



Adoptive gay father families: a longitudinal study of children's peer victimization and socioemotional adjustment at early adolescence

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Abstract

Gay fathers challenge conventional definitions of masculinity and gender norms, which may put their children at risk for peer victimization at school and affect their socioemotional adjustment. Moreover, many of the children adopted by gay fathers present high rates of behavior problems at arrival in their adoptive family due to prior neglect. The majority of them still develop secure attachment patterns to their adoptive parents but we know little about the long-term protective effect of attachment quality. The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationships between child attachment during early childhood, and peer victimization and socioemotional adjustment at school age, taking into considerations risk factors such as the age upon arrival in the adoptive family and the number of former placements. The sample consisted of 53 gay fathers recruited in Quebec and their 30 children (mean age: 3.93 at *t1* and 12.21 at *t2*). At *t1*, each father-child dyad was observed at home to assess child attachment security using Q-Sort methodology and questionnaires on victimization (*t1*) and behavior problems (both measurement times) were administered. Results indicate that few children had behavior problems in the clinical range at *t1* and *t2* and they were unlikely to experience victimization at school. Attachment security significantly predicted child externalizing behavior problems at *t1* only. Externalizing behavior problems at *t2* were predicted by age upon arrival in the adoptive family and the number of former placements. The discussion will highlight the theoretical understanding of the role of parental gender in child development.

Keywords: attachment, behavior problems, child development, gender norms, same-gender parents