### Introduction

- Sexual minority youths are those who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; report same or both-sex attraction; and/or have a romantic partner of the same sex.
- Sexual minority adolescents report more peer victimization and less closeness with friends than their heterosexual peers (Williams et al., 2005).
- However, little is known about the social experiences of sexual minority youths earlier in development – in late childhood and early adolescence.
- Sexual minority youths exhibit gender-nonconforming behaviors prior to adolescence (Rieger et al., 2008).
- These behaviors elicit negative peer response (Plummer, 2001).
- Thus, sexual minority youths may be at risk for social difficulties prior to adolescence.
- This phenomenon may be more pronounced for males, who are subject to more stringent gender roles than females (Horn, 2007).
- This study examines peer victimization and peer support experiences of sexual minority males and females from late childhood to early adolescence.

### Method

**Sample**
- 836 children from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD)
- 50% female
- 80% Caucasian, 13% African-American, 7% Other
- 4.3% (42 adolescents) classified as sexual minority
  - 75% female

## Results

### Peer support

- **Results**
  - For peer support, there was a grade \times sex orientation \times sex interaction \( F(2, 831) = 13.926, p < .001 \).
  - Sexual minority males reported higher peer support than other males in sixth grade (p < .01).
  - Sexual minority females perceived lower peer support than heterosexual females in sixth grade (p < 0.05).

### Peer victimization

- **Results**
  - For peer victimization, there was a grade \times sex orientation \times sex interaction \( F(2, 636) = 6.045, p < .01 \).
  - Sexual minority females reported increasing peer victimization from third to sixth grade (p < 0.05).
  - Sexual minority females were significantly more victimized than heterosexual females in sixth grade (p < .05).

### Discussion

- In early adolescence, sexual minority males perceived more peer support than heterosexual males.
  - Sexual minority males in early adolescence may seek female friends, who may have more lenient views on gender roles than males.
  - As sexual minority females transitioned from preadolescence into early adolescence, they perceived an increase in peer victimization.
  - They also perceived lower peer support than heterosexual females in sixth grade.
- However, it is not clear why sexual minority females exhibited more difficulties in peer relations than sexual minority males in early adolescence.
- Sexual minority females may not seek the company of heterosexual females because they may lack interest in feminine activities.

### Limitations

- Small number and sex imbalance (75% female) of sexual minority youths
- No explicit information on gender-nonconforming behavior

### Implications for future research

- Future research should examine peer relations as a function of both gender nonconformity and sexual orientation and explore cross-gender friendships in sexual minority youths.

### References


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**Measures**

**Kids in My Class at School.** Child participants rated the frequency of peer support and/or victimization using a five-point scale (1 = never; 5 = always) in third, fifth, and sixth grades (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996).

**Analysis**

The roles of sexual orientation and sex in peer victimization and support in third, fifth, and sixth grades were analyzed using 3 (grade) \times 2 (sexual orientation) \times 2 (sex) mixed ANOVAs. Significant results were followed by t-tests.