

## **Risk and Protective Factors for School Bullying in Children and Adolescence Adopted by Gay Fathers from Child Protective Services in Québec**

**Charlotte Dupont**

Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

**Éric Feugé**

Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

### **Abstract:**

In Quebec, Canada, an increasing number of children from the child protection services are being adopted by couples of gay fathers. While the parenting capacities of these fathers and the early developmental adjustment of their children have been extensively studied, very few studies have focused on the school experience of these children. Due to persistent heteronormativity, children raised by two gay fathers may face higher risks of bullying, as this family structure remains socially stigmatized in many environments. This study investigates whether having two gay dads constitutes an individual risk factor for bullying across school years. Other well-established individual factors were included as control variables, including reactive aggression and anxiety as risk factors, and attachment security to parents and friends as protective ones. A total of 127 children, aged from 7 to 16, from 91 different families were met. To distinguish the effect of adoption from the effect of having two gay fathers, two control groups of participants were included in this study. Participants came from three different types of families: 38 children adopted by gays fathers, 41 children adopted by heterosexual parents, and 46 non-adopted children raised by heterosexual parents. They were asked to complete a questionnaire measuring perceived levels of bullying, levels of reactive aggression and anxiety, and attachment security to parents and friends. A mixed-effects linear regression revealed that reactive aggression is a significant predictor of perceived levels of bullying ( $p < .001$ ), higher reactive aggression behaviors being linked to higher perceived levels of bullying. Furthermore, attachment security to parents and to friends was not a significant predictor of perceived levels of bullying. However, the interaction between attachment security to parents and attachment security to friends was also a significant predictor ( $p = .01$ ), attachment security being a protector of perceived levels of bullying only when levels of attachments security are high with parents and friends. Anxiety was only marginally significant ( $p = 0.06$ ), higher anxiety being associated to higher perceived levels bullying. Family type (adopted or not; gay fathers or not) was not a significant predictor of perceived

levels of bullying. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions focusing on reactive aggression and attachment security to effectively reduce bullying, shifting attention away from family structure and helping professionals better support children with diverse parental backgrounds.

**Keywords:**

Adoption, bullying, gay fathers, school years.