Joyce Yu Narrator

Sarah Mason Interviewer

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Sarah Mason -SM Joyce Yu -JY

SM: I'm talking to Joyce Yu on June 4, 1979 at the Minnesota Historical Society. This is an interview conducted under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society and the interviewer is Sarah Mason. Would you want to start by giving us a little information about your parents? The province they came from and their family background and so on?

JY: Okay. My parents did not come from the same provinces. My father came from . . . Fuzhou, Fujian Province, in the city of Fuzhou. Fuzhou, I guess, in English. And my mother came from [unclear]. I don't recall what city she came from there.

SM: I see. So they met . . .?

JY: In college.

SM: In college, yes. Where were they studying?

JY: They went to Nanjing University. The University of Nanking.

SM: Oh. I see. What year was that, or years?

JY: Hmmm . . . let me . . . I have to think back. [Pauses]

SM: Or it doesn't have to be exact.

JY: Must be in the late 1930s. They came to the U.S. in, I think, 1939. Pretty soon after college, so they must have been in college in the 1930s.

SM: Yes. What were they studying?

JY: I don't know what my mother's major was. But my father's was economics.

SM: I see.

JY: As undergraduates.

SM: I see. They studied at University of Nanking only in the undergraduate . . .

JY: Yes.

SM: I see. And how did they happen to emigrate?

JY: Oh, well they didn't . . .

SM: Or wasn't it an emigration to start with?

JY: Yes. No, they didn't.

SM: Yes.

JY: They came to go to graduate school.

SM: I see.

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or JY: And my father's father had promised him that he could come to America for graduate school.

SM: I see.

JY: And they got married, so then my grandfather said, "Well, now that there are two of you, I guess I have to send both of you." [Chuckles] And so he obviously gave them a pool of money to come and they could stay as long as that money lasted.

SM: Oh. Was that to Minnesota then?

JY: No, they just could come to America. And they arrived in Seattle and stayed there for a short time with many other . . . there were other students and other young Chinese on that same boat.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: These were all very well-to-do Chinese, it was very unusual for . . . young Chinese to come over with money and with no worries, just that they could do whatever they wanted.

SM: Oh. Yes.

JY: And so together with friends that they made on the boat and friends that they met in Seattle, Chinese foreign students, they heard that Minnesota was a good place to go to school.

SM: Oh. They heard this from others on the ship?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: And from other students in Seattle. And so they came to Minnesota sight unseen.

SM: That's amazing.

JY: And then, you know, found a place and enrolled at the University of Minnesota. Many of the y all listory and a solitory and a s students that they . . . that were in the U.S. then now are in leadership positions in Taiwan as well as in Communist China.

SM: Of the same group that . . .

JY: Right.

SM: Oh, wow.

JY: So they were a very elite group to start with.

SM: Yes.

JY: There were only a handful. And so when they'd come over, they came over on the ship, it's not like they came over as immigrants. They were all traveling first class and had servants and the whole bit. And so it was not a . . . it was a great adventure for my parents as a young couple.

SM: I'm sure. Yes. Well, what was your grandfather's occupation then?

JY: Well, my maternal grandfather was a scholar. And no one has ever talked about his occupation. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh. Okay.

JY: So they were landed gentry. So they had land and I'm sure had money from that land.

SM: He wasn't an official though, or maybe he was . . .?

JY: He was active in government work, but he was not an official member of the Kuomintang Party.

SM: Oh. But I mean, was he maybe a provincial official of some sort?

JY: Yes, he was provincial governor.

SM: Oh, I see. I see. In Fujian?

JY: No, in Jiangsu.

SM: Oh yes, this is your maternal . . .

JY: Yes, my mother's father.

SM: That's interesting. And then your father's father?

JY: My father's father, my paternal grandfather was postmaster general.

SM: Oh. Hmmm.

JY: And that position is earned. You start in the civil service but then you earn it. It's not an inherited or through traditional Chinese nepotism, which is how my maternal grandmother's . . . my maternal . . . my mother's family is much more powerful politically.

SM: Oh.

JY: Even though the position, according to American standards, looks higher for my father.

SM: I see.

JY: Because one is earned and one is gotten through a network of family.

SM: Yes. I see. Was her family of higher status than your father's?

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see. Hmmm. Well, that's really interesting. And that they picked Minnesota sight unseen. [Chuckles] Well, were there really many on the ship that were coming to study or say a handful among all the passengers or . . .?

JY: I don't . . . yes, I don't know what the numbers are. I've gotten the impression it was just a handful of students.

SM: I see. Yes. And what part of the . . . what school of the university did he study in?

JY: Well, he started out in business administration, the college or school of business administration, in finance as a specialty. But he had difficulty in that school because it . . . he found it too large.

SM: Oh.

JY: And there wasn't any special help or . . . And he found from other friends, Chinese foreign students, that the college of agriculture was a smaller, more intimate campus.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And that you wouldn't get as lost. So he transferred into agricultural economics, which actually made sense anyway. It wasn't that far from his interests.

SM: Sure.

JY: So then he got a master's in agricultural economics. And while they were here, their money ran out. And at the same time their money ran out, then they had planned to, you know, return to China when their money ran out. But the war with Japan and China broke out. And so they weren't able to ask my grandfather for *more* money, and they also felt that it was too dangerous to go back. And then at that time the state department, U.S. State Department, recognized the plight of the Chinese foreign students here, that they were really caught. So they awarded grants, I think, of a hundred dollars a month to any student.

SM: Oh.

JY: As long as you were going to school. And so my mother decided to go back to school at that point. [Chuckles] Wisely.

SM: Yes.

JY: And so then she . . . both my parents went . . . continued their studies.

SM: I see. What did your mother study?

JY: Sociology.

SM: Sociology

JY: I think she only did it for one or two quarters though. And during that time my brothers were born, my older brothers.

SM: I see.

JY: So she really wasn't able to be a full time student.

SM: I see. So this was maybe the 1940s?

JY: Yes. Yes, 1940 . . . well, maybe 1940 to 1944, 1943. And then my father . . . with two children they obviously couldn't support themselves on just a hundred dollars a month. So my father heard about some job opportunities in Washington, D.C., with the Chinese Consulate.

SM: I see.

JY: And he applied for a job there and got it and they moved to Washington.

SM: This is before you were born?

JY: Right.

SM: Yes.

story Project JY: And then I was born while they were in Washington, D.C.

SM: I see. What year was that?

JY: I was born in December 1946.

SM: I see. And are you about in the middle of your family then?

JY: No, I'm the youngest.

SM: Oh, you're the youngest. I see. And then there are two brothers?

JY: Two older brothers who were both born in Minneapolis.

SM: I see.

JY: And my oldest brother was the first Chinese baby to be born at the university hospital.

SM: Oh.

JY: And I'm sure there were others born elsewhere, but he was born at the university, which was unusual because there weren't any foreign . . . you know, only foreign students . . . only students used that, would use that hospital. And so my mother tells us stories of how they showed the Mongolian birthmark, which is only on Asian babies.

SM: Oh. What is that?

JY: It's just a blue . . . looks like a light black and blue mark. But you're born with it.

SM: Oh.

JY: And it's usually . . . it can be anywhere. It goes away.

SM: That's interesting. I hadn't heard of it. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. It looks like a real faint black and blue mark. It varies in size as well.

SM: Hmmm. Well, that's interesting.

JY: So they used him to show that.

SM: Well, one thing I'm interested in is how the family structure might have changed after they were bringing up children here. How would that have differed from how they brought up Oral History Riving Control of the C children in China? Except, of course, the obvious. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes.

SM: You're in a different environment.

JY: Right. Well, obviously, it's extended family.

SM: Yes, that would be the big thing.

JY: And that was real hard on my mother.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: When my mother came to America . . . both of them, you know, of course, grew up in extended families like everyone.

SM: Yes.

JY: But not only were they in extended families, they were in wealthy extended families, where they had huge compounds not only of family members, but of servants and colleagues. So my father's family's compound not only had my father's family, but had his second wife, and all his administrative aides also lived near.

SM: Oh . . .

JY: Either just outside the compound or in the compound.

SM: I see. So it isn't all relatives.

JY: Right. In our family situation, many people, you know, come under the financial wing. [Chuckles]

SM: Ah ha.

JY: I don't know if that . . . that certainly isn't usual . . . maybe it's usual among the upper class. And my mother's mother died in childbirth when she was born.

SM: Oh.

JY: So that was very unusual. So my mother was brought up by aunts, which is very difficult for a Chinese child because if you aren't . . . do not have a mother, you are really . . . kind of a second class citizen for everyone else. And so that was probably a pretty hard life, because you never see your father, because the father's always busy. And so without a mother and being brought up by aunts, it was probably pretty hard. She doesn't really talk about it as hard, but I can imagine that it was.

SM: Yes.

JY: They were also sent to private boarding schools a lot in high school. So they weren't around their families very much. And then of course they went away to college. All of which is *completely* unusual. Maybe only a thousand Chinese at that time had that similar background.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Or, you know, very, very small percentage of people had that kind of background. So when they came to the U.S., my mother had never been in a kitchen before in her whole life.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: My father had, only because he was kind of, you know, more adventuresome, and would walk through the kitchen. [Chuckles] You know. And hang out and get food. But not because he ever had to do any work.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: And my mother had never seen an uncooked carrot or an uncooked tomato or any of that.

SM: Oh . . .

JY: Did not know how to peel a vegetable.

SM: What an adjustment!

JY: Had never done any work in her whole life. And she tells stories of how the landladies . . . and everyone in Minnesota was really wonderful to them. The landlady taught her how to cook.

SM: Ah. Was she Chinese?

JY: No. But taught her, you know . . .

SM: The basics . . .

JY: This is a carrot, this is a peeler, and this is how to peel, how to cut.

SM: [Chuckles] What part of the city did they live in?

JY: They lived in Southeast Minneapolis. You know, near campus.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And they lived in rooming houses, you know, on the third floor with . . . you know, wooden crates for furniture and old, you know, Salvation Army furniture. And this is a real contrast to their background.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: You know, where they lived, you know, in luxury. And my mother describes her courtship with my father as just before they were engaged they had a party. And my father flew a band in from another city for the party. And they were barely planes in those days much less for somebody to fly a band in. So, you know, their life here was such a contrast. They'd never known that kind of hardship. And they were pretty . . . spirited about it, because they did have some money that they could rely on. And my mother had a lot of jewelry.

SM: Oh.

JY: And during hard times, they, like many Chinese, would sell their gold jewelry. Kind of like the Vietnamese are doing now.

SM: Yes. Yes.

JY: It's a real Chinese tradition. And the jewelry was given to her not as ornaments but as . . .

SM: It's a kind of secured investment.

JY: As like having a savings bond. It's not viewed as, you know, you're giving up some ornament but you're selling something that was given to you for emergencies.

SM: Hmmm. Well, so their family and children was really completely different, and the setting.

JY: Yes. And so when they had children, they had never seen child-raising before because it was all done by nurses and, you know, *amahs*. And in fact they left the United States because of that.

SM: Oh.

JY: After I was born, I got pneumonia right after I was born, and so I stayed in the hospital for several months after I was born. And, you know, I don't know if was because of pneumonia or because it was pretty clear my mother just couldn't handle two other younger children, and then plus another child that was a little bit sick, so right after that they went back to China as soon as I got well.

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SM: I see.

JY: They went back to China.

SM: Let's see, was that after World War II then?

JY: They went back to China in 1948.

SM: I see. And that was a really hard time in China.

JY: Yes.

SM: With inflation . . .

JY: So they went right back during the war. And they went to Shanghai. And a lot of people were being displaced all over China then.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I think my father's father was, by that time . . . had been placed in a . . . in a province in the interior.

SM: Oh.

JY: And I think my mother's father, they lived with him, I think. I'm not absolutely sure of that. I'm pretty sure that he was in Shanghai at that time, because everyone was fleeing.

SM: Yes.

JY: And Shanghai was the last city to fall during the Revolution. And my father got a job at the Farmer's Bank of China and was vice president there. And it was a family-controlled bank.

SM: I see.

JY: And they, I think, were only able to stay in China for a year and a half, two years, during that time. And my brothers and I all had our own nurses and own servants and chauffeurs and the whole bit. So it was a . . . a relief for my parents to have that again.

SM: Yes.

JY: And then the Revolution came, of course, and they tell us stories. They say they took almost the last boat.

SM: Oh.

JY: That was leaving Shanghai. And they weren't able to take very much. And they talked about . . . my parents have a very valuable set of Chinese dishes that was given to them for their wedding that was hand-painted. And they're all destroyed now, because they just threw them in a box. And of course none of them survived the journey.

SM: Oh, they did try to bring them with on their trip?

JY: Yes. But they didn't know what was . . . what it was like, and they'd never packed and never done anything under those conditions. And they tell about how my brothers were upset because they couldn't take their tricycles. And so the war was very . . . seemed very removed, I'm sure, to the children. Because we were very protected. And my brothers have stories . . . my brothers were seven and eight years old. So they went to school.

SM: Oh, so they have some memories.

JY: And they have pretty vivid memories of China.

SM: Yes.

JY: And memories of smells and food.

SM: Oh, yes. Do you remember that at all?

JY: Oh, I have no memories of it.

SM: You were what, two or three years old?

JY: Yes, one to two.

SM: Oh.

JY: So we left when I was about two and a half.

SM: It would be pretty hard to remember much from that.

JY: Yes, and I think because there was so much change going on.

SM: Yes. You don't remember any of your nurses or anything like that?

JY: No. No. My mother does tell me that I did not eat very well. Because she had never fed me, had never taken care of me. So it was, you know . . .

SM: You didn't eat well in Shanghai?

JY: No, on the boat back.

SM: Oh, on the boat coming back.

JY: Yes. And the boat that we came back on, even though it was a . . . fleeing situation, they still traveled first class.

SM: Ah ha. [Chuckles]

JY: And traveled by first class train back to Minnesota again. I mean, it was logical for them to, you know, return to the city that they had friends, and lived in.

SM: Oh yes, sure.

JY: At that time, foreign students before they left were exotic. And so many of the prominent Minnesota citizens, almost similar to today, had great interest in foreign students. And so they would have dinner parties and so it was a very . . . before they . . . you know, when they were foreign students, it was a very active life. So they always went to dinners at professors' homes and got to know really the wealthy community of Minnesota, too. So when they came back, John Pillsbury was their sponsor.

SM: Oh.

JY: So it contrasts a lot from immigrants who had to go through the Ellis Island kind of syndrome.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: They really, you know . . . and not only that, when they came back again they had three American citizens.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Because all of us were born in America. And then they had a sponsor and a guaranteed job and they also, I think, had left a small amount of money in the U.S.

SM: I see.

JY: I don't know if by design or by mistake. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Maybe just for domestic . . .

JY: Right.

SM: Well, what was their guaranteed job then?

JY: Well, then my father went to work for Pillsbury, Pillsbury Company.

SM: Oh, I see. I see.

JY: In commodities.

SM: Ah.

JY: He stayed there I don't know how many years, just a few years. And then he got a job at First National Bank of Minneapolis. And he still . . . well, he's retiring this year, so he's been there, I think, for twenty-five-some years.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And he is department head of the trust department. I think he's an assistant vice president.

SM: I see. So they really had very good contacts and so on.

JY: Yes. Yes. So the initial settling was a little easier. First of all, because they knew where they were going.

SM: Yes. Right.

JY: And they moved back to Southeast Minneapolis.

SM: Oh. Is that where you grew up, in Southeast?

JY: Yes. So I grew up in Southeast.

SM: I see.

JY: Where . . . I live now. [Chuckles] I live three blocks from my childhood home.

SM: Really? [Chuckles] You feel at home then.

JY: Right. [Chuckles]

SM: Well, what about in spite of their feeling awkward about raising children physically, they must have had some values that they were taught as children. And did they try to pass these on or did they . . .?

JY: I don't know. I asked my father about that. And there's such a contrast between my knowledge of Chinese traditions and then other Asian American, Chinese American friends of mine here.

SM: Oh.

JY: And I know so little.

SM: I see.

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SM: Yes.

JY: So they were more modern.

SM: Oh, sure.

JY: Many of those traditions are superstitions.

SM: Right. And they would be more from the village and so on.

JY: Right, and so . . . and they also left China when they were young, as students.

SM: Yes.

JY: So they never ever had to *do* anything. They were all . . . they were . . . first they were high school students studying all the time and then they were college students in the U.S. And so they don't have a . . . wealth of knowledge to, you know, pull and then pass on to my brothers and I.

SM: Right. They didn't live with . . .

JY: So I don't . . . I know zip. [Chuckles]

SM: Well, they were probably in that whole group that were modernized and really rejecting the old ways and so on.

JY: Old China, yes. And my father says that there are . . . he had an aunt who had bound feet.

SM: Oh.

JY: And smoked opium.

SM: Oh.

JY: But my mother's family was a more highly educated family and also closer to Sanyet Son's beliefs and all of that.

SM: I see.

JY: So none of their family had bound feet. And she of course went to college, of which there were very few women who went to college.

SM: Yes. Yes, that was pretty early.

JY: And were *expected* to go to college. Though she actually didn't take it quite that seriously. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, she was expected . . . so the women in her family did go to college.

JY: Yes, were educated.

SM: Well, you say [unclear] was . . . that his ideals were adopted by their family or . . .

JY: Well, it was a republic, the growth of the republic.

SM: Yes.

JY: And, you know . . .

SM: And democratic ideas.

JY: Yes.

SM: So it was fairly similar to American ideas.

JY: Right. Right. That doesn't mean to say we had a democratic structure in our family at all. [Chuckles] There are great contrasts, bringing to mind democratic . . .

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: You know, there still are Chinese perspectives.

SM: Yes.

JY: Of obedience and that kind of thing. But they were a little more open-minded than many of the typical Chinese. And I know that I was in high school permitted to date, which is virtually unheard of among even the educated, similar background Chinese Americans. And . . .

SM: Oh, even among others like say [unclear] family or so on?

JY: Like me. Right. Right. I don't think his family permitted his sisters to date. Maybe once, you know, to the high school prom.

SM: Yes.

JY: But I was encouraged to date.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And we were also encouraged to be very active in high school and to be more well-rounded, which is very dramatically different from other Chinese families.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: My middle brother was a football star. And I think you can count on one hand the number of Chinese kids that play football in high school, I mean, on the varsity team. And my oldest brother was also a basketball star in high school. And that is a little more acceptable.

SM: That's . . . yes, right.

JY: But not a star, because that meant that they practiced a lot.

SM: Yes.

JY: And that meant they didn't study as much. And so my parents really wanted a more well-rounded kind of . . . child. Or my father did. I think my mother wanted us probably to study a little. She had the expectations that all her children would go to Ivy League schools.

SM: I see.

JY: Even though she really encouraged us to be more socially active, which meant that we didn't study as much.

SM: Right. You can't do everything. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. Yes. And so we still have . . . there are still some of those expectations. And fortunately for us my oldest brother fulfilled all of them for us. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] That was a blessing to the younger children.

JY: Right. And so that we didn't have to go in and that the younger ones were let off the hook.

SM: [Chuckles] Do you suppose they put more pressure on him?

JY: Oh, there's no doubt about it. And he jokingly even says that.

SM: [Chuckles] What does he do?

JY: Well, he's a doctor.

SM: Oh, perfect. [Chuckles]

JY: Right. In Pittsburgh. And he has a Chinese wife.

SM: Oh, a wonder.

JY: And two Chinese children. [Chuckles] A boy and a girl, and so the first grandchild was a boy.

SM: Oh.

JY: So, needless to say, everything has been in order. And there are great expectations for him, and he, like the oldest son, has savings accounts for my younger brother and I.

SM: Oh.

JY: And all of us . . .

SM: The oldest brother has accounts for you.

JY: Yes. Yes. And all of us, obviously, are self-supporting, so it's not like we need his support, but he . . . it was always assumed and expected that if anything happened, he would be responsible.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And he voluntarily fulfills those responsibilities.

SM: Yes, and that would be a customary thing to do.

JY: Right. Yes, for the oldest son to do that.

SM: Does he have any different outlook from you and your younger brother?

JY: He has a much more traditional outlook than I do.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Because both my brothers have a much more ethnocentric outlook.

SM: Oh, than you do?

JY: Yes, and much more exclusionary to . . . toward Chinese only. My oldest brother's . . . all of their friends and his wife's friends are primarily—other than colleagues and friends, you know, listory broil other medical students and doctors—are primarily Chinese.

SM: I see. Both your brothers?

JY: Well, with my oldest brother.

SM: Oldest brother.

JY: Yes.

SM: And what does your second brother do?

JY: My second brother is a complete anomaly, and he lives outside of Madison and right now he works with a social service agency.

SM: I see.

JY: As a . . . it's kind of a hands-on social work where they take juvenile delinquents and train them in carpentry.

SM: Oh.

JY: And so he heads . . . he's called a team . . . he's the team leader. And they build houses. And so he works with his hands as a carpenter.

SM: Ah. That really is out of tradition, isn't it? [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. And my parents are openly dissatisfied and at times act as if . . . they never talk about it. And they never talk about what he does. And are very . . . it's very difficult for them to accept that.

SM: Yes.

JY: He has a master's degree in international relations.

SM: Oh. From the U [University of Minnesota] or . . .?

JY: No, from Claremont, in California.

SM: Oh.

JY: So he's done what is expected.

SM: Is that Pomona College or . . .?

JY: Claremont College.

SM: Oh, Claremont College.

JY: It's part of the Pomona system. Actually, Pomona is part of the Claremont system.

SM: Yes, they seem to be six . . .

JY: Yes.

SM: Did he marry a Chinese wife?

JY: No. He married a Caucasian woman who speaks better Chinese than all of us.

SM: [Chuckles] How does that happen?

JY: Well, they lived in Taiwan for three years.

SM: Oh. Was she a missionary's child?

JY: No.

SM: Business or . . .?

JY: No. They met in graduate school.

SM: Oh, she was studying in Taiwan?

JY: Yes.

SM: I see.

JY: They met in graduate school and then they went to Taiwan together.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And so she learned Chinese in Taiwan.

SM: I see. Hmmm. Well, that's a really sort of bicultural [unclear] then, I suppose.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Do they have children, too?

JY: Yes, they have one kid. All the children in . . . all the grandchildren in our family have Chinese names.

SM: Oh.

JY: And my oldest brother's children, Chinese is their first language. So they have maintained that tradition. My oldest brother speaks better Chinese than all of us because he has married a Chinese wife, and obviously speaks Chinese all the time.

SM: They speak it at home. I see.

JY: And he has felt that it has been very important to maintain language. Our family didn't maintain language.

SM: Oh.

JY: So all three of us, actually, as it turns out, from our family, I speak the best Chinese, when we left our, you know, parents, and went to college and whatever. But my brothers have returned to Taiwan to study Chinese, and consequently their Chinese has improved. And I also went back, but my Chinese is not as good as theirs, but it still . . .

SM: You went to Taiwan?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh. When was that?

JY: Oh, 1975 to 1976, 1977.

SM: Were you studying there?

JY: Yes. Chinese.

SM: Oh, so you have a pretty good command of Chinese reading and writing or . . .?

JY: No. None of us read very well, if at all.

SM: Well, it's pretty difficult. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. We all speak well enough to get along on the street and in a dinner conversation. My oldest brother is completely fluent.

SM: Yes.

JY: And can speak scientifically as well for [unclear].

SM: He speaks all the time though.

JY: Yes.

SM: How does he manage to have mainly Chinese colleagues and friends? Are there so many around him or he's just made an effort to . . .?

JY: Through . . . he's just made an effort.

SM: Yes.

JY: That's just their community of friends.

SM: And he lives in Pittsburgh where there would be quite a few Chinese, I suppose. Would that be considerably more than here?

JY: No, I don't think so.

SM: Not really.

JY: I don't think so. It's just their friends. And they've always maintained that. They've only lived in Pittsburgh for a year now, but they lived in California prior to that.

SM: I see.

JY: I suppose they meet people through the Chinese Association.

SM: Oh, yes. Sure. If you just made a point of it, I suppose it would be perfectly possible. Although I would imagine that most Chinese, say in the Twin Cities, are largely surrounded by . . . well maybe not the restaurant group, but the professionals who have mainly Caucasian . . .

JY: I don't know. My parents had almost all Chinese friends.

SM: Here in the Twin Cities?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: The American or Caucasian friends they had were friends that they met when they were graduate students, so they are old, longtime friends who helped them, you know, find their way at the University of Minnesota.

SM: I see.

JY: But to this day, their friends are Chinese only.

SM: What about your father's colleagues? Or are they strictly business?

JY: They're strictly business.

SM: I see. Well, that's interesting to know. What about your own interaction with Caucasians around you as a child? Did you just see it as two worlds, your family and your friends and adapt to both pretty equally or how would you describe it? [Chuckles]

JY: Yes, I... I don't think the two worlds part really came in until I was a teenager.

SM: Oh. Yes. They would be more sharply defined there.

JY: Yes. I was a little more protected when I was little than my neighborhood girlfriends. I had to stay home a lot more.

SM: I see.

JY: But it just . . . it was more obvious in high school where there were different values about . . oh, communication with the family and understanding of . . . oh, things that teenagers need. You know, that peer pressure, you know, is more important than the family. My . . . during when I was . . . all through my life and even until this day, my mother strongly discourages me from having friends.

SM: Oh.

JY: And that's predicated on the belief that you rely on your family and you can't trust anyone outside the family structure. Unfortunately, that . . . and that, you know, is true for people in Taiwan and China today. They don't have very many friends.

SM: I see, so it's not because they're Americans.

JY: Right.

SM: It's just a pattern.

JY: But the pattern is based on extended families. You don't need to have friends because you have twenty cousins.

SM: Right.

JY: And so you have all this diversity within your own family, and you don't have to get along with everybody because, you know, you can always turn to so and so and somebody else.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: But in America it doesn't transfer because there's no one to turn to.

SM: Right.

JY: And so the relationships become very intense in the family and actually there's no mechanism within the family . . . or there's no training that my parents or any Chinese parents would have to deal with that kind of intensity.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: They're not used to being the only parent, the only intimate relationship. So there was . . . I think that kind of double bind that I was supposed to stay at home and only relate to my family, but there . . . I mean there are only four other members in my family and two older brothers who are always out playing.

SM: [Chuckles] They weren't protected as much.

JY: No, not at all. And so their view of childhood is very, very different. They had, you know, they went out and played baseball and did whatever.

SM: Oh.

JY: And I had to stay at home, and so that's . . . you know, a real difference.

SM: So in high school you followed their wishes or . . .?

JY: Well, I think there was a lot of rebellion. And . . . but I certainly had a much more homebased high school life than my classmates.

SM: Yes.

JY: And . . . the difference is that I went to a private school, too. So the contrast wasn't as great for me. If I had been in a neighborhood school, I think it would have been just terrible.

SM: Yes.

JY: Because no one had neighborhood friends in my high school, because we all lived throughout the city.

SM: Yes.

JY: So in order for us to get together, we always had to get our parents to arrange it and drive us and drop us off. And so that was pretty common with everybody.

SM: Which school was that?

JY: I went to University High School.

SM: I see.

Y PROJE JY: And my brothers went to the public school, they went to Marshall

SM: Ah.

JY: U High. Or it wasn't U High Marshall then, but it was Marshall. Just Marshall High.

SM: Marshall.

JY: And the reason for that is that my parents are very class conscious. And they decided that if to protect me they would send me to a school where everyone would be of similar class background.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: So they would never have to deal with, "You can't be friends with so and so, because their parents aren't educated." Everyone at University's High School was.

SM: This is the University's high school run by their college of education or something?

JY: Yes.

SM: I see. So it was largely professor's children . . .

JY: Yes.

SM: And other wealthy . . . [chuckles]

JY: Well, other people concerned about education.

SM: Yes, which could be a lot of different people.

JY: Not so much about . . . it wasn't so much wealth, it wasn't as . . . expensive. It wasn't a *private* private school.

SM: Yes. Can anybody send their children there if they can pay for it? Oh, was it because they had studied there or that was long ago though . . .

JY: They just . . .

SM: Just applied and . . .

JY: Applied.

SM: Yes. Maybe they were looking for diversity to start with.

JY: Yes.

in brojec SM: Yes. Hmmm. That's really interesting. Well, at that point, how did you identify yourself? Mainly Chinese or Chinese American or . . .?

JY: Hmmm. I identified myself as Chinese.

SM: This was in high school?

JY: Yes. We were always made to be very aware of that and always pretty aware of our alliances with other minority groups as well. Well, there weren't any at U High.

SM: Alliances with which . . .?

JY: Well, I think my parents encouraged us to be friends with Japanese people.

SM: I see. Especially Asians then.

JY: Yes. Yes. I think they saw that we were all looked alike to Americans.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I think they've certainly sympathized with black Americans then.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I remember them talking about it.

SM: Oh.

JY: However, they did not want us to be too close to other Chinese, because they felt that the way we would get ahead was by being low key and not to . . . give notice to our presence.

SM: Hmmm. Was this a problem . . .?

JY: You know, like if there are not too many of you, nobody will notice you.

SM: Yes. Right. But is this a pretty common pattern among the intelligentsia or the professionals?

JY: I don't know. I think so, the desire for assimilation.

SM: Yes. I suppose that the more success-oriented that people are, then the more they do want then to fit in. But there are some conflicts. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. Yes. Because you can . . .

SM: Fit in too much. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes, you can only fit in to a certain extent, regardless.

SM: Yes, that's true, too. So they really wanted to keep you mainly as members of a family unit.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: That was the most important thing. Well, the family is a very important thing for all Asians.

JY: Yes. I think that they always attempted to maintain a lot of control over us.

SM: But at the same time they let you have more freedom than some other Chinese families.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: That's very interesting. So where did you go to college then, at the U?

JY: I went to the University of Minnesota.

SM: Was there a sizeable group of Chinese that identified with or were you completely . . .?

JY: No, I didn't have any Chinese friends.

SM: Oh.

JY: And really never have until the Asian American....

[Recording interruption]

JY: No, you press record, not listen.

SM: Oh. Sorry.

[Brief recording interruption]

SM: Yes. If we can get our thoughts back . . .

JY: Yes. We're talking about our Chinese friends.

SM: Oh, yes. It was a small group of friends you had at the U, I think you were starting to mention.

JY: No. Oh . . . no, there's a small group of Chinese kids.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Of family . . . family friends.

SM: Oh, yes.

Chinese tect JY: My parents . . . there's a division in the Chinese community here, if there can be called a Chinese community, of . . . between the educated Chinese and the non-educated. And also between where . . . provinces, you know, where they came from. But I think the division is primarily between education and non-education, non-educated people. And it ends up to be also a class difference and of regional division. Those who were not Mandarin speaking . . . were in another group and those who were Mandarin speaking were in . . . it was broken down between those who spoke Cantonese and then those who spoke Mandarin. However, there were people who were in the educated group, were the Mandarin speaking group, who did not speak Mandarin but were in that segment of the community because they were educated.

SM: Yes. So they could have been from the South then.

JY: Yes, they could have been from anywhere.

SM: Or from Fujian or something. Yes.

JY: Yes. Or Shanghai and didn't speak Mandarin. But, by and large . . . so I believe it was on the basis of class and education.

SM: Yes. Right.

JY: And it was made clear to me very early in my life that I could not associate with anybody, any Chinese who were below me in class.

SM: Oh.

JY: So I was really discouraged from making any friends or having any contact with Canton . . . you know, the Cantonese speaking families here in Minneapolis, even though there were so few of us, my parents were very class conscious.

SM: [Unclear.] Yes.

JY: I think that was true of all the other families, too, though their parents might not have articulated it. Because when we had our New Year's parties and all that, it was just a small group of families, all of whom were Mandarin speaking. We never went to the restaurant things. There were no family associations among the educated class.

SM: Oh.

JY: No clubs. The clubs that they belonged to were the student association. And as, you know, my parents grew out of that, as most of their friends who were students graduated or whatever, they no longer maintained contact with the student association, though that was our main social group for many years past my parents being students, you know, one of those alumni association kind of things. And in fact I remember real vividly in high school I was dating a Chinese American guy who went to Humboldt High in Saint Paul. And his father owned a restaurant in Saint Paul. And my parents . . . it was the only time they forbade me to date somebody.

SM: [Gasps or sighs]

JY: And I was also real aware of their qualifications for dating, so I never ever . . . pushed it around at any rate.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: I mean, I was too obedient to consider . . . pushing it. And so it isn't like I brought in anybody I wanted to bring in, I was real aware of that. And they . . . after two or three dates, they told me that they didn't want me to date him anymore. That I could be friends with him, but that I could not date him.

SM: Oh.

JY: Because his family was a lower class family, though he was a really nice person.

SM: How did he respond to that, or did he accept that as inevitable or . . .?

JY: I don't know. I can't really remember how we dealt with it. We didn't have . . . as it turned out, we didn't have that much in common anyway. Because I had been brought up to be an intellectual. And so there were . . . he was a regular high school guy. [Chuckles]

SM: Was even more American, in a sense?

JY: Yes. He was much more American. And I went to the snotty school, you know, U High where we all thought we were so sophisticated.

SM: Well, all this time it seems as though you've been saying the Mandarin speakers were more tending to be assimilated, but in some ways they weren't, I suppose. Like this guy, you said, was more of a regular high school . . .

JY: Yes. I don't . . . assimilated in as far as achievement.

SM: Oh, yes. And only in certain areas.

JY: I mean, I think the parents figured out what was more important. And so they wanted us to assimilate as far as . . . many of the Mandarin speaking families, their kids don't speak Mandarin.

SM: Oh.

JY: It's very rare that you have a . . .

SM: They speak English.

JY: Yes. They speak English.

SM: So they didn't maintain language as much as the Cantonese, I would think.

JY: Right. Right.

SM: They haven't seemed to too much either, but . . .

JY: Well, I don't know.

SM: Maybe.

JY: They all speak more than I do.

SM: They have the school, and so . . .

JY: Yes, they have a school.

SM: Yes.

JY: And the other difference is that all the Mandarin speaking families, their family . . . parents spoke English.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: So there's no one in our families that don't speak English - at least that live in the U.S.

SM: Right, and it was so often that Cantonese parents *didn't* speak English.

JY: Right.

SM: Which would make a big difference.

JY: Right, they didn't speak English or they had a grandparent who didn't speak English that lived in the home.

SM: Yes.

JY: And at least in Minneapolis, I don't know of any Mandarin speaking family that had anybody in their family who didn't speak English, unless it was a grandmother who was visiting temporarily.

SM: Yes.

JY: They just didn't have people who weren't English speaking.

SM: Right.

JY: They didn't have anybody who was uneducated, un-college educated.

SM: Right.

JY: And that . . . most of the Cantonese speaking families didn't even have high school educations usually.

SM: Yes. Well, I suppose, in a sense, their survival was more dependent on maintaining the language and the close bonds.

JY: Right.

SM: And for helping each other.

JY: And they had mutual aid associations.

SM: Right.

JY: Economically, the Cantonese speaking people were probably better off economically. And they certainly are now.

SM: Oh, really?

JY: There's no doubt about all the restaurant owners now are . . . are wealthy, according to American standards.

SM: Oh. Well, I thought that some really don't . . . like the take-outs and some of those don't really . . . Do they make a lot of money?

JY: Oh, they still make more money than a college professor does.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles] Well.

JY: Yes. They're all . . . middle class, but their hours, of course, are ridiculous. They work all the time, their whole family works. So it's hard to say . . .

SM: Right. And certainly their early years were not very profitable at all.

JY: No. But now, the contrast is really dramatic. And there's . . . you know that conflict between the snobby, educated class always wants the merchant class to make contributions to various causes.

SM: Ah ha. And they're known to have money. [Chuckles]

JY: Right. Though the professors, you know, won't give ten dollars.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, the professors can't be *too* badly off.

JY: No.

SM: If they work at the U or someplace there.

JY: No, but they don't have the income that many of the restaurant owners do.

SM: The restaurants. I see.

JY: And, you know, so it's kind of that conflict of misplaced . . . thinking that you're better than someone else. And that conflict, in fact, has been quite public. And there was a time when there was a Chinese American Association, CAAM, Chinese American Association of Minnesota.

SM: Yes.

JY: And the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Wong Association kind of people joined together in one organization in CAAM.

SM: Oh, they all were part of CAAM. Only for a while.

JY: For a brief . . . I think a year or two period.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh.

JY: And then there was a great split between the interests of the business community and the interests of the so-called Mandarin speaking group. And my father was *the* sole negotiator between these two groups.

SM: Oh.

JY: Trying to get them back together.

SM: Did he succeed?

JY: He did not succeed because neither group would talk to the other group.

SM: What was the main conflict about? A class conflict?

JY: I think business interests. The businessmen wanted to promote projects that would promote business.

SM: Oh, it was a conflict over what the organization would do.

JY: Yes. And the CAAM people wanted scholarships and dinners and a very low profile. And obviously that doesn't serve the needs of the business community who wanted the organization to be more active in a public sense.

SM: I see.

JY: And it really generated around whether there should be a Miss China of Minnesota.

SM: Oh.

JY: And the Mandarin speaking community was just appalled at the very thought of putting their daughters on display. I mean, their daughters were brought up to go to college and to go to Smith and Radcliffe and get A's in school.

SM: There was talk of having a Miss China of Minnesota.

JY: Yes. And in fact there was one.

SM: Oh.

JY: And she, as it turned out, won the national Miss Chinatown.

SM: The national Miss Chinatown? And there isn't even a Chinatown here. [Chuckles]

JY: Right. And so she won. And they put her up and the Mandarin speaking community agreed to go ahead with this contest with the hopes that no . . . no right-minded Chinese family would let their daughter compete. Well, of course, no Mandarin speaking family even told their daughters about it.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: They were so appalled by the thought of it. And they all . . . the Cantonese speaking families, of course, put their daughters on because they wanted the promotional for . . . in the eyes of the white community.

SM: What year was this? In the 1960s or so?

JY: Oh, 1967, I think.

SM: Oh. I saw one contest like this in the Chinatown in Chicago where I worked for a while. And it seemed like an event full of pathos. The parents were sitting there, and then afterwards . . . I mean, there was a real conflict of feeling that you could just *see* in the ways . . . and then afterwards I really thought when the parents looked really sad was these girls that had all been up there showing off their bodies and everything all went off with their motorcycle boyfriends who were all Caucasians and it was a really . . . strange situation.

JY: Yes. Well, anyway, so that was the *break*, you know.

SM: I see. So CAAM is not a businessmen's organization.

JY: No. So after that break, all the Cantonese speaking Chinese left CAAM.

SM: I see. So that's now mainly Mandarin speakers.

JY: Right.

SM: Well, is that a community . . .? What are the purposes of CAAM now?

JY: I don't know. It's had some new blood in it, by various people.

SM: Now Mandarin speakers?

JY: Not necessarily.

SM: Or new immigrants?

JY: Newcomers.

SM: Oh.

JY: Newcomers. None of the old, prominent Chinese Mandarin speaking families are active. They might still be members, I think they all might be members and they might all go to a dinner story Rio once or twice a year.

SM: I see.

JY: But none of them are active anymore.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: That was a big burn in the community, that whole controversy.

SM: It must have been. Where do the newcomers fit in? Are they more the restaurant owners? Or I mean [unclear] are . . .?

JY: Well, there are a lot of professors, too, that have come in.

SM: A lot of professors.

JY: I just . . . I don't . . . I think the restaurant people end up joining the Chamber of Commerce and the family associations. I don't know what happens to the Mandarin speaking community. I think they just get friends within, you know, in their own networking.

SM: You mean in the broader community?

JY: The Chinese community.

SM: Oh, in the Chinese.

JY: Yes, and in the Chinese community. So and so introduces you to so and so and you get into a particular clique.

SM: Yes, but they don't join the organizations as much.

JY: Yes.

SM: Do they come from Taiwan then and Hong Kong or . . .?

JY: I don't know. According to statistics, most of the new arrivals, at least nationwide, are recent immigrants from mainland China.

SM: Oh, really?

JY: Who have had a stopover in Hong Kong.

SM: Oh, I didn't know that.

JY: But I don't know if Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota is getting very many of those people. They might be getting a few who are related to other people.

SM: Yes. The few that I've talked to that are recent are from Hong Kong

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. And there's now . . . they've worked for the Nankin for a few years and now they're [chuckles] starting their own restaurants.

JY: Yes.

SM: And outlying, like Stillwater and [unclear].

JY: Yes.

SM: That family's related to [unclear] in fact, but she says it's pretty distant. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes.

SM: But a very interesting experience, quite different from the older immigrants coming.

JY: Yes, yes, who had all the assistance of the aid societies.

SM: Yes. Well, the new immigrants though say that they have it easier because there's less discrimination and that Minnesotans like Chinese now, they say.

JY: Yes. Well, you know, there was a lot of exclusion and then the alien exclusion act and the quotas really were anti-Chinese.

SM: Definitely. And so there was that whole complicated web of changing names for immigration purposes.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. Is there any kind of newspaper now in the Chinese community?

JY: I don't know.

SM: Or would it just be newsletters of organizations, mainly?

JY: Yes, I think it is newsletters. Haphazardly put, you know, together, that aren't really the snip? same as the newspapers.

SM: They deal mainly with organization things, right?

JY: Yes.

SM: Do you know much about that Chinese Christian Fellowship?

JY: No.

SM: That's Mandarin speakers, isn't it?

JY: Yes, it is.

SM: Yes.

JY: A [unclear – name?].

SM: Is that the head of it? Oh.

JY: He's the guy that started it, and he was good friends with my family for a long time.

SM: I see.

JY: And is part of that original . . . what I think is one of the old timers here, who aren't so old.

SM: Oh.

JY: I mean, came, you know, at the same time as my parents.

SM: They're your father's and mother's . . .

JY: Friends.

SM: Yes. Oh, he was at the university when they were, maybe?

JY: I think so. I think he was a grad student at one time. I'm not absolutely sure.

SM: And he's the pastor or . . .?

JY: I don't think he's the pastor.

SM: Not anymore?

JY: I think he's, you know, a lay leader.

SM: Oh, I see. He was one of the originals.

JY: Yes.

SM: But that is largely then the intellectual classes?

JY: Yes.

SM: That [unclear] that.

JY: And students.

SM: Oh. Yes. Well, how do you identify yourself now as an adult? Any different from your teenage years?

JY: Very little, except with the addition of the Asian American awareness, which was, actually, very significant.

istory Project

SM: What is that, when you say . . .?

JY: Well, in college I started reading all the materials that are coming out.

SM: I see. Yes.

JY: And I realized much of the struggles that I have had with my family – mainly cross-cultural conflicts – were shared by many, many people.

SM: Yes.

JY: And that we could laugh and joke about those things.

SM: I see. This was in the schools that you read this?

JY: At the university.

SM: At the university.

JY: Yes. I had already graduated and was actually employed by the university to work with student organizations.

SM: Oh.

JY: So one of the student organizations that I helped form and worked with was the Asian American Alliance.

SM: Oh.

JY: And Mike Wong and . . . Joe Mihimoto[sp?] and Carol Hossegauer[sp?] were all . . . they were all students at that time, so we were all part of the Asian American Alliance.

Storyiet

SM: Oh, I see. Well, does that still exist?

JY: And [unclear – name?] rejected it.

SM: He *did*?!

JY: And didn't find it was relevant at all and I used to talk to him about it.

SM: Oh! Well he said that always identified himself as American.

JY: Right. Right.

SM: Yes. But now Asian Americans are . . .

JY: Right. And there was a real big turnover. I don't know if he would admit it. [Chuckles]

SM: He didn't mention that. [Chuckles]

JY: It was a big turnaround.

SM: Oh. Well, does that still exist, the Asian American Alliance?

JY: Hmmm . . . I don't think so. I think there's a . . . it's called the Asian American Student Center or something.

SM: Yes. Oh. that's the successor of this.

JY: Yes.

SM: I see. So that's . . . the difference between that what Dennis works for is this is a student-run organization. I mean, his . . .

JY: Well, that was the proto . . . the thing before Dennis.

SM: Yes.

JY: We were kind of the student group that got the university aware of Asian American things.

SM: They asked you to do this though, or you asked them, or . . .?

JY: Well, I... kind of both.

SM: Both. I see.

JY: Yes.

SM: Hmmm.

JY: I think was that whole national movement mainly coming out of the West Coast.

SM: Oh, in the 1960s?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. So you obtained reading materials from some national group or . . .?

JY: Yes, from mainly the university of ... UCLA.

SM: I see.

JY: Asian American Studies Center.

SM: Oh yes, they put out a lot of stuff don't they.

JY: And we had speakers come and a lot of us traveled to, you know, California for various reasons and then would kind of connect with people. So we became really aware of stuff.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And it was a real identity time.

SM: Yes, really.

JY: You know, now we're working on projects. We never talk about identity. But then we used to get together and just tell each other what we thought were just at that time horror stories of our

lives. And now we laugh about it because we find out that, you know, so and so had the identical experience.

SM: I see.

JY: Dating experiences that were just horrible.

SM: Oh, yes. Frank talked about that.

JY: Yes. I was lucky and I think my parents sent me to U High to avoid those very experiences. They just were really . . .

SM: They must have been very demoralizing.

JY: I was very lucky that my parents figured it out. And that's why they sent me to the University High School. Because I think not only for the educational value and for the class thing, but they felt that the University professors would be more liberal.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And that I would never have to be confronted with racism, *blatant* racism. And that was really true. My brothers certainly encountered it going to a public school and I know when we were . . . I was a member . . . or when the Asian American Alliance was active, you know, the women and the men would sit around and talk about things that would happen to them in high school. Name calling and being . . . I mean, serious name calling, or being isolated in a certain way, or having to go through some really kind of very heavy confrontations with families, the kids that they were dating, you know, friends of families and that kind of thing. I never had that, I mean, at University High School.

SM: I see.

JY: If someone called me a name . . . in fact it happened to me once, in junior high school. And I remember a girl that was . . . heard it happen. And she confronted the boy that called me a name and told him that that was unacceptable and that it was racist and . . .

SM: Oh, this was at the University . . .

JY: Yes. So I was surrounded by *liberal* kids.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I remember that vividly. She pulled him aside and said that that was not a nice thing to do and that, you know, she didn't want him to do it anymore. And so I didn't have to do that for myself.

SM: Oh, that's nice to be spared of that.

JY: Yes. And so I was really spared that. And so I don't have some of *those* scars.

SM: Yes.

JY: That other kids really did.

SM: So this was mainly a kind of rapping group.

JY: Yes, a real kind of consciousness-raising.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: It served as that, and as a real social bond. And the people that are part of the Alliance, I don't know, Sarah, when you see all of us and are a very hard core group of friends, too.

SM: That seems to be, yes.

JY: Yes, that are in a way . . . I hate to say clique-ish, but it was based on that we all discovered our identity together. You know, all the Wong kids, you know, that . . . they have, of course, blood relationships. But Joe Mihimoto[sp?] and myself and . . . a couple other people, too.

SM: That's really interesting. Yes.

JY: And whereas Frank and some of those other people are still on the outskirts of that group, because they were not part of that real sharing. And we grew up together.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And got married, you know, that many of them were . . . many of us were married during that time.

SM: To each other or to people outside the group?

JY: To each other and to others outside.

SM: Both ways.

JY: About half and half.

SM: Hmmm. Was there anything like this for high school kids at the time?

JY: There were for the Cantonese kids.

SM: Oh.

JY: A lot of them knew each other through the family association.

SM: I see. Through other kinds of organizations.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: But otherwise your families didn't get together very much.

JY: No, not the Cantonese . . .

listory Project **SM:** But your family did get together with other Chinese families.

JY: Yes.

SM: But they weren't the ones that you . . .

JY: Ended up having any real close tie to.

SM: So was it at the university you met each other and .

JY: Yes.

SM: Hmmm. How many years did that go on then

JY: Oh, I'd say a couple three years

SM: And then it became this other

JY: Yes, and then we all grew up

SM: I see.

JY: And weren't university tied.

SM: Yes. Were foreign students . . .? There seem to be foreign students in that Asian American Center now.

JY: Yes. That wasn't true when we were . . .

SM: Wasn't true then.

JY: There was a real difference between foreign students and American born. Our experiences were really different.

SM: Yes, it is really different. [Unclear] entirely.

JY: When I was growing up, my parents, of course, wanted me to always marry a Chinese man.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I didn't really rebel against that. I mean, I maybe did in my mind – I know I did in my mind. But I decided to go along with them. And . . . I mean, sincerely go along with them.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I dated a number of Chinese foreign students when I was in high school and college.

SM: I see.

JY: Or they would *arrange* the dates. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, they arranged them.

JY: Yes. And I would very willingly go along. I mean, these foreign students would call my mother. And my mother would arrange it, you know.

SM: Oh. Yes.

JY: And I would really willingly go along.

SM: This was in high school?

JY: High school and college. First years of college.

SM: Oh.

JY: But it was very clear that there were no similarities. And one time my father just said, "You know, it's a cultural difference. You are an American."

SM: [Chuckles] Right.

JY: And so that was the end of it. And I . . . it wasn't that I said, "No, I refuse to go out with any of these guys."

SM: Did they all just realize that . . .?

JY: Yes. Yes. They kept on asking.

SM: But I mean your parents realized . . .

JY: Yes, my parents just decided that this is ridiculous and there's no reason why we have to put these Chinese students through this agony of . . . you know, the whole thing was just no good.

SM: Well, I suppose it could have, if there was something else that worked, but it wasn't a very natural kind of . . .

JY: Right. There wasn't a common language.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, and that would seem to be essential.

JY: Yes. At that time I didn't speak very much . . . as much Chinese as I speak now.

SM: Oh, yes. And they didn't speak enough English.

JY: Yes. And I was an American teenager.

SM: Yes. There's a big difference. It was clear the other day when I... oh, I'll turn this off.

[Recording interruption]

SM: ...and so do I. [Chuckles] What were the reasons your parents chose Minnesota?

JY: Well, I guess when they first chose it they . . . it was arbitrary. But when they came back again the second time, where they had already lived in Washington, D.C. and lived in Minneapolis, they chose it because they felt there was a minimal amount of racial discrimination here.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: And they felt people were friendly, because so many people helped them, you know, when they first came as graduate students.

SM: Yes.

JY: And then they chose Southeast Minneapolis for that same reason. They wanted to be close to that liberal university community that would not look down upon a Chinese family or, you know, that they wouldn't . . . and that really proved to be true when I compare my growing up to, as we were talking about, you know, Linda Woo's or a lot of those other people's growing up, where they were in, you know, more . . . you know, typical middle class or working class Minneapolis communities. I had very few name calling things, even when I was a little kid, because there were just so many . . . you know, it just was that university environment.

SM: Yes.

JY: And my parents *really* picked it for that. Congressman Frazier lived across the street from us.

SM: Oh.

JY: You know, so it wasn't a wealthy community, by any means, but it was clearly a university, liberal-oriented environment.

SM: Yes. Which brings me to the question of what were the politics of the Chinese community? Or is there any pattern between say the Southerners and Northerners or . . .? StoryProl

JY: Gee, other than that they didn't mix at all.

SM: The two groups didn't mix.

JY: And to this day they don't.

SM: I see.

JY: My father contends that it is based not only on class but on language differences.

SM: Yes, right, and regional.

JY: However, when . . . Frank's parents don't speak Mandarin. That's not their first Chinese . . .

SM: Oh, where are they from?

JY: Shanghai dialect is their first

SM: Oh, they're Shanghai.

JY: And so it does go, you know, across dialects.

SM: Yes.

JY: It's not *really* the reason.

SM: It's not totally Mandarin.

JY: And I know that a number . . . I've recalled a number of family friends of my parents did not speak Mandarin but were included in that group of Mandarin speaking people because then they'd speak English when the [unclear – name?] were invited over for dinner, everyone spoke English instead of Mandarin.

SM: I see.

JY: And sometimes they would even have . . . someone would be permitted to have a Chinese wife . . . or not a Chinese wife, but an American wife.

SM: I see, among the Mandarin.

JY: Yes, Mandarin speaking people.

SM: More than the others.

JY: Yes, I think much more than the other. And then, out of courtesy for whoever wasn't Chinese, they would speak English. But they were considered part of the . . . you know, Mandarin speaking community and be invited to the picnics or whatever.

SM: Yes.

JY: There weren't that many group activities. There were a few. It would be mainly associated with the university.

SM: Oh, mainly university activities.

JY: Related. Student association related. What else about [unclear]?

SM: But did the Chinese ever enter into American politics or have views about the DFL and the . . .?

JY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They're all real supportive of Humphrey.

SM: Hmmm. Well, is this the same [unclear]?

JY: Because of Humphrey's stand against the Communists and pro-Taiwan.

SM: Oh. He also was very active in changing the immigration law. But did that have anything to do with it?

JY: Gee, I don't know.

SM: And I guess the Filipinos have said he personally helped many of them get their papers and so on.

JY: Yes. Yes. I believe that. Yes.

SM: But I suppose his pro-Taiwan stand would be the main . . .

JY: That's why my parents supported him in recent history. They really weren't that active in DFL politics or in, you know, any kind of American politics, and really had very little interface with the American community at all.

SM: I see.

JY: Other than a few friends. And there were very few.

SM: So they didn't want to be involved in politics.

JY: No, not at all.

SM: They were just [unclear] trouble or . . . [chuckles]

JY: I don't know. They just weren't interested, I think. They were very up to date on Chinese politics and could stay involved in that.

SM: Oh, so they would be much more interested in that then.

JY: Yes.

SM: The whole Communist [unclear].

JY: No.

SM: What about American policy in Asia, are they interested in that?

JY: Oh, yes. Yes. They are very ambivalent because they've always felt that they lost a country, you know, in the Revolution and we're kind of in no man's land.

SM: Yes.

JY: And then when Nixon opened up, you know, Chinese-American relations . . .

SM: Right.

JY: They were kind of ambivalent because here they had adjusted to this no-man's land position and all of a sudden now they had a country again. And it was a country they lost. A country that they couldn't relate to because obviously the last twenty years China looks very different from the old China, and they, you know . . . still look at China in the old days. And so they can't accept the fact that Mao did everything that, you know, Chiang Kai-Shek said he would do but never did.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: And, you know, reality and politics and ideology never ever matched, you know, Mao did everything that the anti-Communists said that Mao would never do, you know. And so how do you fit that.

SM: Yes.

JY: Many parents who were less politically-minded than mine have been able to accept it with more grace than my parents have.

SM: I see.

JY: They've . . . my parents just still believe that Mao is . . . you know, that Communists are brainwashing and torturing people, which is the old 1940s Taiwan stand.

SM: Yes.

JY: And my parents keep that alive in their mind, which is obviously untrue.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, also, if they came from the upper class, they wouldn't have fared well there.

JY: Right. And so they had everything to lose whereas many of the Cantonese people had everything to gain.

SM: Right. Yes. Some of them seem to talk about, you know, they would really like to go back. [Chuckles]

JY: To glories. Yes.

SM: Yes.

JY: Whereas my parents obviously lost everything.

SM: Yes, right. Well, and the ones that talk about it, the Southern ones, aren't really talking very politically or anything, it's just their *home* village, you know.

JY: Yes. And my parents were urban.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And tied to the old system very, very much.

SM: Right.

JY: The other thing I was going to say that we were talking about choosing Minneapolis or Minnesota, my parents also . . . my mother also encouraged us to go to American churches.

SM: Oh, she did?

JY: Which most of the other Chinese, Mandarin speaking and otherwise, did not do. Except with Frank's family who were Catholic, and that's so weird that . . .

SM: Yes, I was surprised to hear that.

JY: Everyone thinks that's weird.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: They all think that, that's completely . . .

a Oral History Project **SM:** There are very few Chinese here that are Catholic.

JY: Yes. And that is . . .

SM: How did they happen to be?

JY: I don't know.

SM: They were just . . .

JY: No one relates to it though, I know that.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, that's funny.

JY: They all talk about it, behind their backs. They think it's weird.

SM: [Chuckles] I guess there were quite a few Catholic, but you hardly meet any that . . .

JY: Right

SM: For some reason.

JY: My father's a real . . . atheist.

SM: Is he?

JY: [Laughing] So he probably said things that other people didn't say.

SM: Was your mother atheist, too?

JY: No, my mother professes to be a Christian, but I think it's more social than anything.

SM: Yes.

JY: And assimilation . . . she really wanted us to assimilate. And she chose the church that we went to very carefully.

SM: Oh, which did she choose?

JY: We went to First Congregational Church, which it turns out, is the first church of Minnesota. History

SM: Oh.

JY: And is one of . . . is a historical site.

SM: Oh, where is that? In downtown?

JY: She chose it. It's in Southeast.

SM: In Southeast.

JY: And it was about three blocks from where we grew up

SM: Close to home.

JY: Yes, close to home. But it also. all the prominent kind of Minnesota politicians of history surrounds that church.

SM: Ah.

JY: And so I felt a real roots in Minnesota through that church.

SM: I see.

JY: All the stained glass windows were donated by the Pillsburys and the Sibleys and the Ramseys and all of that history I learned through that church.

SM: So it was prominent businessmen, too, besides politicians.

JY: Well, I don't think so. Mainly kind of civic leaders.

SM: Oh.

JY: Because it isn't a wealthy church. It was . . . you know, and I'm sure in the very beginning, but it . . . you know, now is a typical church with declining membership with a huge endowment because of it's past. And the other thing that that church had that other churches didn't, which I really am quite proud of my mother for selecting, is that congregational churches are run by democratic structure.

istory project

SM: Yes.

JY: The curriculum and the pastor is selected by vote.

SM: Right.

JY: And even the Lutheran church still has, you know . . .

SM: A hierarchy.

JY: A bishop appoints a minister to come to your church.

SM: Right.

JY: And you can approve it or not approve it.

SM: Yes, the congregational structure is completely different. Right.

JY: Yes. And that was not by mistake,

SM: Oh.

JY: And as a result, the people in the church, of course, reflect that kind of philosophy as well.

SM: Sure.

JY: And so I have a real fondness for that church, though I don't, you know, attend or maybe adhere to a Christian ethic. Socially, it was really a wonderful experience.

SM: Well, the church does serve that function for immigrants very often.

JY: Yes.

SM: Yes.

JY: Yes, and they were all, you know, the church was obviously very warm to our family. And some of our closest Caucasian friends are those original church people. Friends of my mom's.

SM: I see. Well, do many Chinese families do this, do you think? Join a church and . . .

JY: I don't know.

SM: As a part of some . . .

JY: I don't know. I don't think any of my . . .

SM: Or did many of them even join a Christian church?

JY: I don't think so.

SM: Yes.

JY: I don't know. And if they did, it was very cursory.

to be a lift SM: I see. What about at Westminster Church? There seemed to be a link between . . . that was more of the Cantonese . . .

JY: Yes, but they had a separate service.

SM: Yes.

JY: And a separate organization.

SM: They had a Sunday School, too.

JY: Yes, this was much more integrated.

SM: It seemed to be partly for assimilative reasons. I mean, the English classes.

JY: Yes. And my father hated it that we went to church because he didn't believe in the religion.

SM: He didn't go then?

JY: No. No, he always made fun of it.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

JY: And didn't like it.

SM: But all the children went?

JY: Yes. My mother and kids went. And it was because . . . she went for social . . . you know, she knew it was for assimilation and it really did do that.

SM: That was a good kind of church to choose for that.

JY: Yes.

SM: Yes.

JY: [Unclear] a lot from church. I was married in it as a result, too.

SM: Oh. Hmmm.

JY: Confirmed, baptized, and married.

SM: Oh, you really went through the works.

JY: Oh, yes. We all did. We were real active, you know, I gave the youth sermon.

SM: Oh!

JY: And the whole . . . all that stuff. It was a real good [unclear],

SM: What year was that, that you gave the youth sermon?

JY: I don't know, it must have been in . . .

SM: In high school?

JY: High school . . . maybe a freshman in high school. It was very good leadership training.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: I mean, you know, I certainly didn't look at it then that way.

SM: Yes. [Unclear.]

JY: I sang in the choir. Yes.

SM: Right.

JY: It was really a fun time.

SM: Oh, you sang in the choir, too. Oh, your brothers did, too?

JY: Of course now I can't sing. Yes, they did stuff that I . . . I don't remember. In fact . . . no, I do remember, my brother was Moses in one of the, you know, pageant things.

SM: That was your older brother?

JY: No, my middle brother.

SM: So you really were very much a part of things there.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Hmmm. Well, is there something we have skipped over that we shouldn't have that comes story projet to mind?

JY: Not that I can recall. [Chuckles]

SM: There is a [unclear]. Thanks very much for your patience.

JY: I forgot about the church part. That was really funny.

SM: That's really....

[Recording interruption]

SM: What was that? Testing, testing, testing, testing. One, two, three four.

[Recording interruption]

SM: Okay. That was [unclear]. I'm talking to Joyce Yu on July 2, 1979, continuing our interview. Could you talk a little bit about your role in the family as related to your mother's role or your relationship to your mother? In other words, the two women in the family.

JY: Oh. Hmmm. It's complicated in my family because my mother went back to Taiwan when I was in high school.

SM: Oh, she did? For an extended . . .?

JY: For a couple years.

SM: Oh.

JY: And she'd come back for maybe a month or two. And so she was gone, basically, my junior year in high school through to my freshman year in college.

SM: Oh.

JY: And so that, you know, was really different. And I took on then all the responsibilities of running the home.

SM: Oh, in addition to going to college.

JY: Yes. And then when she came back then, you know, she took on those same roles. And then I moved out of the family home when I was a junior in college and lived on campus.

SM: I see.

JY: But earlier, when we were like in junior high school and high school, before she left, she made concerted efforts to train me to be . . . 1, eid

SM: Before she left?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: I mean, not in anticipation of going, but just, you know, as a mother

SM: Yes.

JY: To do household things. Like I would have . . . when I was in junior high school I had to cook one . . . I don't know if it was a hard fast rule, but she said it was the goal, right. [Chuckles] That I would cook one meal a week.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And I helped her prepare virtually every meal. Like I'd cut things and I'd wash things and I'd maybe make . . . I'd make the rice. And my brothers . . . or one of my brothers or I would set the table, you know, that kind of stuff. My brothers always washed the dishes. So it wasn't like I had to do all the housework, you know. Me and my brothers didn't do any. But the other thing in housework is that she wanted . . . and you know, like deciding who does what other than cooking. She preferred that I didn't do things that involved washing stuff, like with my hands.

SM: Oh.

JY: Like having your hands in water. And I think that was the old Chinese thing of preserving your hands. And she really wanted . . . you know, told me that when I grew up I'd have to spend one day a week doing things for me, like wash your hair and take a bath and soak and put cream on your face, do your nails.

SM: Hmmm.

JY: And it's kind of like women space, but it was related to beauty, but it still was relaxed to make your . . . you know, because obviously people that are relaxed look better [chuckles] than people who are, you know . . .

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

JY: So I really remember that. And I don't do that, but I do know that virtually every Chinese woman friend that I have now, you know, who's my own age, takes care of themselves.

SM: Oh.

JY: You rarely see a Chinese woman unless they're really poor, you know, obviously money, I think is more important than anything else, but is usually really put together.

SM: Right.

JY: So anyway, I never had to wash the dishes. I mean, I *did*, but not as often as regularly as my brothers did.

SM: I see.

JY: And she didn't like . . . like if we . . . it was my turn to wash the say bathroom floor. She didn't like me to get down on my hands and knees and scrub. She'd want me to try to use the sponge mop.

SM: Oh, she really didn't want you to get your hands in it.

JY: Right. And I'd always have to wear gloves and stuff like that. And so when I got older, and obviously independent on my own and was a hippie, as she would call it. And I had my own garden and I obviously got my hands dirty and cut and I've got a cat and so I have this huge scar on my hand. And it just freaks her out.

SM: This was in your teen years?

JY: Well, no, you know, recently.

SM: Recently.

JY: Yes. But I've been independent. And so that really freaks her out.

SM: Oh, she didn't want you to get dirty nails and stuff.

JY: Right that I have . . . that I work with my hands.

SM: Oh, yes. That is a taboo.

JY: And dirty things like, you know, a garden and farm work and, you know, all the thing that they did not bring me up to do! [Chuckles]

SM: Right.

JY: I mean a little garden and flower garden is one thing, but . . .

SM: You wear gloves. [Chuckles]

JY: Right. But, you know, a big garden that takes work is a whole different thing.

SM: I see.

JY: I mean, a flower garden would be marvelous, I mean that's . . . you know, part of the whole trip but . . .

SM: Yes.

JY: So there were those things that . . . and then lessons in jewelry.

SM: Lessons?

JY: Yes. This is good jade, this is bad jade.

SM: Oh, I see. Yes. Oh, that would be useful.

JY: And to this day, I still window shop in jewelry stores. Just out of habit.

SM: Oh, because you know . . .

JY: Even if I'm not interested.

SM: Oh, she would take you window shopping?

JY: Yes. Yes. When we would....

[Recording interruption]

SM: We were talking about window shopping and jewelry.

JY: Yes. So anyway, the value of jewelry and looking nice. The other thing that my mother taught our whole family, which I think is real Chinese, of women as a commodity, is that when I was little, one of the ways that, you know, like my brothers were beating me up or something.

One of the ways I could get my parents to intervene . . . they basically thought my brothers were right, my brothers were pretty good to me.

SM: Yes.

JY: And would be, I could say, "Bob or Vic is hitting me in the face." They could never touch my face.

SM: Oh.

JY: They could spank me or beat me up, but if they ever touched my face, that would be all over. And when I was really little, I can't remember, maybe eight or nine years old. That's my recollection. We were in the car, and my brother and I were having a fight. And he accidentally scratched me in the face and it bled.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, no.

JY: And my mother was not in the car yet. Or maybe it was just us kids were waiting in the car for my parents to come in the car. And my parents were absolutely horrified. And it wasn't that, you know, I was hurt, but that I had a *scar*, a scratch on my face.

SM: Oh.

JY: And my brother thought he was going to die. I mean, I could tell that he was absolutely . . . you know, it was like horror-stricken. It wasn't like getting a black and blue mark on my arm, which probably my parents would not have even paid any attention to. And they . . . they really spanked him a lot. I think they really . . .

SM: Oh.

JY: Yes, they *really* punished him. Because that was a really big no-no.

SM: I see.

JY: And the one other time, actually, that I got hurt was when, you know, when you play stretch?

[Recording interruption]

SM: [unclear] Okay.

JY: Oh, we were playing stretch and one of the knives hit my leg. And so this knife was implanted in my leg.

SM: [Gasps] Oh, dear!

JY: It was terrible. But my parents really didn't react to that.

SM: [Gasps and chuckles]

JY: Which was a *huge* cut in my leg. And I remember it happened the same year that I had this little teeny scratch on my face, and that was a real . . . that was when I realized that getting scratched on the face was a *really big deal*. And from then on . . .

SM: I see. So they would never say that directly, that your face is . . . or did they?

JY: Yes, when I got to be a teenager they actually . . . when my brothers were big and *could* hurt me

SM: Yes. Yes.

JY: You know, like could give me a black and blue eye or something. They made it real clear that they should *never* hit me on the face. And so I remember we'd be fighting in the basement and I'd say, "They're hitting me on the face!" [Laughs] And my mother would come down and intervene. But she could hear me screaming prior to that, you know.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: My whole body could be black and blue and it wouldn't matter. But . . . so that was a . . . and I think that had to do with, you know, appearances and, you know, that kind of thing.

SM: Yes. So she didn't worry about your brothers' faces too much, is that right?

JY: No, I mean, there was nothing I could do to beat them up.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, you could scratch them.

JY: Yes, they didn't know. I did scratch them a lot of times.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

JY: And it was my only defense.

SM: I see. So hands and the face were really important.

JY: Yes. Yes. And I think those were traditional kinds of things.

SM: Ah ha. Yes. Well, if your parents . . . well, which of your parents would exert the most control over you? Or was it pretty equal?

JY: Well, my mother exerted a lot more control.

SM: Oh. Was that because you were a daughter?

JY: Yes.

SM: I see.

JY: Oh, yes.

SM: And so your father would exert more control over the sons then? OLABIOLA

JY: I don't know. I think my mom did in general.

SM: Oh, to all the children.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see, since your father was the one out working and all this.

JY: And I think my mother had more definite ideas about the way things should be.

SM: Oh, in general, you mean?

JY: Yes. Yes. It was my . . . though I just found that out recently that it was my father's decision that . . . that we not speak Chinese at home.

SM: Oh, you didn't speak Chinese at home.

JY: Yes. Well, we did, but not enough so that we were . . . you know, real fluent. Like I'm not as fluent as many of my other Chinese friends are in Cantonese, yet my parents are much more literate than their parents are, and able to teach us more.

SM: Yes.

JY: But they wanted us . . . my . . . I just found that out recently, that it was my father's idea that we not speak as much Chinese as possible.

SM: I see.

JY: My mother actually wanted us to retain it.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And she wanted to teach writing and reading.

SM: Oh.

JY: And she did that for my brother, my oldest brother a little bit.

SM: He's the oldest in the family.

JY: Yes. And he went to a Chinese . . . well, we were in China for . . . when he was in first grade so that he had that learning [unclear].

SM: Oh, yes. He went to the first grade in China.

JY: So she wanted to keep that up, but my father really discouraged it.

SM: Oh.

JY: So I think maybe my father exerted much more control when we were younger, and then as we got older, my mother became more and more influential.

SM: Your mother became more influential when you were older.

JY: Yes, it seems that way.

SM: Ordinarily, you would think the mother would have had more influence on the younger children.

JY: Yes, I don't remember spending any time with my mother as a child.

SM: Oh.

JY: Like going for walks or any of that kind of thing.

SM: But you did with your father?

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: Yes, spent much more time. And I remember going on errands with my mother, you know, like to the grocery store. But never play things.

SM: Oh.

JY: I don't ever recall doing any recreational stuff with my mom.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: I remember a *lot* with my father.

SM: Oh.

JY: On the weekends. And even, you know, at night when he would come home from work.

SM: Oh, well do you think that was part of her whole background of not being the one . . . of not caring for children and . . . I mean . . .?

JY: I don't know. I don't know what it is.

SM: Did she change or just maybe related better to older children?

JY: I don't know. That might be, that it was less overwhelming. She was really overwhelmed, I do know that, when we were really young.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Because they went back to China as soon as I was born.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And I think the reason was because, you know, just child care.

SM: Were you three close together, in age, I mean?

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh, so that it could be . . .

JY: My brothers were less . . . are exactly a year apart.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: So that's really close.

SM: Yes. Yes. And then you are how much younger?

JY: I'm like four years younger.

SM: Oh. So there was a little break there.

JY: Little gap, yes. But they were still . . .

SM: But two boys just a year apart would be quite a handful.

JY: Yes. They were four and five when I was born.

SM: Oh, a year younger.

JY: Yes.

SM: I see. Oh, so that would be quite a big hassle. [Chuckles]

JY: Yes. Yes, it was, for a woman who had never seen anyone take care of a child or run a house.

SM: Yes.

JY: I mean, it's not like an American . . . you know.

SM: Right. I see. So your father adjusted to that . . .

JY: Really did a lot more, yes. I think my father did most of the child care.

SM: Oh, that's really interesting.

JY: And my mother did most of the cooking, and grocery shopping, and stuff like that, and cleaning.

SM: Oh.

JY: But I think my father really did most of the decision making in our youth. And as my mother became, I think, more fluent in English, and more comfortable, and becoming more of her own, she exerted more and more influence.

SM: Was your father more of an assimilative factor then, and if he took you out to do things and wanted you to speak English?

JY: Hmmm. Yes. Yes. I think more in a . . . in a more natural way. My mother wanted us to learn things by taking lessons or by joining organizations.

SM: Oh.

JY: And my father was not so concerned about us joining organizations and going to church and doing that kind of stuff, but rather experiencing things.

SM: I see.

JY: Yes. He was much more into that. And my mother wanted us to join the right things and *be* in the right places. She wasn't really concerned about whether we learned anything from it as human beings, you know.

SM: I see.

JY: Just . . . it was much more . . . symbolic. And my father was more interested in, you know, the experiences.

SM: I see.

JY: And was not at all organizational-minded. So that was actually kind of a good combination.

SM: Well, yes. Right. You had a little of both.

JY: Yes. Though there was a . . . you know, there's a lot of conflict between doing, you know, things for learning or things for titles.

SM: [Unclear].

JY: You know.

SM: Oh, yes. Well, how does your mother wanting you to take these lessons and join the church and so on fit with that idea that Chinese don't join organizations? Did she this as a way of adapting to American culture?

JY: Well, yes. Oh, yes. It was just for us, for the kids.

SM: Oh.

JY: She never wanted us to be *real* members of anything.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

JY: She just wanted us to say that we could be the members of something.

SM: Hmmm.

JY: It's like you could take three tennis lessons, but not four. So you could say you knew how to play tennis.

SM: I see.

JY: But that you might not really know how to play tennis. She wasn't concerned about whether you really knew, but just so that you could say you knew.

SM: [Chuckles] I see.

JY: And that's really true to today. She doesn't understand *doing* and having any commitment to anything because you're interested or for the experience, but just to say... And that's really true with a lot of Chinese, even in... at least, in my experience in Taiwan. It's like being on a tour bus and driving through a place and stopping and having one lunch and saying, "Ah, that's all. I was in so and so. I know so and so."

SM: Yes.

JY: But not really having [unclear] experience.

SM: So this would be for getting ahead?

JY: Yes. Yes. Or, you know, whatever. And not really . . . they . . . we all took lessons and . . . though I didn't have the same lessons as my brothers did. I had piano lessons and dance lessons and my brothers had swimming lessons and tennis lessons and piano lessons.

SM: Oh.

JY: And they really didn't have to do the music stuff. They did it a little bit.

SM: So it was more the sports she thought they should take.

JY: Yes, which was very unusual for a Chinese family.

SM: Oh.

JY: To have their sons do sports. Because you're supposed to be studying and reading books. And so they were very . . . everything, you know, all these parents never can plan, can control what kids do much yet. Like they exposed my oldest brother to tennis, and then he became a fanatic. They didn't plan on that.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: They planned on it just so that he would know tennis because that's what upper class kids know. It's kind of like copying, you know. You read a book and you see that. That's what they do, so that's what you teach your kid to do. And then he became a fanatic and played tennis eight hours a day.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, really?

JY: And then he got a job at the tennis court, which then of course facilitated playing tennis eight hours a day.

SM: Yes.

JY: And that really distressed my mother. That was not part of the scheme. He was only supposed to take three lessons and learn how to play so that he could say he played.

SM: It distressed both of your parents?

JY: I don't know if my dad really cared.

SM: Oh.

JY: Actually, my dad liked it. Because it was, you know, it was really fun to see someone having fun.

SM: Yes. Right.

JY: And really be . . . my dad was much more, you know, wanted us to *learn* things.

SM: Yes. So he liked a more thorough [unclear] going into this.

JY: Yes. Though they never did those things . . . it's kind of my middle brother who got kind of gypped, you know.

SM: [Chuckles] How do you mean?

JY: Well, I mean, he would get the one or two lessons, you know, but he never was able to be the fanatic, you know.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: He was less disciplined, too, as a person, than my older brother was anyway.

SM: Oh, I see. But then you were more disciplined again then?

JY: Yes, and then I kind of had followed the suit of studying and taking lessons and doing the right things kind of . . . I think there was a lot of . . . pressure for various kinds of social achievement for me.

SM: From your mother particularly?

JY: Yes. Well, both my parents.

SM: Both.

JY: And mainly my mom, yes. And less concerned about what my grades were.

SM: Oh. Yes. This is from your mother.

JY: Yes, from both my parents. And I remember when I graduated from college they did not want . . . they were not concerned about whether I went to graduate school or not, which was real different from my brothers who were told they *had* to get Ph.D.s.

SM: [Chuckles] They were told that?

JY: Yes. That was just real clear. They have to. Period. It doesn't matter if there's any job market for it or not, but they had to be . . . you know, have professional degrees.

SM: Yes..

JY: And they didn't really care what happened to me as long as I got a college degree. In fact, I don't think they even cared if I got a college degree.

SM: Oh, but they didn't try to stop it or anything like that?

JY: No, no. They encouraged it, but . . . and were supportive, but they really didn't care at all.

SM: Yes. They didn't see it as important?

JY: Yes. Yes, because I supported myself throughout college.

SM: Oh.

JY: And my brothers worked a lot in the summer but their . . . I think they knew that if they didn't come up with the money, somebody would come up with the money. Whereas I knew pretty much that I would have to pay for everything.

SM: Oh, so they got more help from your parents.

JY: Yes. Yes. They both went to private schools, too.

SM: Oh, private colleges?

JY: Yes, private colleges.

SM: Oh. And that's expensive.

JY: Yes.

SM: Where did they go?

JY: Well, my oldest brother went to Carleton and then my middle brother went to Hamline.

SM: I see. And then you went to the U.

JY: Right. Right.

SM: And you supported it all. What did you study, by the way?

JY: I got a degree in sociology.

SM: Oh.

JY: My mom has a degree in sociology, too.

SM: Oh, she does? That's interesting.

JY: Yes.

SM: And your father's in economics.

JY: Right.

oral History Project SM: Well, did you say one or the other of your parents was more the disciplinarian? Or . . . no, they were kind of equal in that.

JY: Yes.

SM: Were they strict for a Chinese family?

JY: No, they were really liberal. In some . . . in, I think, in public ways like that I could get a handle on, like dating non-Chinese. They didn't care if we married Chinese or not.

SM: Oh.

JY: Or they gave up hope, I guess, maybe that might be a better . . . I mean they gave up hope in a nice way, not in a . . . you know, exasperated, negative kind of sense.

SM: Yes.

JY: Where they just were realistic, I guess. They . . .

SM: But I thought you said at first they did emphasize marrying a Chinese?

JY: Yes, they did. They did.

SM: But then they later liberalized and . . .

JY: Yes, and I wasn't just so sure how serious that ever was anyway.

SM: Oh. Hmmm.

JY: I think, basically, they didn't care what happened to me.

SM: Oh. Because you were . . .?

JY: Because I was the daughter.

SM: Oh. Hmmm. So you did feel that they were much more concerned about your brothers?

JY: I don't . . . I think this is more in retrospect.

SM: Yes.

JY: I mean, I don't think I was aware of that.

SM: Yes.

JY: I mean, I knew I had a sense of it now as I look back.

SM: Right.

JY: That something was different between me and my brothers, and I always was trying to, you know, rectify that difference, but as I grew up, I began to realize it had nothing to do with *me*.

SM: Yes.

JY: But had to do with the fact that I was the daughter.

SM: Yes. Because it would be harder for you to catch on to that in American society. If you were in China you would see the pattern around you.

JY: Yes. Yes. And there would be other daughters just like me.

SM: Yes.

JY: And I didn't figure it out until I went back to Taiwan, in fact.

SM: Oh.

JY: I mean I *knew* that there was something there. And I was getting a sense of it. But when I went to Taiwan I knew for sure that my hunch was right.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: Because I saw very clearly. It's like my father doesn't . . . I don't think my . . . either of my parents even know the names of their other grandchildren other than the first son.

SM: Really?

JY: The first grandson.

SM: Oh. Because they are the most important and . . .

JY: Right. The first one, of course, is the novelty. But the fact that the first one was a boy.

SM: Oh.

JY: I mean, my father says, "My grandson." And he has two grandsons and a granddaughter.

SM: Ah ha. *That's* his grandson.

JY: Yes. And it's just his grandson. And even last . . . even as early as last night, we were at his apartment and he was saying, "Yes, my friend Alan was asking him about this painting and what . . . they're moving out of their house. And he was saying, "What are you going to do with this painting?" And my dad said, "Oh, the kids don't appreciate that. Neither Vic or Bob want it."

SM: [Gasps] Oh.

JY: And I was sitting right there. And I looked at Alan and he looked at me. Because right before that he said, "Joyce, don't you want that painting?" And I said, "It's not up to . . . you know, I don't have any *claim* to anything here." And he said, "What do you mean by that?" And I said, "Well, ask my dad." And then he asked my dad and my dad said, "The kids aren't interested, don't appreciate these things, neither Vic or Bob have a place for it." And I was sitting right next to the painting. And Alan looked at me and I looked at Alan and I said, "See?!" You know, I just went, "Right."

SM: Oh, that's . . .

JY: It was like I was *invisible*!

SM: Yes.

JY: So and I used to think there was something wrong with me.

SM: And you would.

JY: You know, that maybe I did something to *provoke* that.

SM: When you were little.

JY: Yes. And now I know that it's because I'm the girl.

SM: Well, it wouldn't necessarily mean they have any less affection for you, I suppose.

JY: Right. Right. It's just that . . .

SM: It's just they're . . . in a habit of thinking.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: But and despite being probably the cream of the modern Chinese, you know, when they came as a young couple and so on, but they still have these traditional . . .

JY: Yes.

SM: Yes. Hmmm. That's really interesting.

JY: And it's not like that I'm a meek little person in the family.

SM: No. [Chuckles]

JY: I'm very loud and, you know . .

SM: Oh, so you did assert yourself quite a bit in your family?

JY: Yes. And I think now that I realize it, I did it . . . otherwise I don't think they'd even know if I was in the *room* or there.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, is that similar then to the traditional woman's role in the family that she might be really domineering and so on as a kind of reaction to this?

JY: I don't know. I think there might be some of that.

SM: Yes. Hmmm.

JY: You figure out where you do have power.

SM: Right.

[Unclear – both speak at the same time]

SM: Yes.

JY: I don't know. I couldn't say.

SM: Well, have any women relatives been around? Aunts or others?

JY: No. See, that's what is really different about our family is that we have *no* contact with any other relatives except maybe, you know, a weekend or someone would come through as a visitor, but not as far as a relationship.

SM: They don't live here though.

JY: No. We do have some relatives that live here, but for some reason we don't have any contact with them.

SM: Oh. Was there a rift?

JY: Yes, I have a feeling there is.

SM: Oh. Well, if you did have like cousins here . . .

JY: There are cousins here.

SM: Oh.

JY: Yes.

SM: Well, if you saw quite a bit of them, would you have been expected to do things with the other girls particularly?

JY: Probably, or the other cousins. It would have been nice, in fact, but there weren't . . . I don't think there were any my age. The cousins that we have are really my parents' age but they're cousins, you know, because of . . .

SM: Oh, they're their cousins?

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see.

JY: So they're older than I am, actually.

SM: Yes, so you would be their second cousin or something like that?

JY: Yes. Yes. I don't . . . and Chinese lineage, it changes, you know, brothers and sisters. Cousins are brothers and sisters.

SM: Oh. I see. Hmmm. You mean, cousins are considered like . . .?

JY: If you have the same grandparents, you're brother and sister.

SM: Oh, I see. And they're called brothers and sisters then.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Well, what about someone like Helen Fong? What kind of role did she have in this Chinese community? Is it mainly within the Cantonese group or is it in the whole group or is it as strong as it appears to me, or . . .?

JY: I think it would be in the Cantonese community.

SM: Yes.

JY: And it comes from . . . well, her capabilities, for sure, and the time she spends organizationally . . .

SM: Yes.

JY: And her sense of, you know, what's going on.

SM: She's very committed to it, it seems.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: I wonder what's behind that? I mean, why is she so committed?

JY: The fact . . . their family . . . I think part of her influence comes from the fact that her husband is a very successful businessman and owns one of the largest restaurants.

SM: So that would have something to do with it.

JY: Yes, and gives her leisure time.

SM: [Unclear] she's not working.

JY: All the other restaurant wives have to be cooking.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: Or being the hostesses and doing things and they have, you know, David is just the manager.

SM: I see.

JY: I mean, he isn't back there . . .

SM: Cooking.

JY: Chopping, yes. Chopping vegetables.

SM: Right. And in the small affairs then the guy who owned it is cooking, too.

JY: Right. And I think it has to do with that they have leisure time.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And they have a larger business . . . larger community sense.

SM: Oh, is he pretty civic-minded, too?

JY: Yes, they both are.

SM: Oh, that's interesting.

JY: And the Chinese businessmen basically are compared to the Chinese professors. I mean, the Chinese professors are just . . . have their heads in the books.

SM: Oh.

JY: And they have less civic sense than an American professor has toward their own community.

SM: Well, that's a good point to bring up, because it's to the advantage of the businessmen, for one thing. For instance, Joe Huie seemed to be *very* civic. He gave scholarships and this kind of thing.

JY: Right. Right.

SM: Hmmm.

JY: But I think it's . . . you know, if you work your way up, you appreciate people helping you and you try to reciprocate when you have the means.

SM: Right. Oh, sure. That's probably it, too.

JY: I think it is that real genuine generosity.

SM: Yes.

JY: And the professors . . . you can listen to my father's oral tape about what he feels about the professors barely would buy a ten dollar membership to the Chinese Association. And then they would expect everything from it. So it really is much more . . . I don't know, individualistic or . . . and maybe that's the non-joiners part.

SM: Oh.

JY: The Chinese are not very good organizational people. I think the Fongs are unusual.

SM: Oh.

JY: And that's where her power comes from, in her ability. And so it's all of us second generation that are doing all this stuff.

SM: It really is, yes.

JY: Yes. And then, American educated.

SM: Right. Well, would being a successful one mean you take on a leading role? I mean, if they are the leading business people . . .?

JY: Well, I don't know. The successful Chinese are a lot of Chinese who just have succeeded in . . . in as far as their business careers or their occupation. The most successful Chinese here are people who got it through their academic standing, really.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And what's his name? The guy who was the economist for Northwestern National Bank.

SM: Oh, yes. I've . . . yes.

JY: You know, he has no connection.

SM: And the anesthesiologist that gets the highest salary of all.

JY: Salary. And Joseph Ling who's the vice president of 3M. None of these people are active in the Chinese community.

SM: Oh, well isn't Joseph Ling?

JY: Marginally.

SM: He has his name on a lot of things.

JY: I mean, he accepts that.

SM: Yes.

JY: He's willing to lend his name to a lot of things. But he's not an active participant in *any* of those organizations.

SM: Oh, so the professionals have really stayed out of civic kind of things.

JY: Yes.

SM: Well, I guess when I meant successful in terms of the Fongs is that they were successful restaurant owners. I mean they have a big one and so on.

JY: Yes.

SM: I wondered in the merchant community whether that does put an onus on you to be a leader in the . . . at least Chinese community.

JY: I don't know.

SM: I wonder . . . It would be interesting to know.

JY: I don't know. I do know that my parents and parents' friends say things like, "Well, so and so is good at doing that, you know, public stuff."

SM: Oh.

JY: And I think it has to do with the sense of the language and the assimilation.

SM: Yes.

JY: And respecting that, you know. And I think there's a little bit of suspicion, too.

SM: Yes.

JY: That, oh, they went over to the other side.

SM: Oh.

JY: But see, with the Fongs, it always serves their business interests.

SM: Right.

JY: So it's not viewed as suspiciously as . . .

SM: You mean . . .? What do you mean by went over to the other side? To the broader society?

JY: Well, I think that they think . . . yes. Yes. They lost their Chinese.

SM: Oh. Oh, yes.

JY: They're not keeping to their own. They're not just doing things for the family, but they actually are doing for something, for someone else. They bought into another ethic.

SM: Ah ha. Oh, yes.

JY: But the business people, obviously, it's part of their work.

SM: Yes.

JY: But I think that would really be it, that they went outside the family.

SM: Ah ha. So it's really against Chinese tradition, in a way.

JY: Yes. Yes, to do anything outside your family.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: In fact, my parents really discouraged me from having friends. To this day, they don't.

SM: To this day?

JY: Oh, yes. They just assume that . . . yes, that you just have your family. And that you shouldn't have friends. And you should have friends only in order to go do things, like if you want to go to a movie and no one in your house, you know, wants to go, then you can go with a friend.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh. I see.

JY: But you don't have a friend for the American sense of friendship, of support and comradeship.

SM: Yes.

JY: And that's really true in Taiwan. You don't have friends.

SM: Oh.

JY: You only have friends to go do things with, have dinner with or go to a movie with or go shopping with.

SM: Oh, to serve an expedience, kind of . . .

JY: Yes, just kind of, you know, to do something with when no one else in your family wants to do that.

SM: [Chuckles] Linda Woo said, too, that her mother would never let her invite people over, or if they invited her, she wouldn't let her go.

JY: Exactly. Yes. Yes. My parents were . . . I could pressure my parents a little bit more than Linda might have been able to.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: Because I could say, "Well, if you want me to be vice president of the student council, you have to let me go."

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: I figured that out my junior year in high school.

SM: [Chuckles] Very clever.

JY: That I could go to [unclear] the way I could go to a basketball game was by saying, "How can I get elected to be student council blah blah blah if I don't go to the basketball meeting, the basketball games?"

SM: That's very true.

JY: And I remember my parents went, "You're right." And they let me go. And I went, "Oh, wow, this is interesting."

SM: Oh, this would be to a basketball game?

JY: Yes. But I couldn't go, just to go and have fun. Couldn't go anywhere or do anything unless there was a motive.

SM: [Chuckles] That's interesting.

JY: You know, couldn't just go for fun or because other kids were going and you wanted to relax after school. Because school was like a job, you went to school to get . . . to learn and be . .

SM: For a purpose.

JY: For a purpose. You didn't go to school for socializing.

SM: Right.

JY: And I think that was . . . you know, I think that was something they didn't know about America.

SM: Well, one thing that's . . . traditionally, I mean, you know, in the real Confucian tradition, the merchants have a pretty low status, but it seems to me in America, they have a much higher status than they did in China.

JY: Right.

SM: Because they're the ones with money and they could bring their families, see, and where laborers couldn't.

JY: And I think maybe the Mandarin speaking people might resent that switch-around.

SM: Yes, that might be part of it.

JY: And suddenly that . . . the merchant class people by Americans are looked at as high as professors, almost as high as professors. There's much more egalitarian . . .

SM: Yes, because Americans worship businessmen so much.

JY: Right. Successful businessmen.

SM: Right.

JY: And so the professors, I think, here Chinese don't want to have anything to do with merchants out of resentment.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: Out of carryover of the Chinese ethic.

SM: Yes.

JY: But then they resent the fact, oh, gol darn it, you know, he made it. He really did make it in American society.

SM: Yes. Yes.

JY: He has a bigger house, his kids go to all the right schools and they have more money. But and so they put within the Chinese community they put even more rigid boundaries on it than probably even exist in China.

SM: Sure.

JY: Out of resentment for the . . . you know, that kind of stuff. Like my parents really made it clear to me when I was dating in high school that I could *never* have anything to do with the merchant kids.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: And even to this day my mother doesn't want me to be friends with all of those other Chinese kids because they are all merchant.

SM: [Sighs]

JY: And they aren't Chinese, because you don't speak Mandarin if you're [unclear]. And then on the reverse, then the Cantonese, of course, have the reaction of keeping to themselves, too. And when you speak Mandarin to them they only reply in Cantonese or Toisanese.

SM: Yes. But would their parents try to keep them from having friends among the intellectual class?

JY: I don't think they were as . . .

SM: Yes, because the intellectual class was always held in high esteem.

JY: Right. I think they were more . . . you know, more interested in having their kids have friends with Chinese.

SM: Oh, I see.

JY: And not just be so class conscious. But they weren't educated in Confucian thought either.

SM: That's right. And the lower class or the peasants had a much more equal kind of relationship.

JY: Yes. Yes. And they didn't have . . . yes, they didn't have those . . . that book learning that all the professors would have had.

SM: Right. But they did have that same idea about education as the road to success, so it's hardly likely they would have opposed their children going to school and meeting the intellectual's children. [Chuckles]

JY: Right. Except they probably might have in that they don't speak the same dialect.

SM: Oh, yes. So they would be opposed to marriage across lines.

JY: Yes.

SM: Let's see. What else do we want to talk about? I think that was the main bit of it.

JY: Yes.

SM: Well, would your mother be any different towards her sons than she was towards you? Well, you've mentioned some aspects of that in that they were more concerned about their education and . . .

JY: Yes.

SM: But how would her role with the sons differ from your father's role to his sons? Would he be the main disciplinarian?

JY: I don't know.

SM: Maybe no difference.

JY: You know, I couldn't . . . I didn't pay attention, I guess.

SM: Well, maybe there isn't a large difference, if you didn't notice.

JY: Yes.

SM: But she . . . mostly she would treat you and the boys the same except in regard to your future [chuckles] or . . .?

JY: Yes. Yes. Well, I think there's some traditional things that, you know, I couldn't go out ever.

SM: Oh, but they could?

JY: But they could.

SM: They could date and so on? Oh, you did, too, though.

JY: Well, when we got dating age, I could date, too.

SM: Yes.

JY: But I could not go out with girlfriends.

SM: Oh.

JY: See, I could go out with a boy because going out with a boy meant . . . had some, you know .

. .

SM: Purpose. [Chuckles]

JY: Purpose, for marriage. Right, you go to date to marry. Or date to experience that so that you will be able to get married. Actually, my brothers were kind of discouraged from dating.

SM: Oh. Well, maybe it was more important that they marry a Chinese.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see. They were discouraged from dating period or dating other people?

JY: A lot. No, dating a lot. They could date a little bit.

SM: They had to pay attention to their studies.

JY: Yes. Right. Yes, tough neither of them really did. [Chuckles] In that sense, my parents were much more liberal than many of the other intellectual Chinese parents. *Much* more liberal.

SM: Oh, than the other intellectuals.

JY: Yes. Yes. Because they let us play sports, they let me date, my brother had a car.

SM: Oh, that is liberal.

JY: My middle brother played football, my oldest brother was a basketball star. All of those things were just really unusual.

SM: I see.

JY: So they were much more liberal, and as a result we're actually less achievement oriented than our counterparts.

SM: Oh, yes.

JY: And if you interview other . . . oh, what do you call it? Mandarin speaking families.

SM: I see.

JY: Frank's family is unusual because they're not Mandarin speaking, they speak Shanghainese, but I don't know if there are any other children of intellectuals . . .

SM: Well, were your parents and Frank's parents friends?

JY: Yes.

SM: Because they're both from Shanghai.

JY: Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh. So you saw a lot of each other and then . . . oh, I see. Hmmm. But he was Catholic. I suppose that . . . well, Shanghai is so mixed and always was [unclear].

JY: Yes.

SM: Had they gone to school together or something? His parents . . .

JY: I think they met here.

SM: Oh, met here. Well, would the Cantonese speakers who were very eager for their children to have education for achievement and all this, too, would they be more so than the professionals? Since they have . . .

JY: Oh, I think they're both the same.

SM: About equal. [Chuckles]

JY: I think the professionals wanted their kids all to go to prestigious schools.

SM: Ah ha.

JY: And the merchant class were just happy that their kids went to college.

SM: Oh, yes. I see. Well, the . . .

JY: Which is why my brothers went to private colleges instead of just going to the U.

SM: Yes. Well, I suppose that intellectuals were much more up on which were the prestigious schools.

JY: Yes.

SM: Well, hmmm. Do you think of anything else we should add to this? Are there any organizations your parents belong to now?

JY: No. Not at all. I think my mom might belong to a thing called the Rainbow Club.

SM: Oh, that's a [unclear].

JY: Which is . . . yes, that's an American club but it's a cross . . . you know, it's black and white . . . I think it started out as black and white.

Mich

SM: Oh, it did?

JY: And maybe Japanese, you know, during the war.

SM: Oh.

JY: But, you know, so . . . a group, it's like a women's luncheon club.

SM: Yes.

JY: But I think there are men in it, too. But it's all races and different people and it's a social thing.

SM: It's a social club?

JY: Yes.

SM: Hmmm.

JY: And then they, you know, belong to the various Chinese organizations but they're not active in them.

SM: Oh, they do belong to them though?

JY: Yes.

SM: Like the Chinese Chamber of Commerce?

JY: No. They wouldn't . . .

SM: Like CAAM or . . .?

JY: But to CAAM, yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: And when we were . . . until actually, until maybe ten, fifteen years ago, they belonged to the student association even though they weren't students.

SM: I see. The Chinese Student Association.

JY: Because they just identified with the university thing. And so the student association really turned out to be everyone who was associated with the university in some way who was Chinese.

SM: Oh, I see. Yes.

JY: So there were a lot of graduate students, a lot of professors. But then it kind of . . . you know, they really did get too old for it, you know. Most of their friends stopped going and so they stopped going. And then that's kind of when CAAM started.

SM: Oh, so CAAM took up some of those same people.

JY: Yes. CAAM was really an organization of professional and the educated Chinese.

SM: I see.

JY: And then they'd formed a coalition with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, with all the Cantonese speaking. And then they had this huge rift, which my father was the main negotiator for.

SM: Oh, he was?

JY: Yes, because he was the only one that speaks both Cantonese and Mandarin.

SM: Yes, it was interesting that he speaks both. But how did that happen?

JY: I don't know. He just traveled around a lot when he was younger and he made an effort to pick it up.

SM: He just learned it.

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh.

JY: Which most intellectuals, you know, it's below them to speak anything other than Mandarin.

SM: Speak Cantonese.

JY: And it's true with the Cantonese, it's below them to speak anything other than their village dialect, too, so both of them are just as adamant.

SM: Yes.

JY: And only since Communist China has developed a more positive attitude toward learning across dialects have people been willing to do that. Even . . . you can even see a big difference in the Chinatowns now.

SM: Oh, really?

JY: You can go up to a Cantonese speaking merchant and if he does . . . if he or she does speak or understand Mandarin, they *will* speak back. Before they acted as . . . they would respond better if you spoke English.

SM: Oh.

JY: The wrong dialect was worse than English.

SM: Oh.

JY: So I used to always just . . . you know, hate going into a Chinese restaurant.

SM: [Chuckles]

JY: Because I couldn't speak the right dialect.

SM: Oh, yes. That is really . . .

JY: But now I can say when they speak Cantonese to me, I can answer in Mandarin and say, "I only speak Mandarin." And then they'll speak Mandarin. Because so many Communist Chinese... because of the dominance of China now in the . . . they have some positive feelings about China now.

SM: Yes. The restaurant . . .

JY: Yes, because now the main language doesn't represent educated class and oppression, which is what Mandarin represented before.

SM: Yes.

JY: And now it represents . . .

SM: Everyone.

JY: Everyone.

SM: Yes. Yes, some of the restaurant people have expressed pretty favorable . . .

JY: Right.

SM: Attitudes. David Yip's, well, you've got to give them credit. Nine hundred million people and all have got something to eat. [Chuckles] Which is, of course, an achievement.

JY: Yes. Yes. Because they came here, you know, to look for the gold mountain.

SM: Yes.

JY: And most of the educated class did not come looking for that. But just came because . . .

SM: They came because they had money, for one thing, to study or . . . Yes. Hmmm. Do you know what years these organizations began?

JY: No, you should ask my parents about that.

SM: Oh, they would know about that.

JY: Yes.

SM: Oh yes, of course, since they were there when they were starting.

JY: They were real active, yes. And probably were in the first student associations.

SM: Oh, yes. I'd love to know when that started, too.

JY: Yes.

SM: Hmmm. Well, do you think of anything else we should add?

JY: No.

SM: Well, thank you again. [Chuckles]