

Developmental changes in school children, from kindergarteners and Above toward Understanding and Experiencing a Same-sex Couple

Using a picture book

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Key words: child, homosexuals, minority

This study investigated the understanding and experience of children when meeting a same-sex couple. The participants consisted of 40 children, at four years old (n=10), five years old (n=10), first graders (n=10), and second graders (n=10).

By taking in account a child's lower cognitive ability, I performed the story-telling of a picture book in which same-sex couples appeared to them one- by-one. Then, I asked them about the contents and the feeling and intentions of the characters. In addition, I asked them about relations involving same-sex couples.

The infants understood the contents by about 50-80%, while the school children were able to understand the contents 100%. When trying to understand the feeling of the characters, the four-year-old children could not answer, but the children at five years of age and older could. Regarding the understanding of intention, the school children were able to reply. Most children understood the relations of a same-sex couple as friends, not as a couple.

Thinking about same-sex couples as if they were one's parents, the infants focused on the sexual roles(gender) and the school children focused on sexuality. In the case of a male same-sex couple, the infants felt uneasiness regarding meals, and in the case of a female same-sex couple, they felt uneasy regarding money. One child thought it was strange that there were two men as a couple at a wedding ceremony.