Parents and Teachers’ Perspectives on School Bullying Among Elementary School-Aged Asian and Latino Immigrant Children

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Concerted efforts have been made to understand school bullying in the last decade; however, few studies have focused on Asian and Latino students. Recent research has proposed a social-ecological framework to study the influence of broader contexts—such as familial, school, and acculturation—on children’s bullying involvement (e.g., Hong & Espelage, 2012). The aim of this study was to qualitatively examine the perspectives of teachers and parents of elementary school-aged Asian and Latino immigrant children on school bullying. Five focus groups with a total of 23 participants (Asian parents = 9; Latino/a parents = 6; teachers = 8) were conducted at an elementary school in Southern California. Data were analyzed using the grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Four themes emerged from the data: (a) parents’ and teachers’ beliefs of what constitute school bullying and its contributing factors, (b) the pervasiveness and impact of school bullying, (c) parenting challenges in the acculturative context, and (d) parents and teachers’ utilization of intervention strategies. Although the findings suggest that parents and teachers possess a rather nuanced understanding of bullying and its detrimental impact, they also underscore the challenges faced by low-income immigrant families and the teachers in fostering home-school collaboration. Commonalities and differences in the experiences between Asian and Latino groups are highlighted, and suggestions for working with teachers and immigrant parents to prevent school bullying are discussed. Drawing from the study themes, a theoretical model that highlights the interrelationships of the themes is proposed for future research investigation.

Keywords: Asian and Latino immigrants, school bullying, parents, teachers, qualitative research

Bullying and peer victimization remain a pervasive problem in the U.S. school system. Drawing from the scholarship of bullying researcher, Olweus (1978), the U.S. Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention collaborated to develop a uniform research definition of bullying. In short, bullying is defined as an intentional act to inflict harm by the (typically more powerful) perpetrator(s) repeatedly on the victim over time (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). To distinguish bullying from other forms of aggressive behavior and interpersonal violence, researchers clarified that bullying is not relationship violence or aggressive behavior exhibited in familial, sibling, or romantic contexts (Gladden et al., 2014; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). A large-scale, nationally representative study found that close to 30% of students are involved in bullying—either as bullies, victims or both (Nansel et al., 2001). More recent statistics revealed that up to 33% of students reported having been bullied in middle or high school (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). Bullying involvement—as a perpetrator, a victim, or both—has been associated with negative academic, social, and mental health consequences (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Copeland et al., 2014; Kim, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2011; Rigby, 2003). Concerted efforts have been made in the last two decades to understand and to intervene with school bullying; however, the majority of U.S.-based studies and interventions have focused on White students (Hong, 2009). Findings from these studies may not generalize to ethnic minority children or children of immigrants because of different contexts and cultural experiences.

School Bullying Among Asian and Latino Immigrant Students

Asian and Latino are the two largest and fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States, currently constituting 5.4% and 17% of the total population respectively (United States Census
Bureau, 2015). The number of immigrant children entering the U.S. education system has increased drastically; nearly 30% of all students in public schools are foreign-born or have foreign-born parents (United States Census Bureau, 2013). It is projected that by 2024, there will be over 3 million Asian students and 15 million Latino students enrolled in the U.S. public school system, representing more than half of the school-age population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Despite the substantial growth of Asian and Latino students in the school system, little research has focused on the school bullying experiences of these two groups (for an exception, see Hong et al., 2014). When looking at the overall (nonlocation-specific) experience of bullying, studies suggested that Asian and Latino students had lower or comparable rates of peer victimization when compared to White students (Peguero & Williams, 2013; Robers et al., 2013; the U.S. Department of Education, 2011). However, some statistics indicated that as many as 54% of Asian and 34% of Latino students reported being bullied in a classroom setting compared to 31% of White students (the U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Moreover, both Asian and Latino students frequently reported experiencing verbal harassment, derogatory treatment, social exclusion, or name-calling due to their race or ethnicity (Koo, Peguero, & Shekarkhar, 2012; Sawyer, Bradshaw, & O’Brennan, 2008). Asian immigrant students are at higher risk for school bullying compared to White students and Asian nonimmigrant students (Koo et al., 2012). A survey conducted by the first author with third through sixth grade students in an elementary school in Southern California (where this qualitative study was conducted) with predominantly Asian and Latino student populations revealed that between 3.6% and 15.7% students had engaged in some type of bullying (e.g., hitting another student, spreading rumors), and between 18.3% and 37.4% students had been victimized (e.g., social exclusion, name calling; Shea, 2011). These findings underscore the significant prevalence of bullying and victimization among Asian and Latino students and the need for more research in these two groups.

Theoretical Framework for Examining Asian and Latino Students’ Bullying Involvement

Recent studies on school bullying have gradually moved toward developing a contextualized understanding of the issue (Barboza et al., 2009; Peguero, 2012) rather than focusing on intrapersonal (e.g., students’ self-esteem, psychosocial problems) or individual school characteristics (e.g., school climate). Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) seminal work on a social-ecological theory of human development has been proposed as a useful model for understanding and examining the influence of broader contexts on Asian and Latino immigrant children and youth’s school experience, including their bullying involvement (e.g., Hong & Espelage, 2012; Hong et al., 2014). The premise of Bronfenbrenner’s theory is that heredity alone does not account for human behaviors; it is the reciprocal interactions between a person and his or her environment that shape an individuals’ development. According to Bronfenbrenner, environment refers to the multilayered, nested social contexts surrounding the child, ranging from microlevel to macrolevel. The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with his or her immediate surroundings such as family and school. The mesosystem refers to the interrelationships between the two or more microsystems containing the child (e.g., home–school communication). The exosystem comprises the interrelationships between two or more systems in which the child does not directly participate (e.g., economic recession and parents’ unemployment). The macrosystem is the outermost layer of a child’s environment that constitutes sociopolitical ideologies, laws, customs, and cultural beliefs, and finally, the chronosystem includes environmental events and transitions that occur throughout a child’s life such as illnesses, parents’ divorces, and political upheavals.

More recently, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) expanded the original theory to include a focus on proximal processes, emphasizing that human development results from continuous interactions between an individual and his or her environment over an extended period of time; the resulting model is known as the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model. In PPCT, proximal processes encompass enduring patterns of interactions within the microsystem and the mesosystem over time such as parent–child communications, child–child interactions, student–teacher interactions, and children’s interaction with and learning at school. Person refers to an individual’s qualities and their demand characteristics (e.g., temper tantrums) that elicit reactions from the environment, which could enhance or disrupt the proximal processes. The last property—time or timing—explains how person–environment interactions such as parenting behaviors or cultural values vary as a function of the passage of time from microtime (day-to-day interactions) to macrotime (within and across generations).

The PPCT model could be applied to examine and understand Asian and Latino immigrant children’s propensity for bullying and peer victimization. To illustrate, immigrant children and adolescents may be stigmatized and targeted for bullying due to their accent, physical size, cultural practices such as food and clothing (Derose, Escarce, & Lurie, 2007; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). The students’ communications with their parents and teachers following the bullying incident, and their parents and teachers’ responses to the incident (proximal processes on the micro- and mesosystem levels) could either exacerbate or alleviate the negative consequences associated with bullying. For instance, research has consistently demonstrated that parents and teachers play a vital role in children’s bullying involvement—as a perpetrator, a victim, or both. Parenting style that utilizes and models power-assertiveness to manage children’s behavior has been associated with bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2000), whereas permissive or overprotective parenting, and low parental engagement in school have been associated with victimization (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Gutierrez, Shea, Shi, Gonzalez, & Villanueva, 2015). On the other hand, responsive and consistent parenting behavior and parental involvement have been associated with higher academic achievement and better psychosocial adjustment (Carlson, Uppal, & Prosser, 2000), and decreased depressive symptoms among those who have been victimized (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009). Teachers and administrators play an equally important role in the management and intervention of bullying within schools (Espelage & Swearer, 2010). Research has suggested that teachers’ efforts in bullying prevention and intervention are most effective when they closely supervise students in various settings (e.g., classroom, playground) and respond to a bullying episode promptly and decidedly (Olweus, 1993). On the
contrary, failure to act or inconsistent approaches may lead to more difficulties for victims (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007).

Although immigrant children do not have a direct role in the exosystem, their parents and teachers’ worldviews, work and life experiences could foster and interfere with the development of proximal processes. Many immigrant families, when they first arrive in the United States, choose to settle in urban neighborhoods and enroll their children in public schools that are affected by poverty, limited resources, and high rates of gang and criminal activities (Desmond & Kubrin, 2009). Immigrant parents may feel deterred to get involved in their children’s education due to their language barriers, unfamiliarity with the U.S. educational systems, feeling unwelcome or disrespected by school officials, fear of deportation, or logistical difficulties such as getting transportation (Behnke, Taylor, & Parra-Cardona, 2008; Carreón, Drake, & Bar- ton, 2005; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). Similarly, some teachers and administrators in urban neighborhood may feel burdened by immigrant students and their parents’ limited capabilities, or feel unprepared to address immigrant families’ unique concerns (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). These challenges may curtail immigrant parents’ level of engagement and their ability to help their children cope with bullying situations, negatively impact teacher–student relationships, and intensify immigrant students’ experience of loneliness and marginalization; all of which might increase immigrant students’ risk for adjustment problems including aggressive behaviors and being victimized.

Finally, on the macrosystem level, the negative public discourse on immigration and its perceived effect on competition for resources, unemployment, and increasing crime rate may spread fear, perpetuate prejudice, and subject immigrant children to ridicule, discrimination, and victimization (Liang, Grossman, & Deguchi, 2007; Peguero, 2009). Further, immigration and acculturation over time (chronosystem) may lead to changes in family dynamics and structure, disrupt immediate and extended social support networks, contribute to language and cultural gaps between parents and children, and expose immigrant families to racism and varied forms of discrimination (Yeh, Kim, Pituc, & Atkins, 2008).

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine all of the process, person, context, and time factors that contribute to school bullying among Asian and Latino immigrant students. Thus, our study focused on parent and teacher-related factors because of the enduring and primary impact of the proximal processes in these two Microsystems on children’s early development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, during our interviews and data analysis, we actively listened for factors embedded in other ecological systems, processes, and times (e.g., inherited cultural values) that enhance or disrupt the parent–child, parent–teacher, and child–teacher interactions. Given the limited empirical data on Latino and Asian immigrant children’s experience with bullying and their parents’ perceptions, we did not form any a priori hypotheses about the similarities and differences of bullying experience and behavioral patterns of Asian and Latino immigrant children, their parents and teachers. We do highlight and discuss the similarities and differences that arose from the data. Finally, based on our findings, we propose a theoretical model that highlights the inter-relationships of the themes for future research investigation.

Study Purpose and Qualitative Inquiry

A limited number of empirical studies to date have examined the role of parents and teachers in Asian and Latino immigrant children’s bullying involvement, leaving a disquieting gap of knowledge. The purpose of the current study was to gain an understanding of parents and teachers’ perspectives of and their personal experiences with school bullying among Asian and Latino elementary school-aged students. We chose to focus on elementary school-aged students for several reasons: (a) this is an age group that is most likely to spend time with and be influenced by parents and teachers, (b) much of the bullying research has examined older children and adolescents (e.g., Radliff, Wang, & Swearengin, 2015; Swearengin, Siebecker, Johnsen-Frerichs, & Wang, 2010; Wang, Swearengin, Lembeck, Collins, & Berry, 2015), and (c) bullying at a young age could lead to more violent behavior later (Saufler & Gagne, 2000). Findings from this study could potentially inform early prevention and intervention efforts.

Our study was guided by a qualitative inquiry approach using focus group interviews of parents and teachers. Qualitative methods have been shown to be particularly useful for describing complex sociocultural phenomena, privileging the viewpoints and opinions of an underrepresented group, uncovering new knowledge and generating future research questions (Bernal & Scharron-del-Río, 2001; Morgan, 1998). Moreover, focus groups can provide a safe place to bring forward the voices of the underserved, to accentuate and validate their collective experiences (Shea et al., 2012). Although the intent was not to compare Asian and Latino students in this study, we were mindful that potential differences in parent–teacher or parent–child interactions between the two groups might arise due to their specific cultural values and beliefs.

Method

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board and the relevant school district to recruit participants from an elementary school in Southern California. It is important to note the characteristics of this specific school, and hence the context of our research. The school serves nearly 600 kindergarten through sixth-grade students with predominantly Asian (48.7%) and Latino (49.1%) students; over 90% of the students were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, and about 60% were identified as English language learners. To protect the anonymity of the school and participants herein, the school accountability report where these statistics were drawn is not referenced in this paper.

Recruitment

We were primarily interested in the experiences of parents and teachers whose children or students have been involved in bullying—either as a perpetrator, victim or bystander—to understand their perspectives and responses to these bullying episodes; hence, this inclusion criterion was specified on all flyers. In addition, on the parent focus group flyers, we specified that parents should self-identify as Asian or Latino/Hispanic immigrants. We excluded parents and teachers of kindergarteners due to their potentially limited exposure to school bullying. All flyers for teachers were written in English, but flyers for parents were made available in Chinese, English, and Spanish.
Multiple recruitment strategies were used for the parent focus groups. First, all students were asked to give their parents flyers written in English and in their parents’ native language (e.g., Chinese or Spanish; classroom teachers helped identify parents’ ethnicity and primary language). Interested parents were asked to return a form indicating their preferred language and availability for focus group participation. Second, flyers were posted near the receptionist area in the main office and the bulletin board near the front entrance. However, the first two strategies resulted in only two responses. Third, the first author went to two separate parent–teacher association meetings to distribute flyers and make an announcement about the focus groups. In each meeting, there were about 15–20 parents. When the parents were asked if they had received the flyers from their children, many said their children either had forgotten to give them the flyers, or reported that they wanted to talk to the first author before they made a decision to participate in the focus group. Several parents expressed interest at the parent–teacher association meetings, but nobody committed to participating in the focus group. Fourth, at the suggestion of our community partner and the Principal of the school, the first author and her research assistants conducted several bullying prevention workshops in the school for the parents. The workshops were conducted in Mandarin, Cantonese, or Spanish. Interpreters of other dialects (e.g., Vietnamese) were available at some of the Chinese-speaking workshops. Workshops were scheduled at varied times (e.g., early morning, after school, evening) to accommodate parents’ schedules. At the end of each workshop, the first author provided details of the focus group (e.g., study purpose, compensation, time involvement) and had a sign-in sheet ready for interested participants. Close to 50 parents came to the workshops, and close to 20 parents expressed interest to participate in the focus group and provided their contact information. This fourth method of recruitment resulted in the remaining 13 participants for the parent focus groups.

Recruitment for teachers took place around the same time. Flyers were left in the mailbox of first through sixth-grade teachers. We also approached teachers at a faculty teacher meeting to provide them with more details of the study and to answer their questions. Ten of the 16 full-time teachers agreed to participate in the focus groups had children ranging from first to sixth grades at the time of the interview. Similarly, teachers who participated in the focus groups had children ranging from first to sixth grades at the time of the interview. Similarly, teachers who participated in the focus group came from first through sixth-grade classrooms. Detailed demographic characteristics of parents and teachers are summarized in Table 1. Participants received a $20 gift card as a token of appreciation.

We conducted parent and teacher focus groups separately because of participants’ language capabilities and the need to create a safe environment for them to share their respective experience. Based on parents’ schedule and language preferences, we conducted one parent focus group in English, one in Spanish, and two in Chinese Mandarin. An English-speaking focus group was conducted with teachers. Due to time constraints imposed by the project and funding deadline, the five focus groups were conducted over the span of 3 weeks. Although some of our groups were smaller than the typical focus groups (six to 12 participants), prior research has endorsed the use of “mini-focus groups” with three or four participants with specialized personal knowledge and experience to engage in discussion (Morgan, 1997; Krueger, 2009). The total sample size of 23 is comparable to the number reported in other focus group studies (Krueger, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).

Procedure

The semistructured focus groups were 90 min long, and began with an introduction of the study purpose and the interview process. The facilitator elicited group discussion by first asking open-ended questions such as, “How do you understand/define school bullying?” Based on the participants’ initial responses, the facilitator probed for more specific details such as, “How do you respond to the situation when your child (student) is involved in bullying as a perpetrator/victim/bystander?” The list of focus group questions is available upon request.

We adhered to the established guidelines outlined for published qualitative studies (e.g., Krueger & Casey, 2000; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) for conducting focus group interviews, data transcription, and translation. The first author and three master-level students (all of them are bilingual in either Chinese or Spanish) moderated all discussions, while three bilingual note-takers took detailed notes about the content and context (e.g., nonverbal behaviors) of the group discussions. The facilitators and note-takers received training from the first author in conducting focus groups and taking verbatim notes to ensure consistency in interviewing approach and reducing biases. Facilitators were instructed to give all focus group participants sufficient time to respond to the questions and to build upon other members’ responses so as to not privilege the voices of certain members over the others. Facilitators asked all the questions and encouraged all focus group participants, including the reticent ones, to express their opinions. All of the interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed. The first author and three master-level students (all of them are bilingual in either Chinese or Spanish) transcribed the audio recordings. The transcripts were analyzed by the first author and her research assistants until consensus was reached.

Grounded theory (GT) was chosen as our analytic approach. GT approach does not test predetermined models or hypotheses; rather it focuses on gaining insights into participants’ subjective experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) by creating a themetic schema or a coherent “story” to highlight the interactions and actions shaped by

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1 Although some of the teachers have had informal discussions with their students about bullying-related issues, there had not been any formal bullying training provided for the teachers or parents in the school at the time of data collection.
participants’ narratives. One of the advantages of the GT approach is to generate future research questions and hypotheses based on the thematic schema or model (Shea et al., 2012). The process of data analysis is characterized by constant comparison both within the individual transcript, and across several transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Two bilingual raters—who did not facilitate the focus groups—analyzed all the transcripts. The first author served as the independent auditor and reviewed all the transcripts, themes, and categories. During open coding, the two raters read each transcript several times and then broke the data down into the smallest unit of meaning labeled as “concepts.” Examples include “difficulty learning English and communicating with my child” “helping the bully to see the impact of his/her action on others” and “school refusal behavior.” These concepts were then grouped together to give rise to coherent categories and themes, such as “parental involvement in children’s school life” “negative outcomes of bullying” during the axial coding stage. Newly coded concepts were constantly compared to existing ones, thus expanding the list of categories. Finally, in selective coding, the raters integrated all the themes based on their structural interrelationships (e.g., how themes might be linked to one another in the context of participants’ narratives) and developed a core theory to capture the most salient aspects of the data (Fassinger, 2005). In this study, we used a modified version of the GT approach. We did not develop an initial set of themes or categories based on the first round of interviews to guide our next step in sampling participants or in constructing new interview questions; instead, we sampled all of our participants prior to the focus group meetings due to the restricted timeframe. We acknowledged that the use of structured interviews, the lack of theoretical sampling, and the detailed coding to bring specificity to data land our study closer to the post-positivist rather than the constructivist conceptualization of the GT methodology (Fassinger, 2005). But the more structured format helped facilitate the flow of conversation and reduce anxiety among participants who were not familiar with focus group interviews. We followed the GT framework for data analysis and used constant comparison to review codes both within and across transcripts to add or modify core categories.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Researchers who have engaged the GT method suggested the following strategies to increase the credibility and authenticity of researchers’ interpretations, and to ensure the “story” is grounded in the data (Yeh et al., 2008). These strategies include prolonged engagement, data triangulation, member checking, and researcher reflexivity.

Prolonged engagement. The research team consisted of the first author (the principal investigator) and a group of undergraduate and master-level students majoring in psychology or counseling (eight females, two males; six Asian American students, three Latino/a students, one African American). The first author of this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Chinese-speaking parents, Group 1</th>
<th>Chinese-speaking parents, Group 2</th>
<th>Spanish-speaking parents</th>
<th>English-speaking parents</th>
<th>English-speaking teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation status</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Second</td>
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<td>Not assessed</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
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<td>41.0 (SD = 11.0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9 (Chinese = 6; Vietnamese Chinese\textsuperscript{a} = 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>6 (Mexican = 4, Belizean\textsuperscript{b} = 1, Venezuelan = 1)</td>
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<td>$29k to $37k</td>
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<td>$37k or more</td>
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\textsuperscript{a} These parents self-identified as ethnically Chinese, but culturally Vietnamese as they grew up and were educated in Vietnam. They speak fluent Vietnamese and Chinese. \textsuperscript{b} Although this parent identified as Latin Belizean, it should be noted that there is a large group of African descent Belizeans with a Latino cultural heritage (e.g., Spanish speaking).
study has been involved in research projects that focus on low-income Asian and Latino immigrant communities for over 10 years. Prior to conducting the focus groups, the first author had spent close to one year visiting the school and building relationships with school members, attending parent–teacher conferences, and talking with teachers and administrators. Research assistants from the research team had been involved in multiple volunteer activities at the school and had interacted with parents, teachers, and students. Our presence and visibility in the school helped establish trust and respect within the school community.

Data triangulation. Researchers have recommended using multiple informants to account for the authenticity of the data. We intentionally included both parents and teachers’ viewpoints to build a contextualized, ecological understanding of immigrant children’s experience with school bullying. Narratives from parent and teacher focus groups were repeatedly compared to verify our interpretations and to increase the credibility of our findings. For instance, immigrant parents discussed parenting and cultural adjustment challenges; teachers also brought up similar concepts.

Member checking and researcher reflexivity. To ensure a culture of accountability and collaboration, the first author’s research team maintained a careful trail of research activities and processes, and met weekly to address any questions, concerns, and potential biases in the interview or data analysis process. All transcripts and translation were carefully checked against the original audiotapes. The first author also conducted an independent review of the concepts, categories, and themes that arose from the data.

After the analyses, focus group participants were invited to read the list of themes and categories to verify researchers’ understanding and interpretation as a stability check (Swagler & Ellis, 2003). One parent, Gin, and one teacher, Zoe, responded to our invitation and provided written feedback. Both of them agreed with the general interpretation of the data; and interestingly, they independently highlighted the critical role parents and teachers play in modeling appropriate behavior and the dire need for developing strategies to help immigrant parents parent their children. Their additional feedback were further discussed in research team meetings and incorporated into the final version. Additionally, the two raters kept notes of their thoughts and reactions while coding and analyzing the data. This process of self-reflection is important for reducing biases and assumptions in their interpretations of the data (Patton, 2002).

Results

Four themes reflect the story of how parents and teachers of Asian and Latino immigrant children understand and respond to bullying incidents, and the challenges they face in home–school collaboration: (a) parents’ and teachers’ beliefs of what constitute school bullying and its contributing factors, (b) the pervasiveness and impact of school bullying, (c) parenting challenges in the acculturative context, and (d) parents and teachers’ utilization of intervention strategies. Although both parents and teachers are aware and knowledgeable of the severity and the detrimental outcomes of school bullying and are willing to work together to help the children, they are confronted by communication difficulties, value discrepancies, and limited resources.

Theme 1: Parents’ and Teachers’ Beliefs of What Constitute School Bullying and Its Contributing Factors

While a small number of parents mislabeled mutual fighting (e.g., “He kicked him back... they started shoving each other.”) as bullying, the majority of the parents and all of the teachers demonstrated rather nuanced knowledge and awareness of different forms of bullying and their negative consequences. Parents and teachers noted the power dynamic between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s), the use of social exclusion or verbal threats as a covert form of bullying, and the age and sex variations in bullying patterns. For example, teacher Kira said,

Some kids are more overbearing than others, that’s normal. But they take it a step too far. Let’s say we were doing a science experiment, we are pouring liquid into a cup. The stronger kids voice their opinions and make their positions known; they do not allow certain kids to participate. You know, they have a more powerful presence... so instead of being a leader, they have become bullies.

Jessica, a Latina mother stated, “Bullying is not just physical. The girl forced Violet to help her with homework, or she would tell the other kids not to be her friend.”

Parents and teachers tended to agree that bullying involvement is influenced by factors beyond the disposition of the child; family and school context could either contribute to or discourage bullying involvement. Specifically, parents and teachers discussed the roles of parenting styles, parental involvement, and teacher involvement as outlined in the following.

Parenting styles and social modeling. Both teachers and parents shared that young children learn and imitate their parents and siblings’ behavior at home, and begin to interact with their peers in a similar way. Lily, a Latina parent said, “I have to watch what I say because when I go cursing, they go cursing.” Teacher Mary said, “The bullies are being bullied by their older siblings and sometimes by their parents at home. That’s their [learning] experience. So they find whom they can do it back to in school.” While parents who condone violence and bullying may model aggressive behavior, parents or teachers who take a permissive stance could also perpetuate the problem. Teacher Esther stated, “You will hear some parents say ‘boys are boys’ meaning they would not do much about the situation—whether their kids are bullies or victims.” Teacher Patty added, “Sometimes I feel that the parents make excuses for their kids; they brush the issue under the rug. They said they will talk to their kids, but there are no consequences or follow-through.”

Parents and teachers also brought up the indirect effect of marital and neighborhood tensions on bullying involvement. Children who witnessed family violence tend to displace their anger and frustration onto their classmates—a seemingly safer target. Teacher Mary said,

2 Pseudonyms were used for all parent and teacher participants and for children whose names were mentioned during the interviews.
A lot of our students live in this apartment right here (location not specified), and their families know each other. There were a lot of problems and conflicts among the adults, and the feelings got carried over to the kids. Then the kids bring these unresolved issues and feelings to the school.

**Parental involvement.** Parents’ general attitudes toward children’s development seemed to affect their level of engagement in their child’s school life and their specific responses toward bullying episodes. For example, Rosalie, a Latina mother shared, “I am trying to get more involved in school, to know what is going on. My second grader gets so excited that I am always there.” Alberto, a Latino father stated, “I think a good anti-bullying program should not only be for the students, but also involve the parents, because the problem concerns us [adults].” On the other hand, several teachers in the focus groups expressed frustration toward the lack of parental involvement and the difficulty in collaborating with parents. Teacher Aimee stated,

I think it would be effective if the parents could come to school more often. We deal with over 30 kids, and they have one or two—well, some have more. They could come and sit with their children and observe how they do.

Teacher Patty added,

I understand you cannot force the parents, but if you were my child’s teacher and were telling me that my child is struggling or is bullying others, I don’t care if I don’t want to go. This is my child, my responsibility. I need to be there.

**Teacher involvement.** Most parents perceived that teachers play a critical role in their children’s education and school experience. Some parents commended the teachers and the Principal for their effective response toward bullying situations. For example, Rosalie, a Latina mother said,

We spoke to his teacher . . . then I also spoke to the Principal. They responded right away. They got everyone together and talked. Everything worked out. I think we came to an understanding. She [the perpetrator] felt like she was doing something wrong, I guess. After that, the behavior stopped.

On the other hand, some parents shared their concerns about teachers’ lack of responsiveness to bullying episodes and their differential treatment toward students. For example, Mayra, a Latina mother said,

On one occasion, I went on a field trip with them. The girl had three sandwiches with her for lunch. Three or four, I believe, a lot of food. So, the other kids kept teasing her, “Hey, you’re going to eat all that food? That’s why you’re so fat. Look at her, how much food she is going to eat.” And I saw that the teacher did nothing about it.

A few parents noted that certain teachers would not intervene in a bullying episode because they showed favoritism to students who come from similar racial/ethnic background.

Teachers in the focus group suggested that parents’ expectation with regards to teachers’ role in shaping their children’s school experience stem from parents’ cultural beliefs and acculturation difficulties; for example, teacher Lois said,

It’s because they [parents] don’t understand English. They don’t know what to do or what to say to their kids. So they come and ask us to help make their children behave, do chores, and listen to them. They say their kids don’t listen to them but would listen to me.

Teacher Mitch said,

In some of the cultures they have such a high regard and respect for the teachers. Parents believe that the school can handle it better than they can, so they leave it up to the teachers. But we do need them to be involved and to work with us.

**Theme 2: The Pervasiveness and Impact of School Bullying**

Both parents and teachers acknowledged that school bullying is ubiquitous in the school and is associated with detrimental outcomes. They noted that bullying was more common among older children, with physical bullying being more prevalent among boys and relational bullying being more prevalent among girls. For example, Sabine, an Asian mother shared,

I have witnessed this, it’s kind of . . . unhappy. It looks like there are many students doing this, seven or eight of the entire class. They target someone all day long. My son is nice, but he is bullied every day.

Teacher Zoe also stated, “I see it happen more in the upper grade, when I taught kindergarten, I don’t remember it being this bad.” Parents whose children were being bullied described negative emotional and psychological consequences, including fear, anxiety, denial, and school refusal. For instance, Vera, an Asian mother shared,

My daughter did not want to go to school every day. She cried a lot and would refuse to go. My daughter likes to study and does well in school. I didn’t understand why she didn’t want to go. Later I found out some older boys in the afterschool program forced my daughter to play a game and they pinched her cheek until it turns red. She got worried and nervous, and sometimes would wake up in the middle of the night, crying . . .

Gin, another Asian mother recounted,

My daughter stopped talking to me. She was unhappy at home and started crying as soon as she went into the classroom. She refused to tell me what happened or just said she doesn’t know . . . she was so afraid.

Similarly, teachers described that victims felt rejected, helpless and experienced distress such as “talking in very low voice,” “crying” or “running away.”

**Theme 3: Parenting Challenges in the Acculturative Context**

There was a sense of helplessness in parents’ narratives when they reflected on their experiences as parents in the United States. Some parents described that language barriers and value discrepancies contributed to communication and parenting difficulties at home, which had resulted in conflicts and alienation. Le, an Asian father shared,
Communication when he was little was fine. But now that he has grown up and can’t really speak Chinese, and I cannot speak English. I don’t understand what he wants. When I ask him, he gets impatient and just says “never mind” to shut me down.

Other parents said the language barriers coupled with their limited educational experiences (both in their native country and in the United States) had made parental supervision a daunting task. Tan, an Asian mother said, “I cannot review my children’s homework. If I understand English, they could not lie to me and they would not be so presumptuous. But it seems very difficult for me to learn English.” Tan also felt sad when her daughter rejected her help.

My daughter says “Mom, you don’t understand how difficult my homework is! I need to write many pages.” I couldn’t say anything after that. I saw her sitting in front of the computer for a long time... Perhaps she was really doing her homework. I do not know.

Several parents remarked that the financial pressures and other contextual stressors simply do not allow them the time and energy to cultivate relationships with their children. Le, an Asian father said, “The economy is so bad now. Everyone has to make money.” Sally, an Asian mother added, “Everyone is busy making a living. Who has time to take care of the children?”

Many teachers noted how the immigration and acculturation contexts have changed parents’ roles, expectations, and family dynamics. Teacher Esther said, “I sure have found a lot of kids to be very disrespectful toward their parents (because their parents cannot speak English or provide guidance). It almost seemed like the parents are afraid of their kids.” Teacher Mary said at times she experienced a sense of resignation and helplessness from Latino parents and students. “The Hispanic families would say that there is no opportunity for their children in higher education because all the spots are taken up by Asian students; there is no point in trying.”

Several teachers expressed the urgent need for providing services for immigrant parents. Teacher Loits suggested,

I think there needs to be a lot more parent education programs. These immigrant parents do come to schools and ask for help, but we don’t have the time to train them how to be parents. They are asking for it, and we do need to respond to that.

Theme 4: Parents and Teachers’ Utilization of Intervention Strategies

Our findings suggest that parents tend to endorse more pragmatic or solution-focused strategies such as distancing from the problem or seeking instrumental help from the teachers, whereas teachers tended to employ more insight-oriented or emotion-focused strategies such as emotion regulation, perspective-taking, and self-empowerment.

Several parents said they had told their children to stop escalating the situation or walk away from the problem (e.g., “stop calling people names”; “do not provoke”). Some parents were more thorough in following-through with the incident, but prefer to elicit teachers’ support to resolve bullying problems with other students and parents, as they are the “authority.” Pei, an Asian mother recalled, “I ask the class teacher to handle it. If the teacher cannot, the principal will get involved.” Rosalie, another Latina mother recalled, “We spoke to his teacher... and I also spoke to the Principal. They responded... After that, it [bullying] stopped.”

Several teachers in the focus group said they were more interested in developing an understanding of why the bullying episode occurred, and how the perpetrator and the victim felt. For example, teacher Zoe shared her strategy,

I definitely let the kids understand how the other person feels. I first ask the bullies why they feel justified to say or do what they did. I try to understand where they are coming from. Then I ask them to put themselves in the other person’s [victim] position. I ask the persons who were bullied to say how they felt and why they didn’t like it. I definitely have a discussion with everyone while I am there. Of course, I would ask the bullies to apologize.

Some teachers prefer to take a less directive role and instead help students cultivate a sense of self-reliance and responsibility. Teacher Kira said,

I try to build student leadership and empower the students; for instance, fifth graders would become the advocates for younger kids. So if there is an issue on the playground or when they see something, they would call the person out or tell me after school that someone has been harassing or being mean to another kid.

Similarities and Differences Between Asian and Latino Immigrant Parents’ Experiences

Although the main purpose of the current paper was not to compare Asian and Latino parents’ experiences, a few differences between Asian and Latino parents did emerge when we analyzed the data. When asked about their visions and preferences for school-based interventions and services, Asian parents prefer to see more academically oriented programs and services being provided by the school, such as interschool competitions to promote academic excellence and aspirations; whereas Latino parents want the school to offer more classes and activities to help cultivate their children’s social skills and artistic interests. None of the parents suggested a stand-alone bullying prevention program. Furthermore, some of the teachers noted a sense of resignation from Latino parents; for instance, one teacher said, “I heard the Hispanic families say and feel that there is no opportunity for their children in higher education because all the spots are going to be taken by Asian students, so there is no point in trying.”

Despite those differences, our findings suggest that Asian and Latino immigrant parents in our study are more similar than different. Both parent groups struggle with general parenting and specific intervention strategies when their children are being bullied (Themes 3 and 4); both expect the school to play an active role in shaping their children’s development and school experience (Themes 1 and 4), and both expressed a grave need for help and intervention services in a bilingual context (Theme 3).

Discussion

The goal for the current study was to explore how immigrant parents and teachers of Asian and Latino elementary school-age children understand and respond to school bullying, as well as the resources, strategies, and challenges endorsed by them. Using the GT approach, we examined the interrelationships among the themes developed from the focus group data and proposed a moderated mediation model (see Figure 1). Specifically, our model posited that parents or teachers’ intervention to
bullying may mediate the relation between parents and teachers’ perceptions and beliefs of school bullying and the pervasiveness and impact of bullying. Although previous research has found that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about bullying (e.g., avoidant beliefs) are associated with the strategies they use to intervene (e.g., advocate avoidance, separate students) and students’ experience with peer victimization (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015), no study—to the best of our knowledge—has examined parents’ attitudes and beliefs about bullying, and how those attitudes influence parents’ intervention and coping.

Our study is the first to propose that parents’ attitudes and beliefs about bullying may impact parents’ intervention strategies for bullying, which then influence the propensity and impact of their children’s involvement in bullying. In addition, we propose that parenting challenges (e.g., acculturative stress) faced by immigrant families may moderate the relation between parents and teachers’ perceptions of bullying and their responses and intervention strategies. The results provide insights for future research on examining how factors in various ecological systems impact bullying behavior. We want to acknowledge that there may be alternatives to the model we propose. For example, the pervasiveness and negative impact of bullying may prompt parents and teachers to intervene differently, and may also change parents and teachers’ beliefs of what factors contribute to school bullying. Those alternative models as well as our mediated moderation model will need to be further examined using empirical data. Below we further discuss the key aspects of our findings and the interrelationships across the themes.

Participants in this study demonstrated rather nuanced knowledge and awareness of school bullying including the age and sex patterns, the power differential between the perpetrators and the victims, and the contributing factors to bullying; specifically, parents and teachers discussed the impact of parenting styles, parental involvement, and teacher involvement on school bullying. However, parents and teachers appeared to have different views about their roles in children’s school experience. Both parties expressed concern toward the limited involvement of their counterparts. For example, some parents complained that the teachers did not do enough to intervene during relational bullying. This is consistent with literature showing that teachers are less likely to notice and intervene during episodes of relational bullying than during physical bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008).

On the other hand, teachers also felt frustrated about parents’ lack of school involvement and inconsistent discipline (e.g., not providing consequences to their children who bully others). The disagreement between parents and teachers on their involvement in bullying prevention may be in part due to the challenges that immigrant parents experience in their acculturative context. Both parents and teachers in this study reported a variety of stressors faced by recent immigrants, such as financial pressures, language barriers, value discrepancies (with their children and teachers), emotional distance between parents and children, and changes in family roles and dynamics (Hwang, 2006; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Yeh et al., 2008). As described by the parents and teachers in our study, some of the children do not see their parents as authorities or have experienced communication breakdown with their parents. Under such stress, immigrant parents are less likely to be involved and collaborate with teachers or use effective intervention strategies when their children struggle with bullying (Vazquez-Nuttall, Li, & Kaplan, 2006); for example, parents may use limited or passive coping methods by relying on the classroom teacher to handle bullying incidents. On the other hand, teachers may also feel unprepared to address immigrant families’ concerns and experience burnout when working in a low-income, resource-starved schools (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), compounding the difficulty in communicating and collaborating with parents. Furthermore, tensions and conflicts in the neighborhood or local community may increase parenting stress or exacerbate children’s behavior problems that may manifest as bullying in school. Although we did not directly measure factors related to exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, our findings revealed potential links between these distal contexts and the proximal processes that might elevate children’s risk of being involved in bullying.
We did not form any specific hypothesis regarding the differences between Asian and Latino/a parents, however we did identify many similarities and some differences between the two groups during our data analysis. It is important to mention that the data were collected from a school with predominantly Asian (48.7%) and Latino (49.1%) student populations in a neighborhood with matching demographics. In other words, the school and the community contexts provided possibilities for many between-group interactions. Our findings suggest that Asian and Latino immigrant parents in our study are probably more similar than different. Considering these similarities, we believe that some bullying prevention strategies that are culturally sensitive to low-income immigrant parents and families—such as offering workshops at varied times to accommodate immigrant parents’ work schedule; providing translated materials and childcare during school functions or meetings—are likely to work for both Asian and Latino parents.

A few differences between Asian and Latino parents did emerge from our data. For example, teachers reported a sense of resignation from Latino parents regarding the lack of educational opportunities for Latino children as compared to Asian children. Although it is possible that experiences with prejudice and stereotypes—in addition to economic pressures and acculturation difficulty—may contribute to Latino immigrant parents’ sense of alienation and decreased involvement in school (Carreon et al., 2005), it is important to note that racial stereotypes endorsed by teachers may also impact their interactions with parents and students. For example, research has found that teachers tend to have higher academic expectations for Asian students than for Latino students, possibly because they perceive Latino students as less competent and agreeable (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Latino/a youth also reported experiencing more discrimination from teachers than their Asian peers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Conversely, researchers suggest that Asian American students are more likely to be bullied or harassed by their peers because of the model minority belief and perceived favoritism shown by teachers (Qin et al., 2008; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). To prevent bullying for all students, teachers and parents need to become aware of how stereotypes and their unconscious biases might influence their interactions with students and parents.

We also found that Asian parents prefer to see more academically oriented programs and services being provided by the school, such as across-schools competitions to promote academic excellence and aspirations; whereas Latino parents want the school to offer more classes and activities to help cultivate their children’s social skills and artistic interests. The feedback from parents would offer more classes and activities to help cultivate their children’s aspirations; whereas Latino parents want the school to promote cultural assets such as collectivist coping strategies and family connectedness (e.g., Falicov, 2014; Parra Cardona et al., 2012; Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006). These strategies are likely to help families more effectively prevent and intervene school bullying. For example, because immigrant children are likely to be bullied due to their ethnic or cultural differences (e.g., language difficulties; Qin et al., 2008), parents could help promote a sense of cultural pride and an appreciation for cultural legacy and traditions in their children to cope with discrimination and bullying. Previous researchers have found that cultural socialization defined as “parenting practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children’s cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly” (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 749) served as a protective factor against aggressive behavior and depression for African American children who were exposed to community violence (Henry, Lambert, & Smith Bynum, 2015). Racial socialization has also been found to relate to more positive and involved parenting (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002). In light of these findings, clinicians and counselors could encourage Asian and Latino immigrant parents to have conversations with their children about the culture, history, and traditions of their respective ethnic groups to cultivate an appreciation for their cultural legacy and promote a sense of ethnic identity and cultural pride. These cultural socialization practices may also help parents and their more acculturated children develop a deeper understanding and a better relationship with each other, which was noted as a prominent parenting challenge by both parents and teachers in this study.

At the same time, it is critical to strengthen communication and understanding between parents and teachers. Specific bullying prevention and multicultural training are needed for teachers. Research has shown that teachers lack specialized training on bullying prevention, and are not confident in their ability to handle implement culturally responsive bullying prevention programs for immigrant children and parents. Generic bullying prevention programs are likely to fail to meet immigrant families’ needs (Hong et al., 2014). An effective approach to reduce bullying among immigrant children should include joint efforts of parents and teachers/administrators to build a safe and culturally sensitive school and home environment. Parents should be encouraged to gain bilingual and bicultural competencies (e.g., knowledge of the U.S. education system and school culture), strengthen parent–child relationships (e.g., communicating with children in bicultural context), model appropriate social interactions and conflict resolution at home (between parents, parent–child, and among siblings) and in the community (e.g., with neighbors), and get involved in school activities when possible. In many cases, parents are more accessible than counselors, thereby minimizing stigma associated with seeking help from professionals (Ham & Shea, 2012). Parents should be encouraged to advocate for their children who are the victims of school bullying by actively seeking support from teachers and school administrators. For example, parents can share their observations and concerns about their children’s signs of distress, and express willingness to collaborate with teachers, administrators, and staff such as school psychologists to help their children.

Parents should be supported by culturally sensitive parenting training that does not only focus on problems and deficits, but also incorporates the family’s worldviews, explores and utilizes cultural assets such as collectivist coping strategies and family connectedness (e.g., Falicov, 2014; Parra Cardona et al., 2012; Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006). These strategies are likely to help families more effectively prevent and intervene school bullying. For example, because immigrant children are likely to be bullied due to their ethnic or cultural differences (e.g., language difficulties; Qin et al., 2008), parents could help promote a sense of cultural pride and an appreciation for cultural legacy and traditions in their children to cope with discrimination and bullying. Previous researchers have found that cultural socialization defined as “parenting practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children’s cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly” (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 749) served as a protective factor against aggressive behavior and depression for African American children who were exposed to community violence (Henry, Lambert, & Smith Bynum, 2015). Racial socialization has also been found to relate to more positive and involved parenting (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002). In light of these findings, clinicians and counselors could encourage Asian and Latino immigrant parents to have conversations with their children about the culture, history, and traditions of their respective ethnic groups to cultivate an appreciation for their cultural legacy and promote a sense of ethnic identity and cultural pride. These cultural socialization practices may also help parents and their more acculturated children develop a deeper understanding and a better relationship with each other, which was noted as a prominent parenting challenge by both parents and teachers in this study.
bullying appropriately (Oldenburg et al., 2015). In addition, teachers may not be aware of the unique challenges immigrant parents and children face—such as their acculturative stress (e.g., language brokering; role reversal at home)—which may contribute to teachers’ misinterpretation of parents’ behavior. For example, teachers may think parents do not care about their children’s development or school experience when parents do not participate in school activities; but in reality immigrant parents may not be able to attend school events due to their long work hours, limited language capabilities, or unfamiliarity with the school culture. Similarly, many immigrant parents respect and trust teachers and may prefer to elicit teachers’ support to resolve bullying problems instead of getting personally involved. They view teachers as the “authority figures” in the school and the experts who know how to handle school-related issues including bullying. This reliance on teachers, however, may be perceived as not caring or unwilling to be involved.

In addition, American schools are likely to be a new, unfamiliar, and even intimidating environment to a lot of immigrant parents who grew up in another country. To promote parent–teacher communication and to reduce misunderstanding due to cultural value discrepancies, teachers and administrators need to find culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to reach out to immigrant parents. For example, providing interpreters or translated materials to parents may increase parents’ participation in school activities (Turney & Kao, 2009). Scheduling activities at varied times (e.g., early morning, after school, evening) to accommodate parents’ schedule is especially important for encouraging parent participation. We would not have been able to recruit the participants for this study if researchers did not provide the bullying prevention workshops at convenient times for parents.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions**

Researchers have proposed an ecological perspective to understand how bullying occurs and perpetuates (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Hong et al., 2014). Guided by the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), our findings are consistent with the ecological perspective in that our proposed model points out the importance of considering proximal processes (student–teacher interaction, student–parent interaction, home–school communication/collaboration), exosystem (parents’ employment), macrosystem (e.g., cultural values, acculturation), and chronosystem (e.g., acculturation over time) in bullying prevention and intervention work. Our model has uncovered potential moderators and mediators, illuminated pathways for examining and understanding bullying involvement among Asian and Latino immigrant children. Furthermore, there are very few bullying prevention training or programs for parents, and there is none specifically tailored to socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Our study is the first of its kind to open up a conversation among teachers and immigrant parents to share their perspectives on bullying prevention. Another strength of our study is that our study is one of the very few studies examining bullying among elementary school-aged immigrant children and their parents and teachers, which fills a gap in the current literature on bullying. Our findings could provide insights for future development and evaluation of ecological-based bullying intervention as well as parent training for immigrant families.

There are several limitations associated with this study that need to be noted. The first limitation is related to sampling. Our relatively small sample of parents and teachers were recruited from one urban school in a neighborhood where most children were from ethnic minority groups. Parents and teachers’ experiences with bullying are likely to differ if they live in school districts with different demographics. Furthermore, the majority of our Asian parents are Chinese and the majority of our Latino parents are Mexican. Our findings may not generalize to families from other Asian or Latin American regions due to the diversities in nationalities, cultural practices, and socioeconomic statuses. Further, despite our multiple recruitment strategies, most parent participants were recruited from the bullying prevention workshop. This might suggest that only the most involved parents in terms of their interest and investment in this topic participated in the focus groups. Although the workshop only provided general information on bullying (e.g., statistics of prevalence, warning signs of children being bullied or bullying others, children’s coping resources), and did not explore specific patterns of bullying (e.g., sex and age differences), it is possible that the knowledge parents gained from the workshop might have influenced their perceptions of bullying in the focus group discussion. However, parents were also likely to have learned about bullying from other sources such as media and friends prior to their participation. Ultimately the focus group interviews aimed at understanding participants’ personal and subjective experiences, and not their objective knowledge of bullying. Second, it is likely that some of the parents did not feel comfortable disclosing their personal problems or their children’s bullying involvement in front of other parents due to the concern of “losing face” and cultural stigmata (Yeh et al., 2008). However, we chose a focus group format because it provided a venue for parents and teachers to share and validate their collective experience; we believe the benefits outweigh the limitations. Third, although there were common observations made by the teachers and parents about bullying incidents in the school, it is important to note that the incidents they described in their respective focus group interviews may not be referring to the exact same bullying episodes. Finally, most participants were females. It is unclear how gender dynamics may have shaped the focus group discussion, and participants’ perception of bullying and their intervention strategies.

Future studies should focus on recruiting parents and teachers from diverse ethnic (e.g., Vietnamese, Filipinos, Central American) and socioeconomic backgrounds to enrich our understanding of within group variability. The main purpose of our study was to develop an overall picture of how immigrant parents and teachers of Asian and Latino children understand and respond to school bullying, but researchers in future studies should collect richer data about the bullying episodes using a combination of methods, such as observations, interviews, and surveys. For example, researchers could examine the specifics and racial/ethnic dynamics of the bullying incident: “What was the bullying about?” “Was the child being bullied by children from the same or different ethnic group?” In addition, the proposed moderated-mediation model should be tested using quantitative method and other potential mediators or moderators such as parents’ intercultural competency and specific parenting strategies for managing children’s peer relationships could be included.
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