

COVERING HEALTH: HEALTHWORLDS OF FIRST-GENERATION CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN BOSTON CHINATOWN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through three-month fieldwork in a local church and a community park in Boston Chinatown, I tried to understand how immigration experiences influence the health lives of first-generation Chinese immigrants. I explored three aspects of community members' health lives: how the *space* of Chinatown influences and reflects people's post-immigration healthworlds; the dynamics of *community* health supports and health challenges; and the daily health lives of these immigrant *individuals* within their respective families.

In this poster, I will focus on the key theme of my research, social insurance: **it is the creation of community members' moral agency and reflection of their moral solidarity- turning a social network to a web of caring and covering the health needs that are not guaranteed by Biomedicine system nor medical insurance in everyday life.**

2. METHODS

◆Participation Observation:

- ✓Church fellowship group, Sunday Worship visit, and fellowship group trip;
- ✓Hanging out in community park;
- ✓Walking around Chinatown during free time.

◆ Semi-Structured Interview with 11 interviewees:

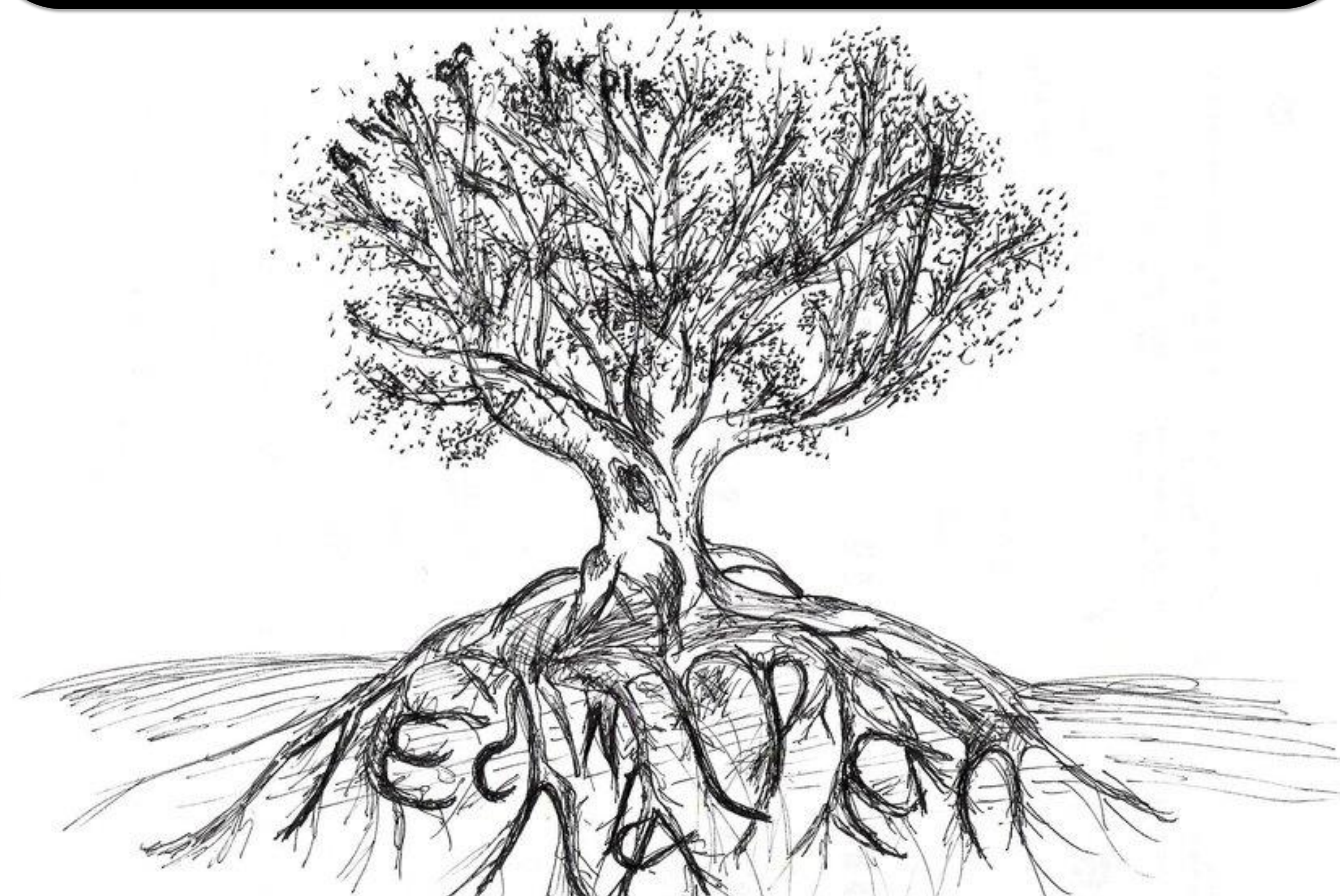
- ✓ Conducted in the life scenes of interviewees: home, workspace, and community space;
- ✓ Conducted in three languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, and English.



Community Park

3.1. SOCIAL INSURANCE: Health in Everyday Life

Healthworld is a region of lifeworld, the mirror of lifeworld. Our consciousness to the search for well-being is only in particular action and isn't completely guide by health knowledge. As the tree below, what we can see and feel in a glance is not the entire body of the tree. Many community members said that they don't have particular health concern. During participation observation, I realize what guides their health-seeking behaviors are their healthworlds that are strongly influenced by religion, experience, emotion, and values. What they want and need don't necessarily match what medicine system provides and suggests, which makes it significant to have social insurance.



3.2. SOCIAL INSURANCE: Web of Caring

The tree's roots and joints connecting to each other are similar to social connections within community members. And the social connections are growing out of the soil of socially-shared lifeworld as Chinese immigrants. Moral solidarity forms through a sense of social belonging when they share self-perceived identity, religion, culture, experiences, and barriers. What community members brings to each other is beyond material support and caretaking action. The most important thing is that they become someone related to, involved in, and influenced by each other's life. This is something meaning for everyone belonged to the web of caring as the fact that social insurance exists means there is someone "being there" for them and there is social guarantee in a world full of uncertainty and dangerous.

4.3. SOCIAL INSURANCE: Better Self

Social insurance helps community member grow to be a better self. It is a form of moral experience on three levels:

1. Key issue community members mentioned as health concern and immigration hardship is the feeling of solitude. Social insurance gives them a chance to become someone connected and needed again. Their devotion gives them a chance to have moral agency.
2. Social insurance as a community coping strategy is a way of practicing agency, training the ability to integrate in the society community members immigrated to.
3. Community members mentioned the ways of "being Chinese" and "being Christian". Social insurance is a chance to turn their moral values into practices.

5. POTENTIAL APPLICATION

Understanding social insurance can be very inspiring when it comes to designing social services for immigrant population. Taking the church community for example, regular meetings and shared religion secure the moral solidarity within the community and make their web of caring tighter than the park community. Even though providing help for immigrants is crucial, it is more important for community members to feel belonged and get chances to realize that they are needed. Community members understand each other better and individuals are more capable of covering the health life needs beyond the reach of system.