

**BULLYING AND QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)  
OF WASHINGTON STATE YOUTH  
PERCEIVED AS GAY, LESBIAN, OR  
BISEXUAL: THE NEED FOR:  
“IT GETS BETTER™”**

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# BACKGROUND

- Bullying is highly prevalent in school aged youth
- Strong media and political attention.
- Washington state Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) asks youth whether they had been bullied specifically due to perceived sexual orientation.
- Youth Quality of Life Surveillance 6-item Measure (YQOL-S) also fielded in WA HYS.
- Can QoL assessment help support strategies such as the national, “It Gets Better Project™” to reach Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Youth during these difficult years?.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

We examined the association between self-reported bullying because of perceived sexual orientation and quality of life among middle and high school students in Washington State.

# METHODS

- Data from Healthy Youth Survey 2008 - a school-based, cross-sectional survey representative of 8th, 10th, and 12th grade Washington State youth.
- Differences examined in YQOL-S.

# MEASURES

## BULLYING BECAUSE OF PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Healthy Youth Survey 2008 item:

*In the past 30 days, how often were you bullied, harassed, or intimidated at school or on your way to or from school because someone thought you were gay, lesbian or bisexual (whether you are or are not)?*

- a. 0 times
- b. 1 time
- c. 2-3 times
- d. About once a week
- e. Several times a week or more

# MEASURES

## YQOL-S Items:

1. I feel *good* about myself
2. I feel I am *getting along* with my parents or guardians
3. I feel *alone* in my life
4. I *look forward* to the future
5. I am *satisfied* with the way my life is now

Scale used with these items: *(please circle the number)*

NOT AT ALL    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    VERY MUCH

6. Compared with others my age, I feel *my life is...*

Scale used with this item: *(please circle the number)*

MUCH WORSE THAN OTHERS    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    MUCH BETTER THAN OTHERS

# ANALYSES

- Mean scores were compared between youth who reported any bullying and youth who reported none by *t*-test allowing for unequal variances.
- *t*-tests were used to compare the prevalence of reporting feeling depressed or seriously considering suicide in the past year.

# RESULTS

## YQOL-S and individual items for 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders by gay/lesbian bullied status (y/n) – Healthy Youth Survey 2008

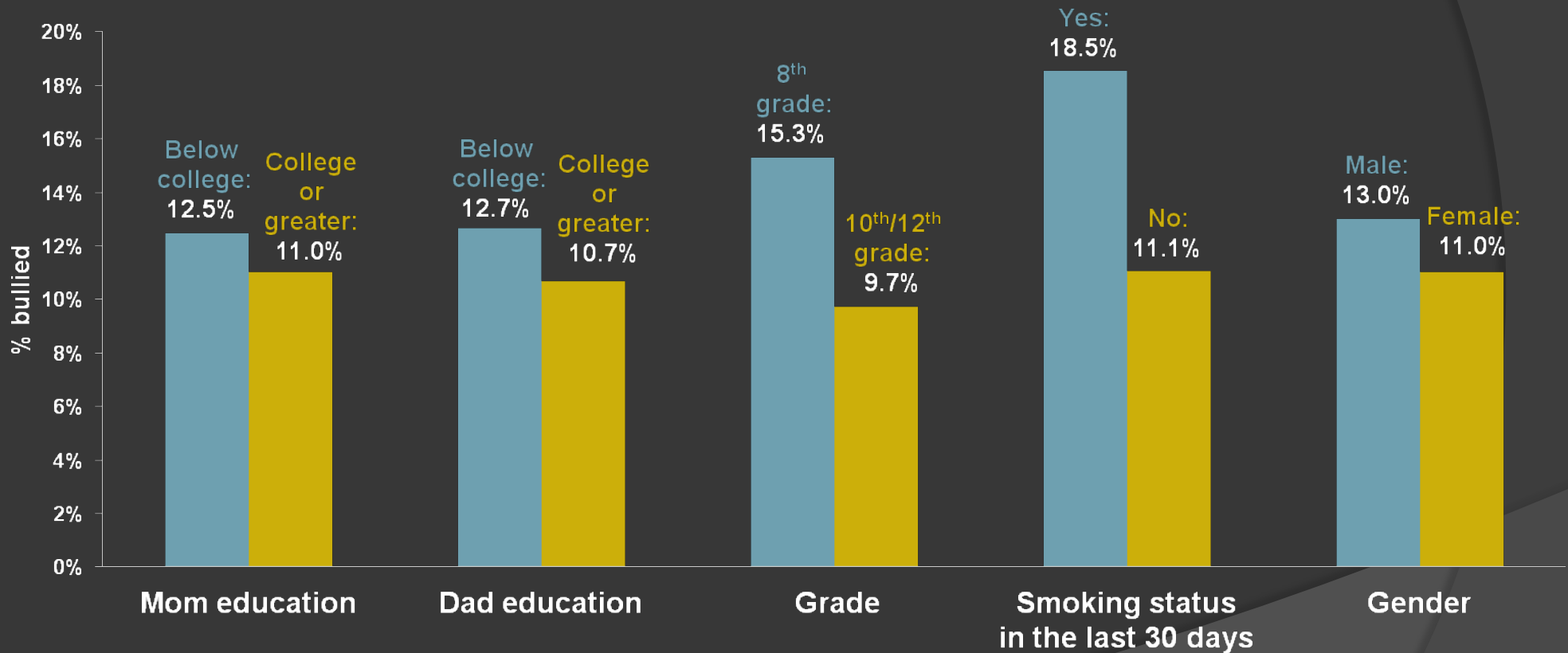
YQOL-S item	Bullied?	N	Mean*	SD
YQOL-S index score (0-100)	No	8586	74.9	20.0
	Yes	1142	61.8	23.9
Get along with parents or guardians	No	8643	73.8	28.9
	Yes	1150	61.1	33.2
Look forward to the future	No	8623	82.9	24.9
	Yes	1146	72.0	32.2
Feel good about myself	No	8623	75.9	26.5
	Yes	1145	61.2	32.5
Satisfied with the way my life is now	No	8604	71.2	29.6
	Yes	1144	56.5	34.2
Feel alone in my life	No	8569	76.7	31.5
	Yes	1140	62.3	35.6
Compared with others my age, my life is better	No	8547	69.1	25.6
	Yes	1140	58.2	30.1

\*All means are significantly different at the ( $p < 0.0001$ ) level



# RESULTS

**% gay bullied<sup>†</sup> among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders by risk factors of low quality of life — Health Youth Survey 2008**



<sup>†</sup>The percentage differences of bullied by dad education, grade, smoking status, and gender were all statistically significant at level of  $\alpha=0.01$ ; the percentage difference of bullied by mom education was statistically significant at level of  $\alpha=0.05$ .

# RESULTS

YQOL-S item scores and risk factors for 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls by gay/lesbian bullied status – Healthy Youth Survey 2008 (n = 2179)

	Bullied (n=301) 13.9%	Not bullied (n = 1870) 85.8%
<b>YQOL Sub-scores</b>		
Get along with parents	58.1	75.9*
Look forward to the future	69.0	83.6*
Feel good about oneself	54.5	74.6*
Satisfied with life	51.8	72.6*
Feel alone in life	61.6	77.5*
Compared with others	55.3	69.6*
<b>Risk Factors</b>		
% depressed in the last year	55.0%	24.1%*
% considered suicide in the last year	37.0%	12.4%*

\*Two-sided p-value for difference < 0.0001

# RESULTS

YQOL-S item scores and risk factors for 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys by gay/lesbian bullied status – Healthy Youth Survey 2008 (n = 2162)

	Bullied (n=358) 16.6%	Not bullied (n = 1794) 83.0%
<b>YQOL Sub-scores</b>		
Get along with parents	71.0	78.5*
Look forward to the future	74.9	83.1*
Feel good about oneself	72.2	83.7*
Satisfied with life	65.4	77.6*
Feel alone in life	66.9	81.6*
Compared with others	63.2	69.3 (p=0.0006)
<b>Risk Factors</b>		
% depressed in the last year	35.1%	14.3%*
% considered suicide in the last year	18.8%	6.6%*

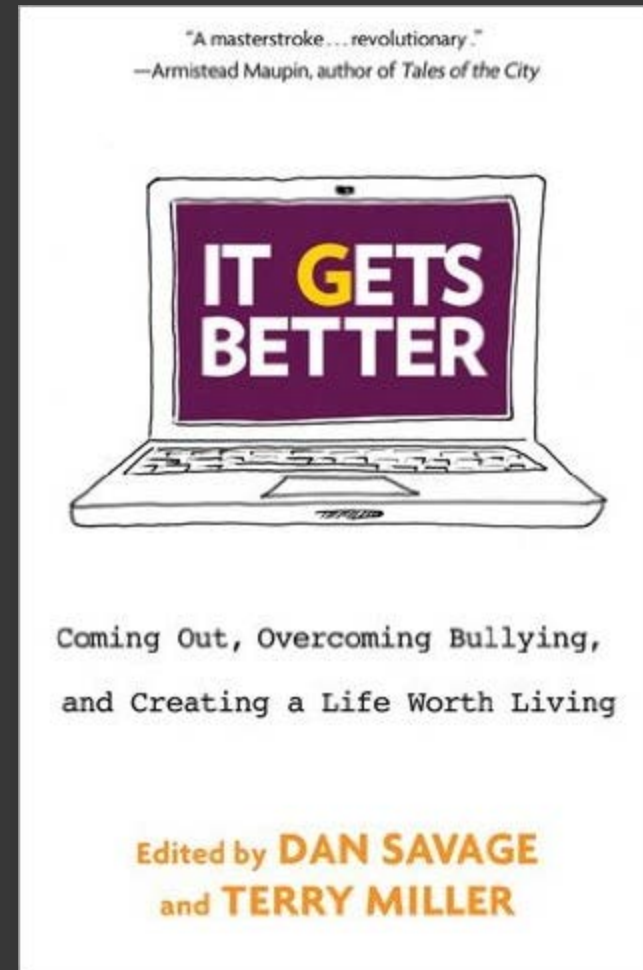
\*Two-sided p-value for difference < 0.0001

# CONCLUSIONS

- Bullying because of perceived sexual orientation is most prevalent amongst 8th grade youth.
- Depression and contemplation of suicide is especially frequent in bullied 8th grade girls.
- Low scores on feeling “good about myself” and feeling “alone in my life” reaffirm ongoing efforts like the “It Gets Better Project™” to ameliorate depression and suicidal thoughts among LGBT youth.

# CONCLUSIONS

“The It Gets Better Project™ was created to show young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach — if they can just get through their teen years. The It Gets Better Project™ wants to remind teenagers in the LGBT community that they are not alone — and it WILL get better”



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- We thank the Washington State Department of Health for sharing the DOH dataset.

[www.SeaQoLGroup.org](http://www.SeaQoLGroup.org)

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