



PROJECT TOUCH THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG

Serving LGB youth and their families

Since 2007

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

1. Need assessment
2. Intervention approaches
3. Service delivery
4. Evaluation
5. Transferring knowledge
6. Application in different culture
7. Success factors
8. Difficulties
9. Future development



THE STORY BEGINS IN COMING OUT...

- “Desperate, devastated and dysfunctional would be the most accurate descriptors of us as parents following the announcement from our 28 year old son that he, in fact, was gay ... As parents we felt alone, terribly alone. I felt so sorry for my son and felt so sorry for myself. I had always thought of myself as the luckiest man in the world but suddenly my world collapsed.”

~Father of a gay son



Prayers for Bobby
(2009)



1. Need assessment

LGB YOUTH WITH MINORITY STRESS

Social stigma and
discrimination

Internalized
homophobia and
shame

Lack of social and
family support

Hide and live in closet,
strong sense of loneliness

Lack of social
learning in couple
development

Isolated in schools,
churches, mainstream
service, etc



1. Need assessment

COMING OUT TO PARENTS

- dilemma: a deep yearning vs unknown risk
- yearn for acceptance, an open and honest relationship
- fear of being rejected by parents or hurting them
- the most stressful but crucial experience



WHEN PARENTS KNOW

- react with shock, guilt, anger, embarrassment and depression
- a process very similar to grieving for the loss
- suffer and struggle with marginality, vulnerability and stigmatization
- 80% shows depressive symptoms and 50% has suicidal ideation (BGCA, clinical data)



COPING STAGE OF PARENTS*

混亂與失序

掙扎與抗拒

面對、解決
與成長轉化

尋找平衡
與適應

一天

一個月

三個月

半年

一年

震驚、傷痛
混亂、忘掉細節
壓抑、否認
怪責他人
關係冷凍對立
迴避互動
生活茫然

自責、找出原因
生理因素
養育過程倒帶
敏感生活互動
歸因環境變異
力求控制改變

找資源
面對現實：
選擇或被迫接受
轉移失落感
認識同志世界

納入同性戀話題
生活的融入
回歸熟悉的生活
重建價值與次序
展望未來、希望
尋找替代幸福

*曾麗娟(2007)。父母面對同志子女出櫃後因應歷程之研究。玄奘大學應用心理學系研究所碩士論文。

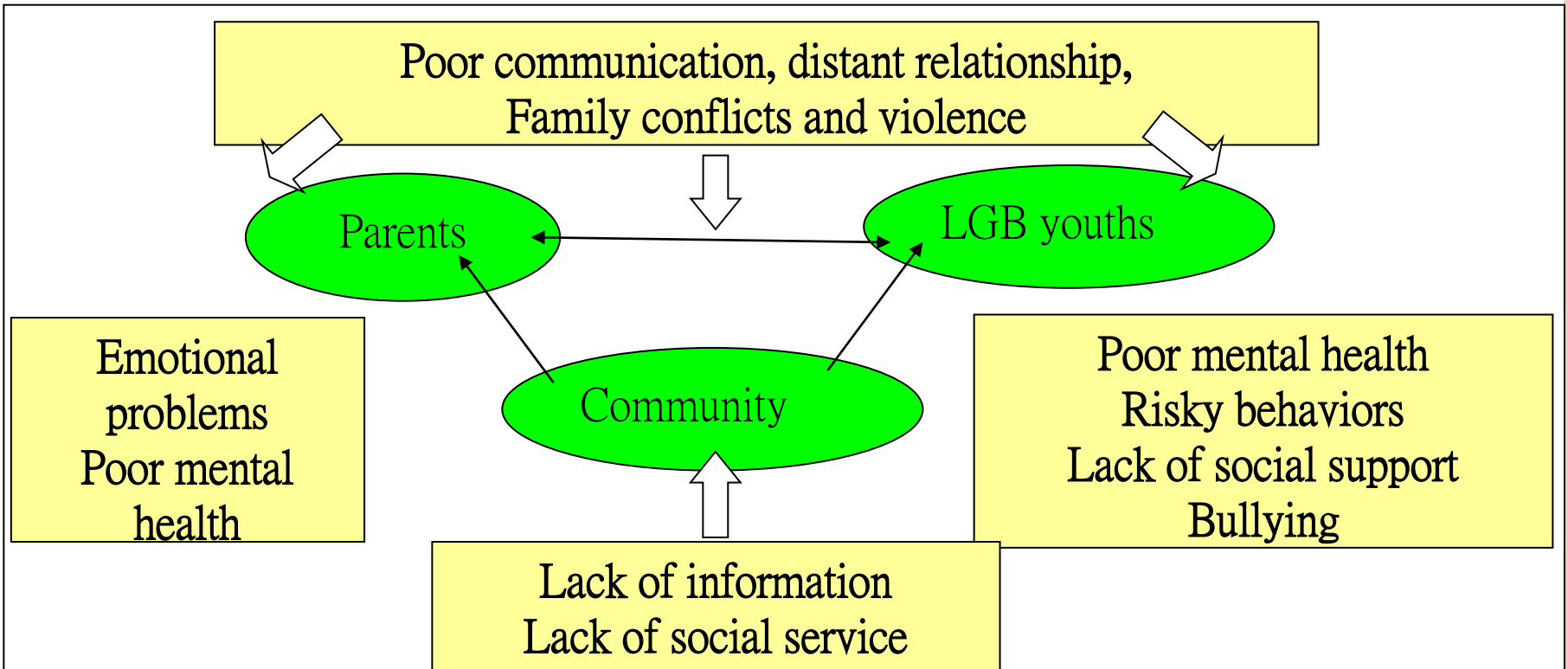
1. Need assessment

PERSPECTIVE OF MENTAL HEALTH

- research* showed that family rejection during adolescence were significantly associated with poorer health outcomes for LGB young adults
 - More than **8 times** as likely to have **attempted suicide**
 - Nearly **6 times** as likely to report **high levels of depression**
 - More than **3 times** as likely to use **illegal drugs**, and
 - More than **3 times** as likely to be at high risk for **HIV and sexually transmitted diseases**



PERSPECTIVE OF MENTAL HEALTH



*Research identifies family relationship as a significant predictor of mental health and risky behaviors of LGB youths (Ryan C, et al., 2009, PEDIATRICS Vol. 123 No. 1 January 2009, pp. 346-352)

PROJECT TOUCH

- Founded in 2007 as the first social service for LGB youths and their families in Hong Kong and in greater China
- With the objectives of encouraging mutual understandings & rebuild family relationship and promoting a more open and inclusive society



THEORY

- Affirmative Approach
- Bowen's Concept of Differentiation of Self
- Support Group
- Ecological Model and Empowerment



AFFIRMATIVE APPROACH (NASW, APA)

- sexual orientation: normal variants of human sexuality
- recognize the value of LGB' s well-being
- create supportive environment for acceptance and growth
- evaluate and externalize the impact of heterosexism and social stigma
- examine and reflect on worker' s value



BOWEN' S CONCEPT OF DIFFERENTIATION

- LGB:
 - perceive parents reactions as rejection of self
 - debating & reasoning resulted in family arguments
 - escalated into defensiveness and anger
- Parents:
 - “powerful emotional counterforce” to control their child and restore homeostasis
 - projection on children as continuation of self
- Treatment
 - reframing parents reactions as part of a normal and hopefully progressive adaptation process
 - planned distance, maintain brief contacts as connection
 - avoid fusion and estrangement



SUPPORT GROUP

- create “we” experience and share “sameness”
- normalize the guilty and lonely feelings
- develop social support and self help spirit
- restore the strength and resources from being marginalized
- critically examine the nature of oppression and make changes to the structure and culture



ECOLOGICAL APPROACH & EMPOWERMENT

- Family-centered and system perspectives
- Visibility and Social Inclusion



PROJECT TOUCH

- Normalization
 - Integrated in mainstream children and youth center
- Counseling and Support Group
- Cultivating social changes through empowerment
 - School workshops
 - Professional Trainings
 - Interviews in mass media
 - Public education and advocacy
 - Research



COUNSELING

- Individual & family counseling provided accordingly
- Counseling objectives
 - Cognitive level: Remove stigma & prejudice
 - Emotional level: Acknowledge the emotions expressed
 - Relational level: Foster communication
- Crisis Intervention: Reduce physical and psychological harm to LGB youth
- Group transition: Motivate & prepare parents to meet other parents
- Workers' role: affirming but not taking side



SUPPORT GROUP

- Both parents & LGB youth participated in the SAME group
- Encourages mutual dialogue and understanding
- Content covered:
 - Understanding sexual orientation
 - Opening dialogue with children/parents
 - Managing conflicts
 - Coping with stress and stigma
 - Coping with coming out



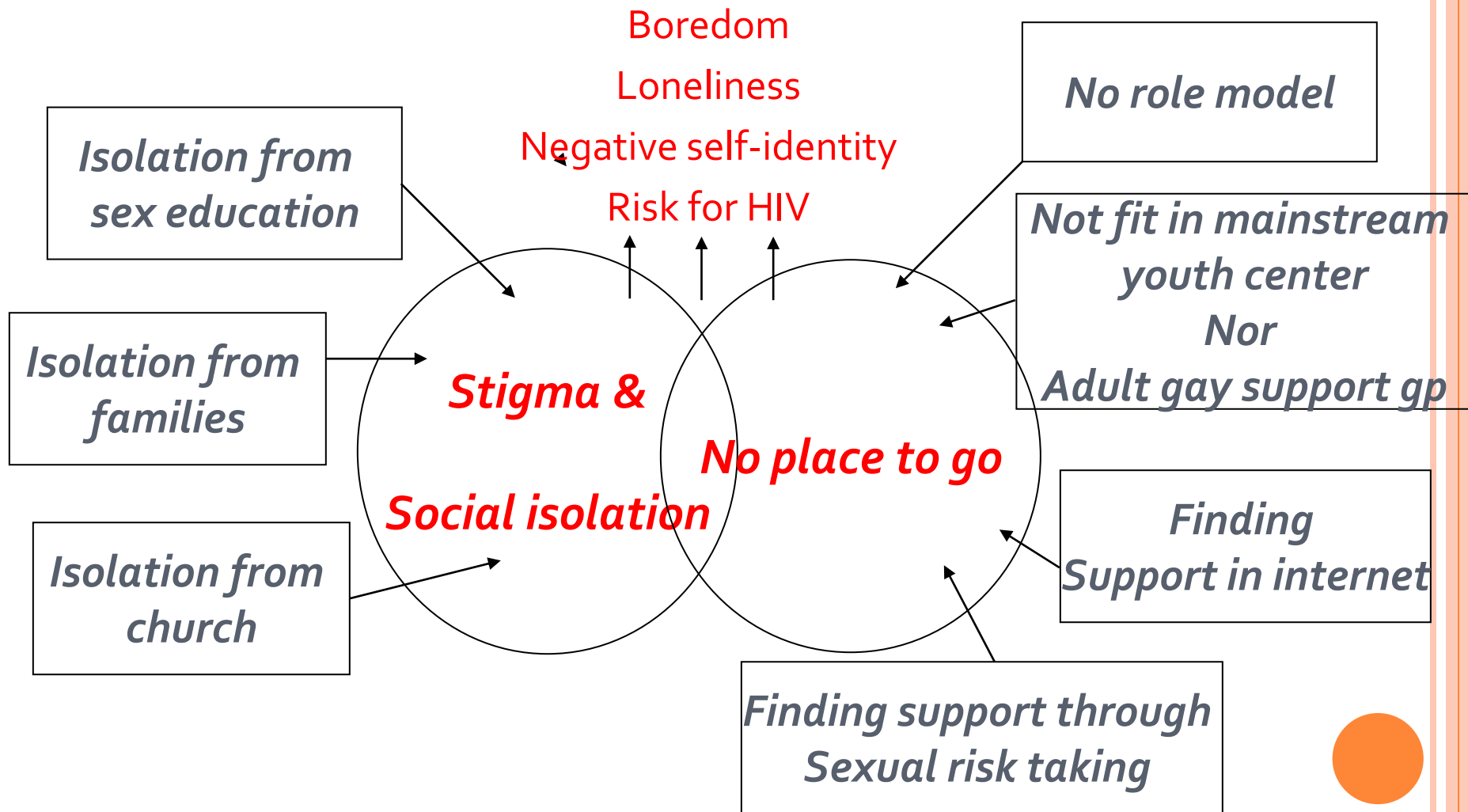
OUTPUT & OUTCOME FROM PARENTS

- Serve more than 50 families
- 83% reported improved emotional health
- 80% reported improved relationship with children

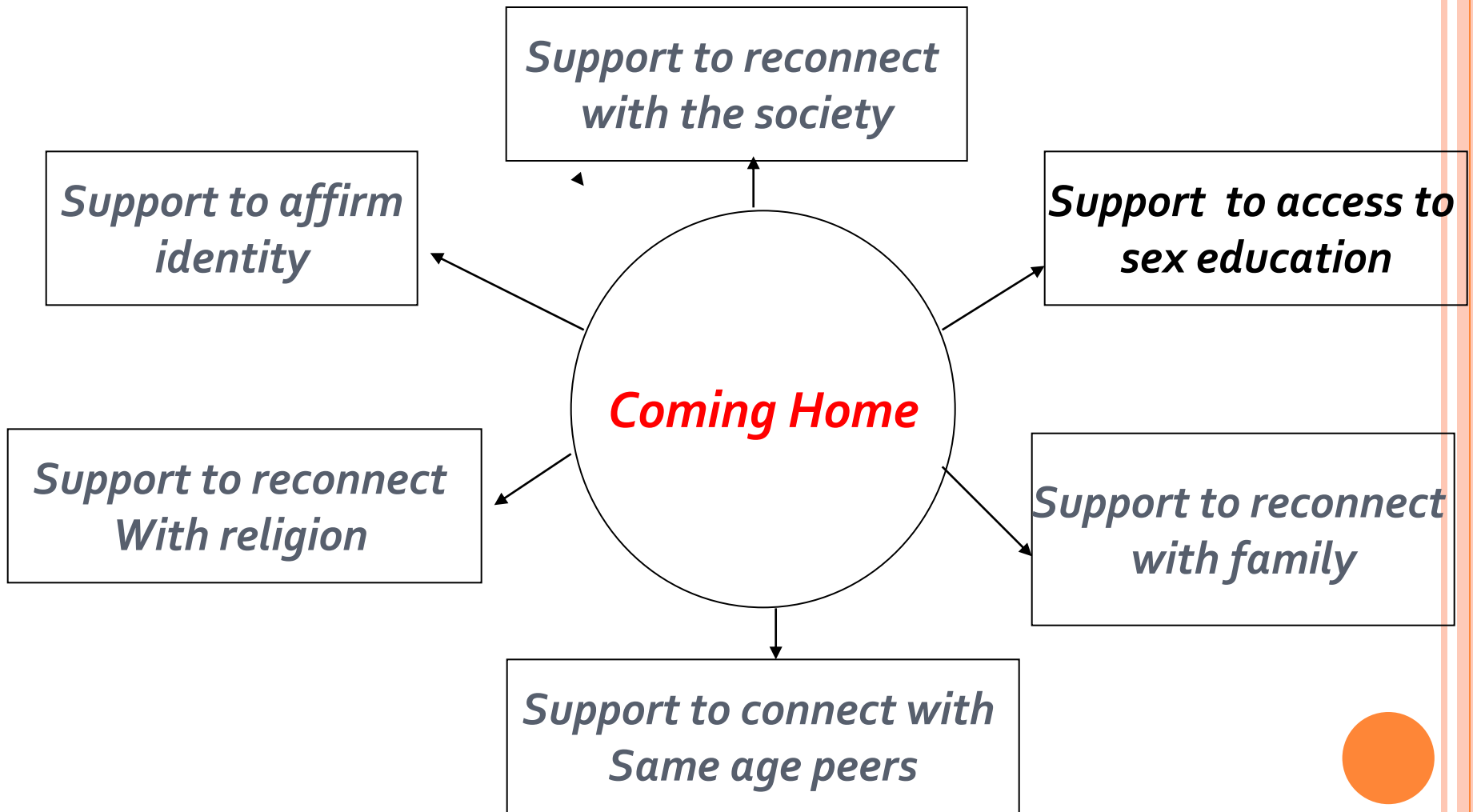
- Most important:
 - Reconnect the love and relationship
 - Regain hope of future



THEMES IDENTIFIED – BEFORE JOINING THE PROJECT



SUPPORTING QUALITY GAY LIFE



Research	Date	Collaborators
Experiences of Chinese Gay & Bisexual Youth in “Project Touch” : Empowerment-based HIV/AIDS Prevention Project	Jul 2009	Ms Diana Kwok, Department of Applied Social Science, The City University of Hong Kong
The School Experience: how is the life of LGB youth in schools	Aug 2009	BGCA
Effect of parental reaction of coming out to LGB youth’ mental health	May 2010	Prof. Winnie Mak, Department of Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Health Survey	Jan 2012	Prof. Krystal Lee, School of Public Health and Primary Care, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Attitude of University Students towards Homosexuality	Dec 2011	The Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong
How parents cope with their children coming out	Undergoing	Prof. Hung Suet-lin, Department of Social Work, The Baptist University of Hong Kong
Psychological Health and Use of Social Media by Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youths	Undergoing	Prof. Winnie Mak, Department of Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Presentation	Date	Academic Seminar
Is this a home for me? Building supports for sexual minority adolescents in Hong Kong- implication for social work practice	Jun 2009	International Conference: Promoting Harmony and Justice in a World of Conflict
Empowerment through “Project Touch” – Narratives from Chinese Gay and Bisexual Youth Volunteers in Hong Kong	May 2010	World Social Work Conference
Opening Difficult Dialogue – Sexual Education for Parents with LGB Children	Jun 2010	Asian Sex Education Conference
Successful Factors in Hong Kong AIDS Prevention for Men who have sex with Men. (as representative of Hong Kong Council of Coalition of AIDS Organizations)	Dec 2010	UNAIDS/UNDP Action Planning Meeting of Men who have sex with men and transgender People Multi-City HIV Initiative
Opening Gay-friendly Space – an experiment of a mainstream NGO	Apr 2011	Gender Conference 2011: Gender/Sexual Politics in Hong Kong
Homophobic Bullying in Hong Kong Schools	Apr 2011	“Managing Diversity in Plural Society” Conference, Faculty of Law, Hong Kong University



APPLICATION IN DIFFERENT CULTURE

- Religion
- Family culture and structure
- Changes in legal, policy and cultural norms in social environment

Japan:
BL comics



Korea: Life is Beautiful (TV)



Taiwan:
Blessing from
Buddhist



Singapore: pinkdot



SUCCESS FACTORS

- Love and collective wisdom of parents
- Non-discriminative space and attitudes
- Cultural sensitivity of workers
- Multi-leveled and integrated intervention
- Use of mass media and social media
- Integrating research as part of intervention

HKCSS 2011

Best Social Service Award



7. Success Factors

DIFFICULTIES

- Attack and complaints
- Parents insist to change children' s sexual orientation



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Changes in discourse: family diversity and fluidity
 - Families with LGB child
 - Same-sex couples as a family unit
 - Same-sex parents with their children



我們的 同志 孩子



香港小童群益會 / 策劃
蘇美智 / 著

愛，一直領航，
帶他們重新看見
自己的孩子，
就像最初。

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