One-Way Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA) to examine differences pre and post-intervention
- The independent variable was Group (intervention; control) and the covariates were gender and baseline perpetration.

Results

- There was a significant group differences in bullying perpetration at the follow-up assessment when controlling for gender and bully perpetration at baseline, $F(1, 54) = 4.58, p < .05, h^2_p = .08$
- Medium effect size
- Students in the STAC intervention group reported significantly lower levels of bullying behavior compared to students in the control group



RESULTS

Can Training Bystanders Improve Socio-Emotional Adjustment?

Much has been done on the overall effectiveness of bullying interventions, but there is little research investigating the impact of bystander interventions on socio-emotional outcomes for students

Since most students indicate they witness bullying and that they are negatively impacted by witnessing, this is an important for school personnel and for researchers to learn more about.

STAC Improves Socio-Emotional Outcomes	Sample	Findings
Midgett, A., & Dumas, D. M. (2020). Acceptability and short-term outcomes of a brief, bystander bullying program implemented in an ethnically-blended school in low-income community. <i>Contemporary School Psychology, 24</i> , 508-517.	Middle School, Low-Income, Semi-Rural	Students trained in the STAC program reported a significant decrease in bullying behavior ($p < .01$), depressive symptoms ($p < .01$), and social anxiety ($p < .05$) at a 6-week follow-up.
Midgett, A., Dumas, D. M., Peralta, C., Bond, L., & Flay, B. (2020). Impact of a brief, bystander bullying prevention program on depressive symptoms and passive suicidal ideation: A program evaluation model for school personnel. <i>Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion, 1</i> (1), 80-103.	Middle School, Low-Income, Rural	Students trained in the STAC program reported reductions in depressive symptoms ($p = .02$) and passive suicidal ideation ($p = .01$) at a 6-week follow-up compared to an <u>increase</u> in symptoms reported by students in the control group.
Midgett, A., Dumas, D. M., Trull, R., & Johnston, A. (2017). A randomized controlled study evaluating a brief, bystander bullying intervention with junior high school students. <i>Journal of School Counseling, 15</i> (9).	Junior High School, Urban	Students trained in STAC reported a decrease in bullying victimization ($p < .01$) and perpetration ($p < .05$) at a 4-month follow-up.
Midgett, A., & Dumas, D. M. (2016). Training elementary students to intervene as peer-advocates to stop bullying at school: A pilot study. <i>Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 11</i> , 353-365.	Elementary School, Urban Low-Income, Rural	Students reported an increase in their ability to identify what different types of bullying look like ($p < .001$), knowledge of bystander intervention strategies ($p < .001$), and general confidence intervening as peer-advocates ($p < .01$).
Midgett, A., Dumas, D. M., Trull, R., & Johnson, J. (2017). Training students who occasionally bully to be peer advocates: Can a brief bystander intervention decrease bullying behavior? <i>Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling, 3</i> , 1-13.	Elementary School, Low-Income, Urban	Students trained in STAC reported a decrease in anxiety ($p = .06$) relative to the control group.
Midgett, A., Dumas, D. M., & Trull, R. (2017). Evaluation of a brief, school-based bullying bystander intervention for elementary school students. <i>Professional School Counseling, 20</i> , 172-183.	Elementary School, Low-Income	Sixth grade students in the intervention group reported an increase in self-esteem ($p < .05$) relative to the control group.



Middle School Study

Midgett, A., Doumas, D. M., Peralta, C., Bond, L., & Flay, B. (2020). Impact of a brief, bystander bullying prevention program on depressive symptoms and passive suicidal ideation: A program evaluation model for school personnel. *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*, 1(1), 80-103.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2632077020942959>

Study Purpose

Evaluate the impact of the STAC intervention on reducing depressive symptoms and passive suicidal ideation among middle school students in a rural, low-income community using a randomized controlled design



Middle School Study – Methods

Participants ($N = 130$)

- 57.4% females and 42.6% males enrolled in 6th – 8th grade
- 11-14 years old ($M = 12.50$ and $SD = 1.00$)
- 59.2% White, 36.9% Hispanic, Pacific Islander 1.5%, African-American .8%, Asian-American .8%, and Other .8%,

Procedures

- Active Parental Consent
- Students were randomized into the intervention ($n = 69$) or control ($n = 61$) group
- Participants completed baseline and 6-week follow-up assessments completed during classroom time
- Students in the intervention group completed the STAC intervention immediately after completing the baseline assessment
- Students in the control group returned to their classrooms

Methods

Measures

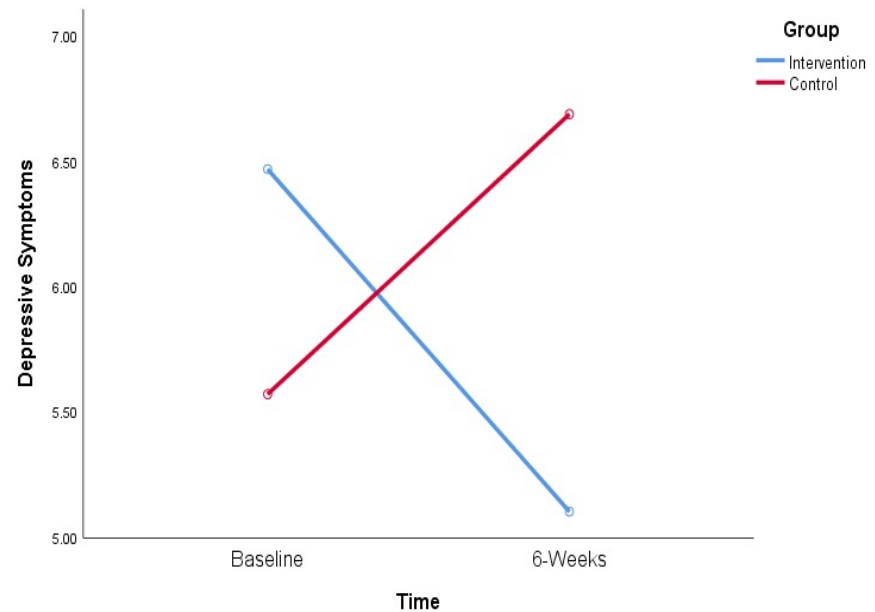
- **Depressive Symptoms.** *12-item* Depression Scale of the Behavioral Assessment Scale-3 Self Report of Personality-Adolescent Form (BASC-3 SRP-A)²²
- **Passive Suicidal Ideation.** One item of the Depression Scale of the BASC-3 SRP-A²² – “I feel life isn’t worth living”

Statistical Analyses

- General linear model (GLM) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the intervention effects across time
- The two fixed effects were Time (baseline; 6-week follow-up) and Group (intervention; control)

Results

- Depressive Symptoms
 - Results revealed a significant interaction effect for Time x Group, Wilks' Lambda = .95, $F(1, 110) = 6.05, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .02$, indicating a reduction in symptoms among intervention group students relative to control students.
 - Post hoc analyses revealed a significant difference from baseline to 6-weeks for the intervention group, $t(59) = 2.16, p < .04$, but not for the control group, $t(50) = -1.36, p = .18$

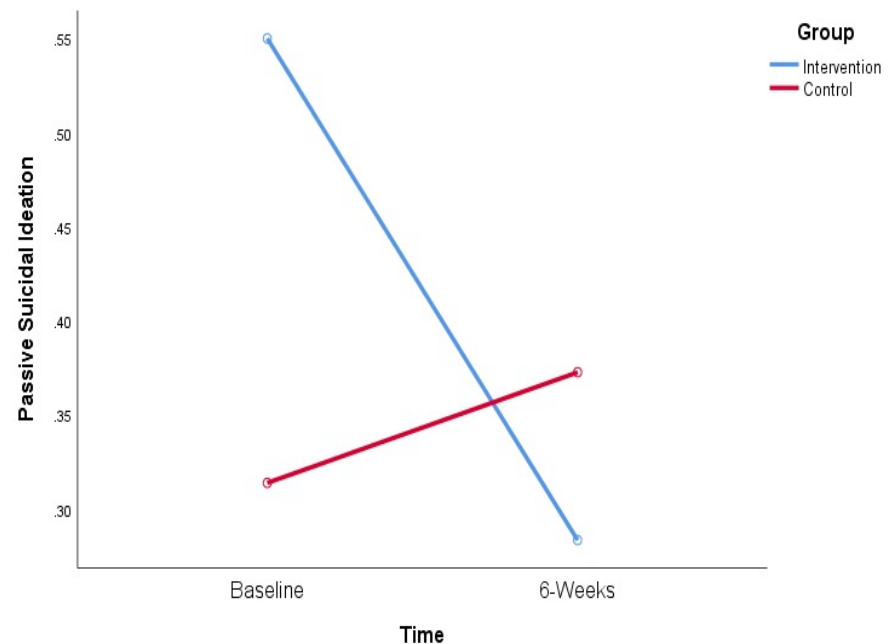


Note. There is no significant difference between baseline scores for the intervention and control group

Results (cont)

- Passive Suicide Ideation

- Significant interaction effect for Time x Group, Wilks' Lambda = .95, $F(1, 110) = 5.62$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .02$, indicating a reduction in symptoms among intervention group students relative to control students.
- Post hoc analyses revealed a significant difference from baseline to 6-weeks for the intervention group, $t(59) = 2.52$, $p < .02$, but not for the control group, $t(50) = -0.77$, $p = .44$



Note. There is no significant difference between baseline scores for the intervention and control group



Implications for School Personnel

School personnel can utilize a brief bystander intervention to reduce school bullying and improve socio-emotional outcomes for students

We have found that when students are trained in STAC, they not only learn the content but they use the strategies between 90-100% of the time, when they witness bullying

Providing students who occasionally bully with intervention strategies, can instill in them a belief that, instead of bullying, they can act in a prosocial manner and make a positive impact on the school's culture



Implications (cont)

Although school personnel may be aware of the negative impact of bullying on targets and perpetrators, they may not know about consequences for bystanders

Because the majority of students report witnessing bullying, implementing STAC as a school-wide prevention program may be a useful approach to engage all students as part of the solution

STAC can be implemented in the classroom setting conducted by the school counselor through 3, 30 minute lessons plus boosters

Boosters can inform school personnel- from a student perspective- about the most common types of bullying students experience while empowering students to act as “defenders”



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