

GFVM\_1045 Matters of Life and Death

# RECONSTRUCT THE MEANING OF LIFE AND FIND LEGACY AMONG THE ELDERLY IN HONG KONG : A NARRATIVE THERAPY

Presented by **Group 1:**



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# INTRODUCTION



# THE TREE OF LIFE-NARRATIVE THERAPY

## What did we do ?

- **Collaborative social science project** for college students and older adults
- Explore an older person's **life story**
- Construct his/her **tree of life**

## Objective :

- **Review and record their life stories** with the elderly
- **Discovering the legacy of the elderly** in the process of constructing the Tree of Life of the elderly adults
- Help older adults **validate their stories** and **preserve and expand their rich life insights**





**Elders are treasures.**

家有一老，如有一寶。

# BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM



## Hong Kong's population is aging

In 2038, **almost 1** in 3 people will be elderly (Wong & Yeung, 2019)



## Less contact with the elderly

- Stereotype/ Prejudice
- Increase in **nuclear and small families** (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2021)



## Subliminal Stereotype

**More than 40%** of the college students interviewed believe that most of the elderly are **“Poor, Depressed, Unable to adapt to changes”** (CHAN, 2016)



# 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW



# PROBLEMS OF THE ISSUES FOR ELDERLY IN HONG KONG



For Hong Kong, the elderly population deserves social attention.

A common misconception is that the elderly are happier than other age group.

In HK, the **suicide rate** among the elderly is several times **higher** than that of other age groups.

- **Late-life depression** is also a common psychological problem
- The quality of death for elderly people is **low**.
- **Insufficient** end-of-life care, death lacks dignity and peace.

Needs more attention to improve **the psychological health** of the elderly and the quality of **end-of-life care**. (Wong, 2016).



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Samantha Lock (2016):

Tree of Life helps people **repair people's hope and beliefs about life**,  
can be used in several fields

- Such as children, vulnerable people, mental illness and elderly

Emphasizes each person are **the master** of their own life

- **Forms identity**, contains core points of reviewing life experiences
- Retelling life stories and **reconstructing self-identity**
- Provides opportunity for client to **assess life, re-examine identity and rethink way of life**



# TWO SUCCESSFUL CASES

Ncazelo Ncube (2006) used Tree of Life to investigate mental health of African children therapeutic process **positive and effective with vulnerable groups**

- gives children **hope for future** and **appreciation of skills and abilities**

Chow Oi Esther (2020) believes narrative therapy **promote mental health process in older adults**

- Through this approach, older adults rediscover identity through drawing and dialogue
- Provides deeper understanding of their lives

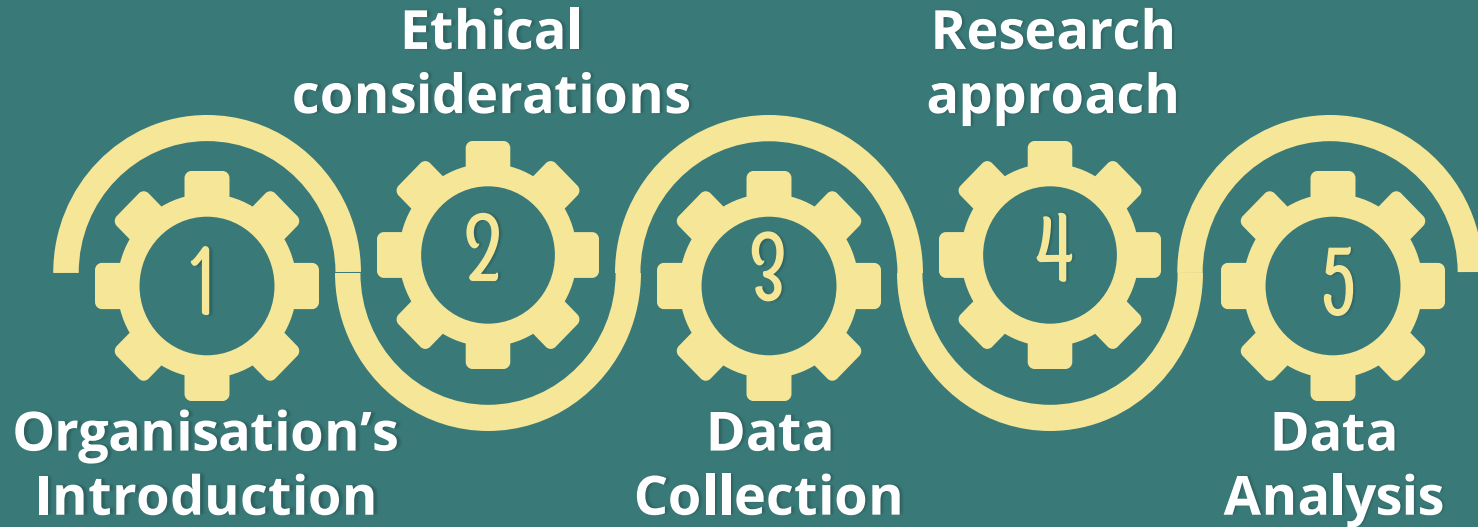




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# METHODOLOGY

# PROCESS OF THE RESEARCH



# ORGANIZATION'S INTRODUCTION

## Institution Name

Asbury Methodist Social Service  
Neighbourhood Elderly Centre



## Target audience

Elderly aged or over 55



## Objectives

Connect with different community groups to provide activities for the elderly



# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Ask the elderly to sign a **Service-Learning Consent Form**
  - to let the elderly know and understand the **purpose** and **rights** of our project
  - to gain permission to **arrange** and **process** the text, audio and video in the interview
  - to allow the elderly **request to stop** at anytime and prohibit the use of materials

**服務學習大學社會工作學系**  
**課程 CWT30007 (Section 1)**  
**服務學習研究同意書**

**同意書之目的**  
這份同意書旨在說明以參加服務學習研究之目的及權利。

<b>參與者信息</b>	
姓名(請寫)	姓名(請寫) 服務學習課程中 服務學習大學社會工作學系 服務學習課程中
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**說明**

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**聲明**

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# DATA COLLECTION

## THE SECOND SERVICE-LEARNING VISIT (22/03/2023)

1:45-2:00



Arrive and  
Meet up with  
the Elderly

2:00-2:45



Present gift and  
take group  
photos at the Hall

2:45-3:45



**Finish and present the  
ToL and take photos  
with the drawing**

3:45



End of visit

# DATA COLLECTION

## THE FIRST SERVICE-LEARNING VISIT (22/02/2023)

1:45-2:00



Arrive and  
Meet up with  
the Elderly

2:00-2:30



Talk by the  
Organization

2:30-2:45



Introduce the  
purpose and  
ask to sign the  
consent form

2:45-3:45



**Interview and  
facilitate the  
drawing of ToL**

3:45



End of visit



# RESEARCH APPROACH

1. Confirm our philosophical theoretical basis of our research : **Social Constructivism**

Definition:

- **All knowledge is socially constructed**, including ideas, beliefs, scientific or disciplinary knowledge, etc., and **will change over time** (Young, 2008).
- **Our cultural and social environment influences our values**, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

2. Use **Narrative therapy : Tree of Life**

Reasons:

- Narrative therapy **adopts a social constructionist model** that effectively allows people to reclaim and **refresh their memories** and **rebuild meaning in their lives**.
- **Tree of Life** is a metaphorical approach **to implement** narrative therapy

# Research Method: Qualitative research

Importance:

- **Contributes** to the process of **inductive reasoning**
- The ability to **introduce conclusions from a particular situation** through a subjective description of a particular phenomenon.

Step:

1. **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted
2. **Observation, note-taking, and recording** during the interview
3. Conduct **data analysis** and **information integration**
  - 3.1 **Transcription** of the two interviews into text
  - 3.2 **Topic classification**



## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION



**Name:** CHEN Oi Ho  
(Angel)

**Age:** Elderly

**Gender :** Female

**Occupation:** Retire

**Family status:** Divorced,  
with two sons



# Interview (narrative therapy) process:

## 1. The **use of collective metaphors (Tree of Life)**

- Question guide based on the Tree of Life, open-ended questions

## 2. **Dialogue** with the person

- **Discovering** their personal abilities, values, beliefs and unique life moments
- **Deconstructing** and strengthening understanding of the interviewee's life story's aspects

## 3. Use of **therapy files**

- **Co-authored** with the participant to **draw** a **unique tree of life** based on her description



# DATA ANALYSIS (THEMATIC ANALYSIS)

## 1. Familiarizing our data



transcribed: transcribing the verbal content of the interview into text

## 2. Generating initial codes

## 3: Generating themes

- Organizing and summarizing the existing codes and organizing the different codes into different potential themes.
- Analyze the codes and consider how they can be combined to form an overall theme
- Some codes may form themes or become sub-themes . Some may not belong anywhere.

## 4. Reviewing potential themes

## 5: Defining and naming themes

- Organize and structure the data of each theme into a coherent narrative
- Presenting the content of the data e.g quotes from the participants
- Make sure there is not too much overlap between themes
- Determine an appropriate name for each theme, so that people can intuitively understand what the theme is about.

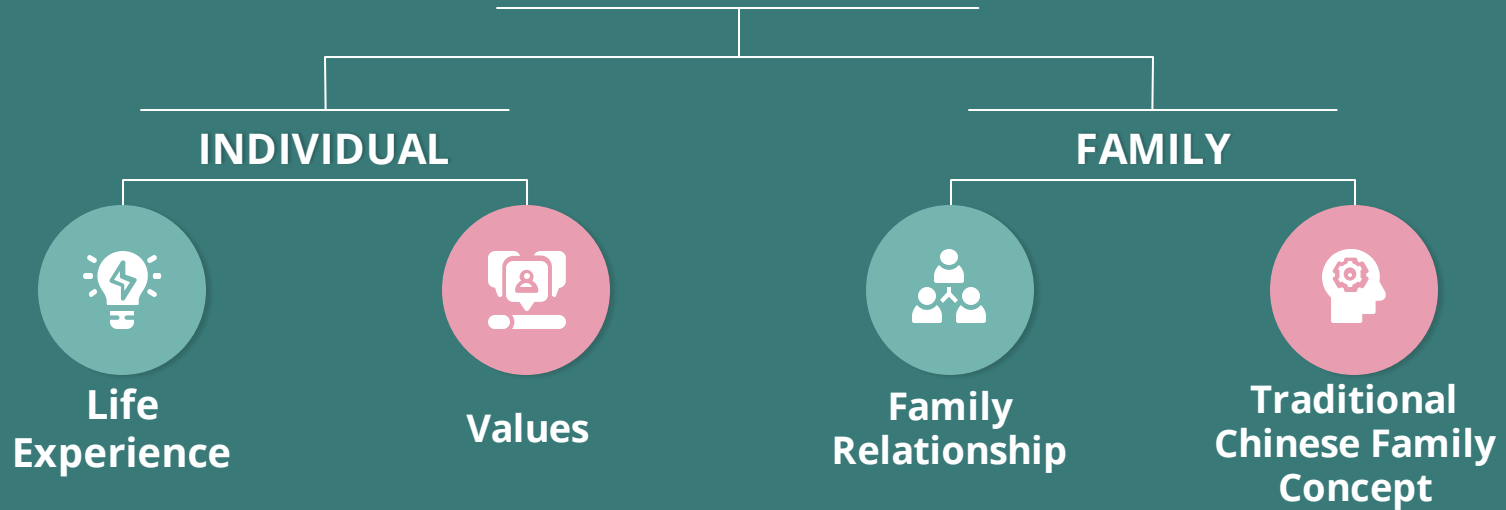
# 4

## FINDING AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE ELDERLY



# FINDINGS AND RESEARCH

**Participant:  
Angel Chan**



# INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE FAMILY CONCEPT

①

## Attach importance to the family

- She **prioritized** taking care of her **family** even **lost** her pursuit and **dreams**.
- It's not that I didn't want to think about my dream and goals, I might have thought about it at that time, but I didn't have time to think about it. **My mind is only thinking about taking care of the family and the children."**
- Children limit many of her life choices.

②

## Influenced by traditional patriarchal social concepts

- **"Obedience to the husband, with male authority as the axis.**
- Although she wanted to buy a flat to improve their living environment, her husband opposed it, so she couldn't do it.
- **The male lead outside, the female lead inside.**
- She wished to be a **good wife** and **mother**. Her wishes were **family-centric**, not personal.
- **"I want to be a professional woman? I don't have this idea. I only want to get married and have children. I hope my children can grow up healthily."**



# INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE FAMILY CONCEPT

3

## Value on filial piety (Chinese Parental Respect)

- She believes that it is the **responsibility of children** to **take care of their parents**.
- "It should go without saying that the son treats his parents well; you cannot claim that after you are married, you no longer care about them."

4

## Implicit expression of care and love

- express **love through actions, not words**, between a mother and children.
- She thinks that her son **feels the love and care that she did not say**.
- **The love between us cannot be expressed in words. They know in their hearts whether they are taken care of.**
- "I don't spend all the money they give me; I'm saving for them, but I don't tell them. When they need it, I will "lend" it to them. Although I say I lend it to them, the truth is that the money is left to them when I die."

# FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

①

## Poor relationship with ex-husband

- “When he appeared in my life, I am not happy, so I do not like to mention this person, I hate him!”
- Her ex-husband **leaving all the family responsibilities** to her, bringing a lot of **pressure** to her life.
- “I used to feel sick, and he said I was pretending to be sick, I'm already very sick and I have to take care of myself. I feel very angry when I mention him.”

②

## Good and close relationship with her son and daughter-in-law

- Her son is very **concerned about** her and **takes care of her needs**, keeping her's words in mind.
- “They will go with me to travel, and also will buy my favorite things, and want to help me decorate my house, in fact, he wants to do a lot of things to take care of me.”
- She **saves most of her money** and wants to **leave it to her children after she dies** so they can use it when they need it, for example, to buy a house.

# LIFE EXPERIENCE

①

## Poor Childhood

- Lack of nutrition
- Mothers **biased her sister**
- worked as **a child labourer** to support family
- Attend **the evening classes** since she **had to work** during the day

②

## Different way to get marriage

- **Not a blind date** and **arranged marriage**
- Meet her ex-husband at a party
- Get married after dating

# VALUES (CONT)

1

## Live in the Present

- **Finds her hobbies and interests** such as traveling, dancing and playing the dart
- "Do not think of unrealistic things. Then you can be happy"
- "If I look back, I jumped to my death."
- Think about **the past** again will only be **her trouble**

2

## Look forward to the future

- Buy tickets to watch Chinese dramas in advance **for her happiness**
- "The past life is very sad. Happy things are worth recalling, but not unhappy things. We should look into the future. If we often feel worried about the past for no reason, we will be very tired."
- Thinks about what she wants to do tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, but **not think about what can be changed in the past**

# VALUES

③

## Pay attention to health

- Mention several times that she **hopes her and her family can be healthy**
- Health is **a gift** that she want her sons to cherish
- Feel that **minor illnesses** such as colds and flus are **very serious**
- **"The most important thing is health. If you are healthy, you can enjoy happiness"**



# 5

## DISCUSSION



# DISCUSSION

In this process, We...

Using **open-ended questions**:

- We use open-ended questions to help elderly people **explore their mental legacy**.
- Gain a better understanding of **their past, present, and future**.



Asked the elderly to look back on her own life

## 1 CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS:

- **Looks back on her life** and **review the big decision in her life**
- Unable to be a good wife and mother becomes a burden
- Tree of Life provides **a safe space** for elderly women to re-examine their experiences and restore their self-respect.
- They are the masters of their own lives, not an object.



## 2 EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION:

We help the elderly person become aware of the shift in her attitude toward her life

- She was **introverted and afraid to express** herself when she was young, related to **society's expectations of women**.
- But as she grew older, she became **more concerned with expressing her emotions and experiences**.
- Recall and share the feelings of different stages of life
- **Provide a guide for more women.**

## 3 THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE:

Through the therapy process, elderly people can **reflect on their relationships with their children**

- Recognize **the importance of love and emotional connection**.
- A transformative realization, particularly in cultures where **honor your parents** is emphasized.
- Love is **the most important thing** between mother and child.





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RECOMMENDATION

# RECOMMENDATION



## For Future Practice

Improve students'  
**communication skills**  
for adapting to  
circumstances



## For Future Research

**Add research** on the elderly in  
the Chinese cultural environment to  
the research field of **social  
gerontology**



## For Policy Making

As a **qualitative survey**  
before the decision of **the  
elderly care policy**



## For Educational Purpose

Raising **awareness of** the  
younger generation towards  
**the elderly**

# 7

## EVALUATION AND LIMITATION

You could enter a subtitle  
here if you need it



# EVALUATION AND LIMITATION



## Advantages

- Personalized
- Focus
- Control
- Time-efficient



## Limitations

- Lack of depth
- Bias
- Limited scope
- Pressure

8

CONCLUSION



# Thank you for your listening

Do you have any question?

Presented by **Group 1:**

GURUNG Jyoji (22219595)

LAU Fong Ching (22236538)

LI Weiyuan (19219806)

NGAI Sin Yiu (22236929)

XIE Kwan Ling (22235558)



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