



# Teaching Culture: Integrating Culture Training with the Second Step Anti-Bullying Program

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## Abstract

Recently the problem of bullying has been at the forefront of discussions in schools and social media. It is a critical issue that must be addressed early in childhood. While many bullying prevention programs have been implemented in schools, there is limited empirical support for these programs. Further, cultural training has not been utilized as a mechanism to decrease bullying behaviors. This research focuses on integrating cultural training with Second Step, an established bullying prevention program, in an urban public elementary school. Researchers will measure the effectiveness of Second Step and whether or not cultural training contributed to the program's effectiveness.

## Introduction

For decades schools have implemented prevention programs in the attempt to reduce juvenile crime, substance abuse, conduct disorder, teenage pregnancy and a variety of other issues that have plagued adolescents as they develop (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002). While prevention programs are prevalent across the country, research on these programs has only recently become popular. Albee (2000) in an evaluation of prevention research argued that remedial intervention programs that intervene after the negative behaviors have already occurred may be an ineffective way to address these issues. The most effective way to reduce these unwanted behaviors in youth and young adults is to create nurturing environments that promote prosocial behavior early on (Biglan, Flay, Embry, & Sandler, 2012).

One area of prevention research that has become increasingly important in recent years is that of bullying. With a variety of horrific stories that highlight the negative consequences of school bullying, understanding the most effective bully prevention method has become a critical issue in counseling psychology. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is repeated and involves an imbalance of power (Smith & Brian, 2000). This aggression can be physical (e.g. hitting, pushing), verbal, or indirect (e.g. gossiping, deliberate exclusion) (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefoghge, 2002).

Researchers have begun to evaluate the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs. Second Step, a classroom-based program, has been found to decrease problem behaviors through prosocial training and self-regulation (Committee for Children, 2012). The 22 lessons include development of problem-solving skills, empathy and emotion management.

While Second Step has been found to decrease bullying behavior there is still room for improvement (Espelage & Poteat, 2012). A specific area of bullying that needs attention is culturally-based bullying. Culturally-based bullying is any discrimination against another person based on their race, gender, ethnicity, and culture (Polanin & Vera, 2013). Bully prevention programs rarely address cultural awareness despite research that has found multicultural awareness reduces prejudice in children.

The present research utilized methods of cultural awareness training to create a bullying prevention curriculum to be paired with Second Step. It is hypothesized that an increase in cultural awareness will contribute to a decrease in prejudice, bully perpetration and bully victimization in elementary schools.

## Methods

**Participants.** The sample consists of 54 fifth grade students at an urban public school. All participants are either 10 or 11 years old and gave assent to participate in the study. The majority (61.9%) of participants are white with an equal representation of males and females.

**Instruments.** A variety of scale measures and questionnaires were used to measure the student's experiences of bullying, victimization, physical aggression, social skills, sense of school belonging, subjective well-being, and cultural awareness.

**Procedure.** Before data collection began, researchers obtained official approval from Loyola University Chicago's IRB and administrators at the public school. Parental consent forms were collected from parents of all students involved along with student assent forms.

Students were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: the treatment group or the delayed-treatment control group. The treatment group (*Second Step Plus*) provides the fifth-grade Second Step curriculum to students along with a cultural awareness training curriculum. The delayed-treatment control participants take part in a creative writing unit where they read and write, receiving structured feedback from teachers and classmates. In order to provide the prevention program to all students, participants assigned to the control group will receive the Second Step programming after the first round of implementation. The program will last for 16 weeks with a total of 31 sessions (22 Second Step sessions and 9 cultural awareness sessions).

The first student observations took place in February 2013. At the time of this poster submission students have completed the Second Step training and are currently receiving the cultural training. Mid program assessments have already been made (observation two) along with program completion data collections (observation three). Another observation will take place after the implementation of the cultural training. A final data collection (observation six) will take place after six weeks and will only be administered to the treatment group.

At the time of this poster submission preliminary data analyses on the pre-assessment and the midway observation of Second Step have been conducted. Univariate ANCOVA models were used to compare the group means for the treatment and delayed-treatment control group. The analysis looks for differences in bully perpetration, bully victimization, physical aggression, school belonging, empathy, engagement, and self-control between the two student groups while controlling for initial differences found in the first assessment.

## Sample Lessons:

Lesson 1: *What is Culture?*  
Objective: Define Culture

- ◆ Ask students to define culture.
  - ◆ Add what is missing from the list.
- ◆ Make sure to address the many sides of culture (this will help ensure kids who may not be from other countries feel included).

Lesson 4: *Culture in Literature*  
Objective: Explain that everyone is unique but we are also connected by similarities.

- ◆ Read different Cinderella stories:
  - ◆ Compare and contrast stories
- ◆ Learn a few words in other languages.
- ◆ Write their own Cinderella story.

## Results

Only one significant main effect has been found as of the second observation period. The univariate ANCOVA model found that self-reported self-control increased for students who had received some Second Step training compared to the control students ( $F(1, 52) = 5.01, p < .05$ ; see Table 1). A considerable increase in physical aggression was found in the control group relative to the treatment group but this finding was not significant.

Table 1: Intervention Outcome Analysis

Outcome	Intervention		Control		F-value
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
Bully Perpetration	.15	.15	.22	.24	.17
Bully Victimization	.95	.92	1.19	1.0	.00
Physical Aggression	.08	.19	.29	.41	1.1
School Belonging	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	.33
Empathy	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.6	.21
Engagement	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	.01
Self-Control	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.1	5.01*

Notes: N: Intervention = 26, Control = 28; \*  $p < .05$ .

## Conclusions

Based on the results of the univariate ANCOVA it is clear that more research into the effectiveness of the Second Step program is needed. At the time of this poster submission the Second Step program implementation has just ended and the third data collection has taken place. It is anticipated that analysis of this data will find more main effects of the Second Step program.

The main limitation of the present study is time. Researchers prepared materials and received IRB approval in the fall of 2012 but spent the fall looking for a school to implement the study. Due to this delay we were unable to collect the majority of data needed to evaluate the effectiveness of both prevention programs in time for this presentation. However, a school was found in time to implement all 16 weeks of the program before the end of the school year.

Future research will exam the overall effectiveness of the treatment program. After implementation of the cultural training, data will be collected and analyzed to measure the overall effect of Second Step and the cultural training on the fifth grade students' bully perpetration, bully victimization, physical aggression, school belonging, empathy, engagement, and self-control.

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