

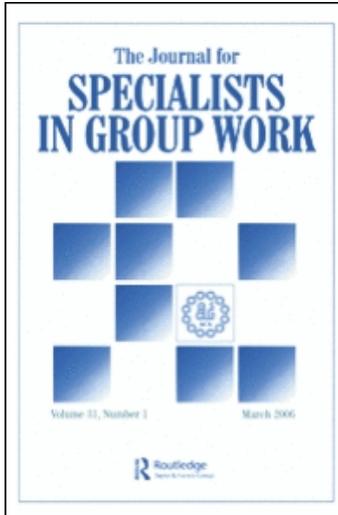
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### **Cuento Group Work in Emerging Rural Latino Communities: Promoting Personal-Social Development of Latina/o Middle School Students of Mexican Heritage**

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# **Cuento Group Work in Emerging Rural Latino Communities: Promoting Personal-Social Development of Latina/o Middle School Students of Mexican Heritage**

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*The experiences of Latina/o youth in rural emerging Latino communities are largely absent in the literature. This article proposes the benefits of a Cuento group work intervention designed to promote Latina/o student personal-social development. An outline of the group intervention offered to middle school students of Mexican Heritage is provided, in an effort to facilitate replication of the intervention in other emerging Latino communities. Preliminary pilot data on group efficacy also are presented.*

**Keywords:** *Cuento therapy; group counseling; Latina/o; rural; school counseling*

The counseling literature on Latinas/os living in the United States is becoming more prevalent (e.g., Constantine, Kindaichi, & Milville, 2007; Malott, 2009; Ramirez, Jain, Flores-Torres, Perez, & Carlson, 2009). Counselors working with significant numbers of Latina/o clients and students rely on theoretical and research studies to

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inform their provision of services to address the strengths and needs of their Latina/o clients. However, the counseling literature does not adequately address the needs of Latina/o clients or students residing in rural emerging Latino communities. According to Suro and Singer (2002), established Latino communities have a large base of Latino residents, stretching back at least until 1980, and have had relatively slow recent Latino growth due to the already large Latino population. By contrast, emerging Latino communities have a small Latino base but have experienced a large Latino growth since 1990, making these newer Latino communities “new Latino destinations,” (Suro & Singer, p. 10) including Salt Lake City, UT, and Raleigh and Siler City, NC (Suro & Singer; Wainer, 2004). Suro and Singer, therefore, caution against assuming that characteristics of established Latino communities mirror those of emerging Latino communities. This calls into question the notion of rescaling group work interventions used and piloted in established Latino communities like Los Angeles, Miami, and San Antonio for use in emerging Latino communities, both rural and urban, through the United States. This study serves as a challenge to school counselors working with Latina/o students in rural emerging Latino communities to consider whether rescaling is the best strategy for implementing interventions “intended” for Latina/o students, as well as to provide practitioners with an example of an effective intervention designed with the needs and experiences of Mexican youngsters living in rural emerging Latino communities.

### **MAKING A CASE AGAINST RESCALING INTERVENTIONS FOR “ALL” LATINA/O POPULATIONS**

Rescaling is the act of taking an intervention, treatment, curriculum, etc., that was designed with a particular population in mind (e.g., African American gifted and talented students) and piloted in a particular metropolitan statistical area (e.g., urban center with over 250,000 residents), and applying it to any group of individuals meeting the demographic criteria of the pilot sample without regards for place (e.g., the same population attending a rural school) (Eberhardt & Pamuk, 2004; Phillips & McLeroy, 2004). For Latina/o students and families residing in rural settings specifically, the distinction between “traditional” and “emerging” communities also is salient. First, the Latino population is now the largest minority population in the United States (making up over 15% of the overall population), and the fastest and most pronounced increases in Latino populations have occurred in rural areas of states (e.g., Iowa, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah) with previously minimal Latina/o residents (Pew Hispanic Center,

2005; U.S. Census, 2008). The second reason for making this distinction is that exploratory research and arguments have recently appeared in the literature, validating an emphasis on the differences between the educational and social-personal experiences of Latina/o youth based on whether they attend a school in a traditional urban Latino community or emerging rural Latino community (Villalba, 2007; Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Wachter, 2007; Wainer, 2004). In spite of these recent findings and ideas, the latest research on the current state of mental and physical health needs and experiences of Latinas/os continues to be focused on traditional, urban Latino communities (e.g., Miami, San Diego, New York City, and Chicago) with little (if any) regard for the experiences of Latinas/os not living in these types of communities (Dingfelder, 2009).

This study describes an intervention specifically designed for Latina/o youth in rural emerging Latino communities. A school counseling intervention was developed and administered to children ages 11–15 of Latino heritage to determine if participating in a small group counseling activity would positively impact potential personal–social needs. In establishing the impetus for this study, the authors were inspired by Phillips and McLeroy’s (2004) challenge to their colleagues in the field of public health to not only cease the concept of rescaling as it relates to rural settings, but also to design new interventions or alter existing ones to account for the unique characteristics of rural communities, schools, and health care facilities.

### **RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF *CUENTO* GROUP WORK THERAPY**

In a previous qualitative study, Villalba (2007) reported differences between school-based personnel’s observations of mental health needs of their Latina/o students depending upon whether the school was located in a rural emerging Latino community or urban traditional Latino community. Specifically, middle and high school principals, school counselors, school nurses, and teachers in rural emerging Latino communities reported more concerns with basic mental health needs (e.g., interpersonal skills, adjustment issues) and physical health needs of Latina/o students (e.g., dental health, poor nutrition, vision care), while urban school personnel working in an established Latino community were more concerned with issues of gang violence, ADHD, teenage pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. When further probed, school personnel in rural areas shared their desire to address the basic personal–social development of their Latina/o students, including self-concept, anxiety, nutrition, self-care, and self-respect.

The information from this previous study led the authors to explore the possibility of designing and piloting a school-based counseling intervention specifically designed for this study, based in *Cuento* therapy.

*Cuento* therapy (Malgady, Rogler, & Constatinto, 1990a, 1990b) is similar to bibliotherapy in that written stories are used to help convey a message related to the counseling goals of the client. Since the 1930s, bibliotherapy has been used with children as a method of fostering positive growth and development by sharing a book or a story that facilitates insight into personal concerns (Allen Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005; Jack & Ronan, 2008). Contemporarily, counselors have utilized bibliotherapy to help children develop and work through a wide range of issues and concerns including, for example, social skills (Anderson, 2000), emotional intelligence (Sullivan & Strange, 2002), bereavement (Ayyash-abdo, 2001), child abuse, (McDaniel, 2001), parental separation/divorce (Pehrsson, Allen, Folger, McMillen, & Lowe, 2007), aggression (Shechtman, 2006), and anxiety (Rapee, Abbott, & Lyneham, 2006). Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) also make the case for culturally relevant books and poetry when using bibliotherapy to address the needs of African American urban male adolescents, thereby emphasizing the need to connect the characters and scenarios in the book with the experiences of target students.

*Cuento* therapy can be considered a culturally relevant form of bibliotherapy using stories to convey morals or themes. The stories are read to or by children, depending on their reading ability, and the stories are usually presented to the children in English and Spanish. More importantly, the themes, characters, locations, and traditions depicted in the *Cuentos* tend to be familiar to Latino children. The rationale behind *Cuento* therapy is that Latina/o youth offered this type of intervention have a higher likelihood of understanding the objectives or goals of a particular clinical task if the *Cuento* and the implicit moral are familiar to the individual. In their initial studies, Malgady et al. (1990a,b) found that Puerto Rican youth living in urban settings showed varying degrees of marked improvement to self-concept and reduction in maladaptive behavior after participating in a *Cuento* therapy intervention. Furthermore, Ramirez et al. (2009) conducted a study in a south Texas city using *Cuento* group therapy with Mexican youth to measure the impact of group participation on self-esteem, anxiety and depression, and reading achievement. Ramirez et al. demonstrated that children of Mexican heritage who participated in the small group counseling intervention using *Cuento* therapy showed marked improvement in their self-esteem compared with peers who did not participate in the group intervention. Although all three previous studies were conducted in schools, they were done either after school or as part of a summer school program, and not as part of the

school counseling curriculum. As a result, current studies using *Cuento* therapy in school counseling settings with adolescents of Latina/o heritage living in rural emerging Latino communities were absent from the literature. This paucity in the research prompted the lead authors to review over 50 Latin American folk tales (Bierhorst, 2003; Philip & Mair, 2003) in an effort to find age-appropriate stories where the moral was readily apparent, and where the protagonists lived in a rural setting so as to include the context of place in the story. The authors used these folktales as the foundation for developing a *Cuento* group work intervention, and piloted the efficacy of the intervention with a group of Mexican middle school students in one school located in a rural emerging Latino community. A sample of folktale titles reviewed for this intervention appears in Appendix A.

## A CUENTO GROUP WORK INTERVENTION

### Planning

The 8-week small group intervention designed for this study was based on the experiences of Latina/o middle school students with self-concept and anxiety concerns as presented in the literature. The number of children per group can be up to ten. In this particular pilot study, the group size varied from three to eight participants, with the average group composed of six participants. Groups took place in one rural middle school located in an emerging Latino community. The school serves grades K–8, but only Latina/o students in grades 6–8 were eligible to participate in the *Cuento* group work intervention. Groups were organized based on grade level, and students were excused from their elective class period once a week in order to participate in the group. The first sessions of the group intervention were reserved for administering the pretest and an introduction to the group. Also, the introduction session was used to explain the *Cuento* counseling method, assess participant's comfort with speaking and reading in English and Spanish, and alert students to the end goal of having them write and discuss a "*Cuento*" about themselves during sessions six and seven. Sessions two through seven were used to deliver content specific to defining emotions, self-concept, and anxiety using rural Mexican folktales. Rural Mexican folktales became the focus of the *Cuentos* because all the Latina/o middle school students in grades 6–8 were of Mexican heritage, and the school was located in a rural community. The last session was used to administer the posttest and termination of the group and to serve as a culminating experience.

## Group Purpose and Goals

The general purpose for this group was to provide an opportunity for Latina/o middle school students living in a rural emerging Latino community to share their experiences. More specifically, the group was designed to promote positive personal–social development by allowing students to process pleasant and unpleasant experiences with being a member of a minority group in a community that may or may not represent Latin American traditions due to size and influence of the local Latino community. The goals of the group, therefore, were (a) to provide students with a safe environment where they could learn effective ways to monitor their emotions and self-concept by learning from each other; and (b) to help participants better understand the influence of their culture on their personal–social development. This learning was facilitated through the use of *Cuento* therapy techniques, in which the authors selected folktales relevant to participants' culture (Mexican heritage) and local community (rural context).

*Member selection and screening.* Member recruitment for the pilot study followed traditional IRB procedures, requiring parental consent and student assent. The school counselor at the participating school was responsible for providing all 182 Latina/o students in grades 6–8 (all of whom were Mexican or Mexican American) with an information packet containing an overview of the *Cuento* group work intervention, contact information for the first author, and consent forms in English and Spanish. Students were given 3 weeks to return the signed parental consents if they were to be considered for the group.

Once the participants had been identified, each student met with the school counselor individually to review the intervention. Students were informed how many times the group would meet, where the group would meet in the school, and the time of day the group would meet. More importantly, students were told that the group would be conducted by external bilingual counselors, that the group would use a technique called “*Cuento* therapy” where short stories would be read in English and Spanish, and that the stories would have a moral to be discussed in the group. Students also were told that the group would include two short surveys to test the effectiveness of participating in the group. Students were provided a chance to ask questions about the group, and were asked to give their assent to participate in the group. Of the 182 eligible students, 70 returned signed consent forms and provided their assent; however, two had to drop out due to unforeseen academic issues that arose after the first session.

## GROUP INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

As described earlier, the *Cuento* group intervention consisted of eight sessions. The following is a descriptive outline that was used as a guide for each of these sessions, including the main objectives, materials used, introductory remarks, discussion topics, activities, and evaluation questions for each session. Note that the stories were provided to participants in English and in Spanish, and that both versions were read aloud by the students, taking turns with each sentence. In the case that the group facilitator is not fluent in English and Spanish, students should still be permitted and encouraged to read in Spanish, as that is the language they most likely heard the story told in if they are familiar with it at all. The outline is written for other school counselors who may choose to provide this group in their schools. It is the outline we followed in the groups in which we piloted this approach. It also would be possible to use this outline as a template for a classroom guidance or large group unit, in an effort to support culturally relevant bibliotherapy.

### Session 1: Introduction and Pretest

*Objective.* Students will understand the importance of sharing their experiences with their peers, and how *Cuento* therapy can facilitate this activity.

*Materials.* Sufficient copies of instruments, pencils.

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Students are introduced to each other by asking them to share their name, their favorite food, and their favorite physical activity.

*Discussion (20 minutes).* Next, students are provided with the term “personal–social development,” and are told how this is related to their school success. Specific examples include telling them the importance of identifying and sharing their emotions, or finding trusted adults who can help them solve conflicts at school. Students will also be told how knowing how to enhance their self-concept and monitor their anxiety are key factors in personal–social development. Once personal–social development has been explained, participants are invited to share reasons why they think they have been asked to be part of this group. After each student has shared, the facilitator reminds participants that they and their parents previously indicated their willingness to take part in a group activity where they would be able to discuss their school and community experiences, as well as share some

thoughts on their experiences of living in their rural community. Specifically, students will be told that this group will let them explore how their cultural identity as Mexicans or Mexican Americans is relevant to their personal–social development. Finally, students will be told about *Cuento* therapy and how it helps individuals gain insight by encouraging them to read or hear stories related to their Latin American culture. Finally, students are asked to think about and share a story that their parents or family members have read to them in Spanish, specifically a story that had a moral. The facilitator also is encouraged to share a folktale they are familiar with, even if it is not a Latin American folktale, in order to explain the importance of the morals in this story.

*Activity (10 minutes).* Students are given two instruments that will be used for pre- and post-comparisons. Instructions are read aloud for one instrument at a time. Students are asked to complete the instruments independently, but are encouraged ask questions about the instrument if they are confused with any terminology.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Each student is asked to share two things they learned from this initial meeting.

## **Session 2: The Little Bird—Helping Others**

*Objective.* Students will realize the importance of helping others and be able to recognize examples of helpfulness.

*Material.* *The Little Bird*, 8.5" × 11" paper (for each child), old magazines, scissors, glue sticks, (markerboard/chalkboard in room), folders of stories for each student.

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Greet the students and remind them that you will be reading a short story (a Mexican folktale), discussing it as a group, and doing an activity related to the story for the next 4 weeks. Also, remind them that in last two sessions, they will be creating their own “folktales” and sharing them with the group. Review the concept of a moral with the students, which was discussed last week, and alert them that some stories and folktales have more than one moral.

*Story (5 minutes).* Read *The Little Bird* aloud in English and Spanish. Ask students what they think the moral of the story is, and write suggestions on the board. If no one else suggests it, add, “It is good to help other people” to the list. Tell students that many of the suggested ideas could be morals of the story, and we are going to focus on the importance of helping other people.

*Discussion (10 minutes).* Ask students for examples of a time when they have helped another person. If the group size permits (<10), allow everyone an opportunity to share; otherwise, just select a few students to share their stories. Ask how they felt when they were helping this person (they may not have wanted to help, so maybe they did not enjoy it, but later they felt good about helping). Ask them to remember a time when someone else helped them and think about how they felt. Make the point that it is important to help other people for their benefit and your own (you feel good), and then maybe later someone will help you when you need it. Ask students to imagine what our world would be like if no one helped anyone else and we each just took care of ourselves. If there's time, allow students to share their thoughts on this.

*Activity (15 minutes).* Have students make a Helping Collage using old magazines. Give each student a piece of paper on which to glue their collage. They may have to share scissors, glue, and magazines. Instruct them to search through the magazines to find pictures that demonstrate ways you could help other people. It may be a picture of people actually being helpful, pictures of people who may need help, or pictures of items that could be used to help others. If there is time, allow students to share their collages and explain what the pictures represent.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Ask students to share how helping others can help them feel better about themselves.

### **Session 3: The Hard-Hearted Son—Honesty**

*Objective.* Students will recognize the importance of being honest and will practice identifying dishonest statements.

*Materials.* *The Hard-Hearted Son* (markerboard/chalkboard in room).

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Remind students of last week's session (Helping Others). Ask if anyone had an opportunity to help someone during the last week, and let a few students share.

*Story (5 minutes).* Read *The Hard-Hearted Son* aloud. Ask students what they think the moral of the story is, and write suggestions on the board. If no one else suggests it, add, "It is important to be honest" to the list. Tell students that many of the suggested ideas could be morals of the story, and we are going to focus on the importance of being honest.

*Discussion (10 minutes).* Ask the students to raise their hand if they have ever told a lie (everyone should be raising their hand). The man in the story lied to his parents about having no food to give them. His parents punished him for lying by putting a curse on him. Suggest to the students that their parents will not put a curse on them, but they can punish them for lying. Many people have a friend who lies a lot, and then you never know if that person is lying or telling the truth: you're not sure if you should believe them. That's what happens when people lie a lot; their friends start to think they're lying, even when they might be telling the truth.

Ask the students and discuss:

- How do you know when you can trust someone? (possible answers: they look nice, they've always told me the truth before, they're my friend). Point out that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether or not someone is lying, especially if they are a stranger.
- Sometimes people can break your trust, for example if you told your friend a secret, and she went and told all your other friends. When this happens, how can you and your friend build that trust back (the friend could apologize and promise not to do it again, it takes time for the friend to show she is honest)?
- If your friends were here right now, would they say that you are an honest person? Why or why not? Point out that it's not a very good feeling if your friends do not trust you.

It's important to be honest so that our friends will trust us and want to keep being our friends, and so that our parents trust us.

*Activity (10 minutes).* Introduce the game "Two Truths and a Lie." Instruct each student to think of two things that are true about themselves (examples: I broke my arm in second grade, I have two brothers, I like pizza). It helps if they pick things that not everyone knows about them. Now tell them to pick one thing that is not true about themselves. It could be anything, but it should at least be believable. Each student will have a turn to share their two truths and a lie with the class. They can say them in any order, and should try to keep a straight face so that they do not give away the lie. The rest of the group has to guess which of the three things is a lie. Continue until everyone has had a turn. Remind them that it is sometimes hard to tell when a person is lying. If there is time, discuss how they decided which statement was a lie.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Ask students how not lying can help them feel less anxious in the long term.

### Session 4: Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet—Fitting In

*Objective.* Students will discuss times they have wanted to fit in. They will recognize that their feelings can tell them when something is right or wrong.

*Materials.* *Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet, Would You Do It Anyway?* worksheet (Appendix B), pencils, (markerboard/chalkboard in room).

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Remind students of last week's session (Honesty). Ask if anyone thought about the session during the last week at a time when they wanted to lie. Let a few students share.

*Story (5 minutes).* Read *Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet* aloud. Ask students what they think the moral of the story is, and write suggestions on the board. If no one else suggests it, add, "Be careful what you do to fit in" to the list. Tell students that many of the suggested ideas could be morals of the story, and we are going to focus on the topic of fitting in.

*Discussion (10 minutes).* Introduce the concept of fitting in and ask students to raise their hand if they have ever done something (whether they wanted to do it or not) just to fit in. Tell them it is normal to want to fit in with a group of people and it's not always a bad thing. Ask for a few students to share how they tried to fit in (common examples: how they dress, how they talk, how they treat others, the music they listen to). Ask these students what the result of their efforts was—did they feel like they fit in or did they still feel like outsiders?

Move the discussion to situations in which people do something they're not comfortable with, just to fit in (examples: smoking, stealing, being mean to someone, drinking alcohol, cheating, etc.). Some people do these things to fit in, even though they know they should not. Explain that usually your feelings will tell you if something is right or wrong and that it's important to listen to those feelings when deciding whether or not to go along with something.

Remind them of Silvestre in the story. He and his friends went to the party and were having fun until Silvestre noticed that something was wrong and he got them out of a bad situation. Ask the students what would have happened if Silvestre had ignored his feelings about the situation and decided to stay at the party to fit in (the witches could have turned him into a frog, killed him, etc.).

*Activity (15 minutes).* Hand out the *Would You Do It Anyway?* worksheet and ask students to complete it honestly. If there's time, allow students to share the choices they made on the worksheet, if they want to. Discuss how it might be harder to make those decisions in real life than on paper. Ask them what they can do to make sure that they make the right decision in real life? Emphasize that when they feel uncomfortable doing something, that is probably a sign that it's not a good choice. Remind them that their real friends will like them even if they do not do it.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Ask students if they see the connection between making good decisions about friends and their anxiety.

### **Session 5: The Hog—Sharing**

*Objective.* Students will recognize the benefits of sharing and practice using it to solve a problem.

*Materials.* *The Hog*, skit scenarios (Appendix C), (markerboard/chalkboard in room).

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Remind students of last week's session (Fitting In). Ask if anyone had an experience trying to fit in during the last week. Allow a few students to share.

*Story (5 minutes).* Read *The Hog* aloud. Ask students what they think the moral of the story is, and write suggestions on the board. If no one else suggests it, add, "It is important to share with others" to the list. Tell students that many of the suggested ideas could be morals of the story, and we are going to focus on the importance of sharing with others.

*Discussion (10 minutes).* Discuss the concept of sharing: letting someone else use something that belongs to you. In the story of *The Hog*, sharing means giving someone part of what you have and keeping some of it for yourself. Ask students to raise their hand if they have ever shared something with someone else (sibling, friend, etc.). Most students will raise their hand; give several students a chance to give examples. Now ask students to think about (but not raise their hand) a time when they refused to share something (e.g., a toy, food, clothes). Which time made them feel better? When they shared or when they did not? Hopefully they will say it made them feel better when they shared.

Address the fact that there are times when they should not share (e.g., they probably are not supposed to share food in the cafeteria).

Point out that if they think they will get in trouble for sharing, they probably should not do it.

Ask students why people should share. (Possible answers: so people will share with you later, to be nice, you're supposed to.) If there's time, discuss what you should do if people are not sharing with you when you want them to? (e.g., be patient, ask nicely, accept that they will not share).

*Activity (15 minutes).* Based on group size, use one of the skit options below: 10 students or more: Let the students pair up, and give each pair a scenario. Allow the students a couple of minutes to read the scenario and prepare a short skit representing it (about 1 minute long). Instruct them to prepare a skit of the story as it is written, with no sharing involved. They should prepare a second skit (also about 1 minute long) that uses sharing to improve the situation. After students have prepared their two skits, allow each pair to take a turn acting them out in front of the class, first the non-sharing skit, followed by the sharing skit. When they are finished with both, have the rest of the group identify how sharing made a difference in each situation (with an odd number of students, the Halloween skit could easily have three people). If a student does not feel comfortable participating in a skit, simply allow the student to observe the other skits.

Less than ten students: Choose ten students to act out five different scenarios in pairs (or use fewer scenarios if it works better for your group). Give each pair a scenario. Allow the students time to read the scenario and prepare a short skit representing it (about one minute long). After students have prepared their skits, allow each pair to take a turn acting it out in front of the group. After each pair is finished, engage the remainder of the group in determining how the situation could have been different if they had decided to share. Ask them what the story would have been like if there was sharing and how it would have made a difference. Let students know that they will be writing their own folktales next week, so they can begin thinking about ideas.

*Evaluation.* Ask students how sharing is related to feeling good about oneself.

## **Session 6: Creating Their Own Folktales**

*Objective.* Students will use their creative writing skills to write their own folktales.

*Materials.* Notebooks, pencils, crayons/colored pencils.

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Remind students of last week's session (Sharing). Ask if anyone had an opportunity to share with someone during the last week. Ask a few students to share their experiences.

*Activity (30 minutes).* Tell the students that today is the day they get to write their own folktales, and let them know that they will be sharing them next week. It is completely up to them how they write their story, but it should have a moral. They can pick a moral first, and then make up a story about that moral. Or they can have a story idea first, and pick a moral that fits with their story. If they want to make an outline first, they can, or they can just start writing. It can be as long as they need it to be to tell their story. They are to write it in their notebooks. If they finish writing the story during the session, they can work on illustrating it. If they do not finish writing or illustrating it, they can take it home to finish it, as long as they make sure to bring it back next week. Offer to collect notebooks and hold on to them until next week if any students are finished with their folktales and are afraid they'll lose them before the next session. Allow them the rest of the time to work on their stories.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Ask students to share which of the four stories they already read served as an inspiration for the story they are writing about themselves.

## **Session 7: Sharing Their Folktales**

*Objective.* Students will have the opportunity to present their folktales to the class and have closure to the counseling part of the group.

*Materials.* Notebooks with their folktales that they wrote the previous week.

*Introduction (5 minutes).* Remind the students that this is the last "real session" and it is their time to share their folktales with the rest of the group. Give the students a few minutes to review their own stories from the previous week.

*Activity (30 minutes).* Give each student a chance to read their story for the group (either in front of the class or from their seat) and share the illustrations. Some students may not be comfortable reading their stories aloud; offer to read it for them or let them pick another student to read it for them. If they simply do not want others to hear it, allow them to just listen to the other stories (they may change their mind by the end). If any students forgot their written

stories, give them the option of telling the group their story from memory if they would like to. If the group is fairly small, there will be time for students to elaborate more on their stories, and talk about the moral and why they chose that. Other students can respond to stories and comment on the parts they liked. Encourage them to take their stories home and share them with their families, if they have not already done so.

Once everyone has had a chance to share their folktales, do some wrap-up discussion for the group. They will see each other again next week, but it will mostly be a time for the assessments like they had the first week. Give them an opportunity to talk about what the group has been like for them. They may want to share something they learned from the group.

*Evaluation (5 minutes).* Ask students to share what was the hardest and easiest aspect of writing their own folktale.

### **Session 8: Wrap up and Culminating Festivities**

*Objective.* Students will have an opportunity to share their impressions of the group, and how it felt to share in a culturally relevant group work experience with their peers.

*Materials.* Posttests instruments, pencils, and snacks and beverages for students.

*Introduction (10 minutes).* Let students know that the “party” will be starting in a few minutes, but that first the facilitator would like to ask them the following questions: How did it feel reading and writing folktales, and how useful will the morals be in their school activities? How would the morals and lessons learned throughout the group intervention help students improve their self concept and monitor their anxiety? And how did it feel to have a few minutes each week to share some stories about their culture in a school setting?

*Activity (30 minutes).* First, distribute the posttests and repeat the instructions from the first session. As soon as everyone has completed their instruments, start the culminating festivities.

## **PILOT STUDY INFORMATION**

To determine the initial efficacy of the 8-week *Cuento* group work intervention, the authors piloted the proposed intervention with a

group of Latina/o students attending a rural middle school in the southeastern United States. Approval was sought and granted from the first authors' university IRB as well as the school district and school principal prior to commencing the pilot study. A total of 70 students of Mexican heritage enrolled in grades 6–8 attending one pre-K–8 school took part in the study. Two of these students had to drop out of the intervention due to unforeseen reasons, leaving a total sample of 68 students. Of the remaining students, 40 were female. The largest represented grade was seventh ( $n = 29$ ), followed by sixth ( $n = 24$ ), and eighth ( $n = 15$ ). All children were between 11 and 15 years of age ( $M = 12.6$ ). Lastly, preadolescents (ages 11 and 12) comprised 55.9% of the sample ( $n = 38$ ) and adolescents (13–15) comprised 44.1% of the sample ( $n = 30$ ). Every participant was able to communicate verbally in English and Spanish.

Data on the efficacy of the intervention were collected using The Behavioral Adjustment subscale of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale for Children Second Edition (PHCSCS–2; Piers & Herzberg, 2003) to measure changes in participants' self-concept and the Trait subscale of the English version of the State-Trait Anxiety Index for Children (STAIC; Spielberger, 1973) to measure changes in participants' anxiety. The specific instruments in this pilot were chosen because of the relevance of student self-concept and anxiety to their personal–social development. Both measures were administered during the first and eighth (termination) sessions as a pre- and posttest. This data analysis effort was undertaken to demonstrate the importance of collecting this type of detailed information prior to administering a group intervention for the first time; however, 8 weeks may not be enough time to produce significant changes in either self-concept or anxiety. Finally, two participants chose to complete the instruments in Spanish due to limited English proficiency, and the rest completed the instruments in English.

Two research assistants trained in delivering the school counseling intervention served as group leaders. Both research assistants were Caucasian female counselors in their mid-20s with experience working with school-aged children who also were bilingual and fluent (writing, reading, and speaking) in English and Spanish. The first author was present for the first and eighth sessions, in order to assist in delivering the pretest and posttest, as well as to allow participants to ask questions about the intervention. Table 1 includes pre- and posttest scores on both instruments, and compares the results of males and females and preadolescents and adolescents. Unfortunately, the ability to generalize these results to a larger population of children of Mexican heritage is limited due to the sample size in this pilot study. In addition, the data reported in Table 1 should be considered

**Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations for Sample, Based on Gender and Age Grouping ( $N = 68$ )**

Variable	Behavioral Subscale of the PHCSCS-2 ( <i>t-scores</i> )		Trait Subscale of the STAIC ( <i>raw scores</i> )	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Preadolescents				
<i>M</i>	51.16	53.79	34.18	33.39
<i>SD</i>	6.85	8.29	4.88	4.61
Adolescents				
<i>M</i>	49.63	48.63	34.73	34.00
<i>SD</i>	8.69	8.63	7.40	6.61
Females				
<i>M</i>	50.05	51.18	35.38	34.43
<i>SD</i>	7.96	8.97	6.53	5.98
Males				
<i>M</i>	51.11	52.00	33.07	32.57
<i>SD</i>	7.39	8.61	5.48	4.75

Note. T-scores of the PHCSCS-2 range from 62-22, and raw scores on the STAIC-Trait, from 20 to 60.

and interpreted with caution because a control group was not used as part of the pilot study. Furthermore, because this study focused on rural emerging Latino communities instead of urban emerging Latino communities, it becomes precarious to extrapolate these findings to urban settings.

## CONCLUSION

The intervention at the center of this study was designed for middle-school aged children living in rural emerging Latino communities. This was done to take into account the context of place, as well as the research-supported notion that Mexican heritage youth may be more likely to experience mental health issues than their non-Latino peers. Furthermore, practitioners should consider the impact of culturally- and contextually-appropriate interventions with subpopulations of different ethnic groups. It simply would not have been appropriate to simply rescale what Malgady et al. (1990a, 1990b) or Ramirez et al. (2009) had used, not just because they were not school counseling-based interventions, but more importantly because neither of those interventions was conducted in rural emerging Latino communities.

As counselors in general seek to address the unique needs of youth from cultural, ethnic, gender, or socioeconomic perspectives, it seems

almost overwhelming to challenge professionals to now consider not only the urban/suburban/rural nature of communities in which they work, but also to take into account the size and history of the local Latino community. And yet, if the majority of the research and interventions designed for Latina/o populations have failed to deliberately consider these contexts, how certain can practitioners be that their interventions are as relevant as they could be when working with youngsters of Mexican heritage living in burgeoning Latino communities? No doubt this is a difficult question to answer. Perhaps offering interventions like the one proposed in this article to Latina/o students in these communities, at the very least, will enrich the school experiences of these children.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Mexican and Latin American Folktales from Bierhorst (2003) and Philip and Mair (2003)**

The Talking Stone  
 Montezuma's Wound  
 The Vanishing Bride  
 Antuco's Luck  
 Don Dinero and Doña Fortuna  
 The Horse of Seven Colors  
 Pedro de Urdemalas  
 The Bird Sweet Magic  
 Juan María and Juana María  
 The Witch Wife  
 Seven Blind Queens

The Flea  
The Story of the Sun and the Moon  
The Tailor Who Sold His Soul to the Devil  
The Hog  
Pedro the Trickster  
The Shadow  
The Mule Drivers Who Lost Their Feet  
The Two Marias  
Cinder Juan  
The Endless Tale

## APPENDIX B

### Would You Do It Anyway?

1. You are taking a test and your friend asks you for some of the answers. You know cheating is wrong, but would you help your friend anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

2. Your friend always borrows your clothes without returning them, if he/she asked to borrow your new jacket, would you let him/her borrow it anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

3. If you are playing with your friends and they all go into the woods, where your parents said you are not allowed to go, would you do it anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

4. The popular kids said you could be their friend if you smoke a cigarette with them. You really do not want to, but would you do it anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

5. Your new friend tries to get you to sneak into a movie without paying, but you do not think you should, would you do it anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

6. Your friends always make fun of the new student, and you think it's really mean, but would you go along with it anyway?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

7. You are at the mall with some classmates, and they want you to steal a shirt. You do not want to, but would you do it anyway, just to impress them?

I would I probably would Maybe I probably would not I would not

## APPENDIX C

### Sharing Scenarios for Skits

Antonio just got back from trick-or-treating and got lots of good candy. His younger sister Maria does not have any Halloween candy because she was sick and could not go. Maria really wants some of Antonio's candy, but he refuses to give her any. The two of them argue about it until their parents send both of them to their rooms for fighting.

Miguel got a new video game for his birthday. He and his friend Luis often borrow each others games, but this game is so cool that Miguel just wants to keep it for himself. Luis asks to borrow it and Miguel tells him no, he's too busy playing it to let Luis use it. Luis gets mad, stops letting Miguel borrow his games, and does not want to hang out with Miguel anymore.

Teresa and Isabel are playing at Teresa's house. Isabel decides that they should take turns riding Teresa's bike, but Teresa does not want Isabel to crash it and mess it up. Isabel insists on riding the bike, and Teresa refuses to let her. Isabel yells at Teresa and says that she is not going to be her friend anymore if Teresa will not be nice. Isabel goes home, while both girls are still angry at each other.

Linda's family only has one computer. She and her brother Hector both need to use it for homework, but Linda will not get off for Hector to have a turn. She says that since she is older, she should get to keep using it. She is in the middle of typing up her homework when Hector gets mad and turns the computer off. Linda yells that Hector has ruined her homework and pushes him so that he falls. Both Linda and Hector end up getting in trouble for what they did.

Pilar and Juliana are sitting next to each other in science class and are supposed to be reading silently from their textbook. Pilar forgot her book at home and asked Juliana if they could share her book. Juliana does not really like Pilar so she told her no. Pilar kept asking and Juliana kept telling her no. The teacher came over to give them a warning that if they did not stop talking, they would have to go to the principal's office.