



# Adolescents' and Parents' Perceptions of News Media and Bullying Experiences

Reese Hyzer, BS; Maggie Bushman, BA; Aubrey D. Gower, BA, BS; Karen Pletta, MD; Catherine Kelley, MD; Megan A. Moreno, MD, MPH, MEd

## INTRODUCTION



- Experiencing bullying as a perpetrator, target, and/or bystander can have negative effects on adolescents' physical and emotional health
- Parents and adolescents are often exposed to youth bullying stories, which are often dramatized and propagated through news media in print and online
- Little is known about how an adolescent's experience with bullying shapes perceptions of news articles about bullying and cyberbullying

The purpose of this study was to understand how adolescents' experiences with bullying impacts adolescent and parent perceptions of bullying and news media.

## METHOD

This study was approved by the University of Wisconsin-Madison IRB.

### Settings and Subjects

- Adolescent-parent dyads were recruited at two primary care clinics in the Midwest
- Participants were adolescents between 15 and 18 years old and their parent or guardian who read English
- After informed consent, participants were separated into different rooms for individual interviews

### Interview Measures

- Participants identified their or their child's role(s) in bullying or cyberbullying:
  - Target
  - Bystander
  - Perpetrator
  - No experience
  - Bully-victim
- Participants were asked:



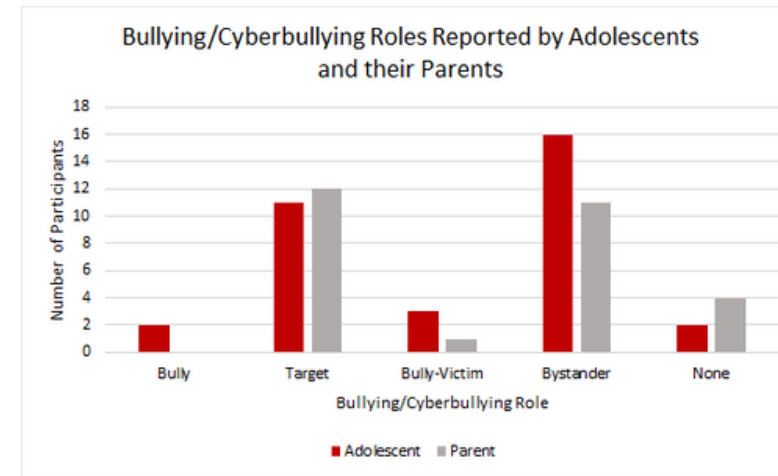
How has your experience affected the way you perceive news media articles related to bullying or cyberbullying?

### Analysis

- Qualitative thematic analysis was utilized by three coders utilizing the constant comparative approach

## MAIN FINDINGS

- 90% of adolescents and 80% of their parents reported that the adolescent had experienced bullying in at least one role
- Adolescents reflected that their past experiences with bullying influenced their news media perceptions



- Parents expressed having a heightened and empathetic response to bullying news media articles, noted the role of technology and social media in their child's life, and reflected on their own role as parents



Table 1: Parents' Perceptions of Bullying News Media Articles

Theme	Example Quotes
Heightened response and empathy	<i>I think that I'm extra sensitive to it because I know that he has experienced it...</i> <i>I mean, you're gonna be over—more—sensitive to it if it's happened to your child, um, than if it hasn't.</i> <i>Oh, I definitely feel like if there's some—something that's, you know, hit home. I know somebody or—whatever, it definitely, you know, um, makes me feel more, um, empathetic.</i>
Social media and technology	<i>I think it's worse with the social media nowadays...</i> <i>I mean it's, it, it's a part of their life much more than it is, um, generations past because—you know, it's cellphones, it's—it's everywhere.</i> <i>I don't like my kids on the internet that much, so I don't get to see cyberbullying.</i>
Reflection on parenting	<i>I just used empowerment of, you know, try to empower your kids to stand up or to try to walk away or try different things.</i> <i>I talk to my kids about it and um and support anything that helps prevent that</i> <i>So as a parent you're just a bystander, trying to be supportive at home, but it's hard to know where to go...it's one of the more challenging parts of parenting...I think it's a really hard issue to know how to tackle as a parent.</i>

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

- 20 adolescent-parent dyads (n = 40)
  - Adolescent age: M = 16.05 (SD = 1.00)
  - Parent age: M = 49.2 (SD = 6.78)

### Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Adolescent n (%)	Parent n (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	11 (55)	4 (20)
Female	9 (45)	16 (80)
<b>Race</b>		
White	14 (70)	16 (80)
African American	3 (15)	2 (10)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1 (5)	0 (0)
Multi-racial	2 (10)	1 (5)
Hispanic/Latino	0 (0)	1 (5)

## CONCLUSIONS

- Findings suggest that experiencing bullying may sensitize adolescents and parents to news related to this topic
- Stakeholders, such as pediatricians and journalists, should be aware that many adolescents have experienced bullying, which impact their perceptions of news media



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is funded by NIH grant R21HD090221-01A1.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Reese Hyzer  
reese.hyzer@wisc.edu

Megan A. Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH  
moreno@wisc.edu

