

Interviewee: Yahui
Interviewer: Sheila McManus
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Transcriber: Sheila McManus



Abstract: Yahui was born in Jiangsu Province, China, and works as a research scientist at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts. She has a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in biotechnology from Nanjing Normal University in Nanjing, China, and a PhD in human genetics from Fudan University in Shanghai, China. Since coming to Worcester in 2006 as a postdoctoral researcher, Yahui has established roots in Worcester. She obtained a permanent resident card, purchased a home, learned to drive, obtained her driver's license, and established a career. Yahui works as a diabetes researcher at UMass Medical School. In this interview, Yahui discusses her move to Worcester, her work as a scientist, and her adjustment to life and culture in Worcester.

SM: Interview with Yahui for the Worcester Women's Oral History Project.

SM: What is your name?

Y: My name is Yahui.

SM: Where were you born?

Y: I was born in Jiangsu Province, China.

SM: [mm-hm] Have you ever married?

Y: No.

SM: Okay. Do you have children?

Y: No.

SM: Where did you attend school?

Y: I attended school in China.

SM: [mm-hm] And what were the names of the schools?

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Y: For college, or for?

SM: For anything.

Y: So I attended college in Nanjing, China. The name of the university is Nanjing Normal University. And then I—I did my master in the same university. And then I went to Fudan University in Shanghai, China, to finish my PhD study.

SM: [mm-hm] So can you tell me what your field is? What your field of study was?

Y: So, I majored in biology for undergraduate - undergraduate degree—for bachelor degree. And a master in biotechnology and then I did human genetics for my PhD.

SM: And you can read from your notes at any time if you want to, if that makes you more comfortable. Okay? [laughs]

Y: [laughs] Okay.

SM: So I'm just going to ask you a couple more questions and if you wanna - if you want to - fill in from your notes, that's fine. Okay?

Y: Okay, that's okay. So you can also ask.

SM: Whatever's more comfortable for you.

SM: Okay. Do you currently work in this country?

Y: In U.S.?

SM: In the United States, yes.

Y: Yes, yes. I'm working at—I work at the UMass Medical School [University of Massachusetts Medical School].

SM: Okay. And what do you do at UMass Medical School?

Y: I'm a research scientist at the diabetes center at UMass Medical School.

SM: [mm-hm] And what specifically are you working on in terms of research?

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Y: In terms of research, I do diabetes related research. So should I specify?

SM: [mm-hm] You can if you would like. Absolutely!

Y: Yeah so my project focuses on the—how the genetic variance in humans affect the diabetes risk.

SM: [mm-hm] So, in your studies, do you work with animals, do you work with computers, how do you conduct your studies? Or your research, I should say.

Y: So, I mostly work on human samples. So we collected the human islets, you know the islets from the pancreas. So, we purchased the human islets and geno- genotypes for some Type 2 diabetes risk locus. So then, I try to find the mechanism of how this genetical risk (___???) variance could affect the Type 2 diabetes risk.

SM: So, you said, “eyelets?” “Platelets?” “Eyelids?” I didn’t get that. [laughs]

Y: [laughs] Islets is the organ to—islets contains like beta cells and alpha cells. A beta cell could produce insulin. So yeah.

SM: Okay. I’m just not familiar with the term. I don’t have a science background.

Y: Everybody have a different genotype you know, so.

SM: Okay.

Y: So - so I actually genotyped this human samples. And at this locus actually, should I like specify the details?

SM: [mm-hm] You - absolutely.

Y: So, the studies have shown that in a kind of a normal healthy people and that Type 2 diabetes human—human—they found some locus associated with the Type 2 diabetes risk. So, but the mechanism how this genetic variance could affect the risk is not known. So, my work is to study this mechanism.

SM: And once it’s known, the hope is that we can prevent it or control it better? Is that correct?

Y: Yes, yes. Yeah.

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SM: Okay. So just let me know if you want to add anything else about work as we go along. So tell me about the country you - that you came from.

Y: Yeah, so I was born - yeah - in Jiangsu Province. And I'm sure maybe you have no idea about it.

SM: [interrupts] I am unfamiliar with it. I apologize.

Y: So, it's like east and central coastal province of China. It's the third smallest but the fifth most populous and the most densely populated of (____???) province of China. Jiangsu actually has the second highest GDP [Gross Domestic Product] of Chinese provinces and it bordered— borders Shandong. We don't need to talk about this.

SM: You can if you want. You talk about whatever you like. That's what I'm here to get your story. [laughs]

Y: It borders Shandong in the north, Anhui to the west, and Zhejiang and Shanghai to the south. So, I think everybody knows Shanghai.

SM: [mm-hm] Yes.

Y: So yeah, my hometown is actually only three hours from Shanghai by car.

SM: Which in China is close, really by car.

Y: Yeah, yeah very close.

SM: Okay, so my next question is when did you leave China?

Y: In 2006. I remember the date. August 10, 2006, I came to the United States.

SM: And what was the reason that you left China to come to the United States?

Y: After I finished my PhD, I was looking for a position. So, yeah I applied to the postdoc [postdoctoral] position in the United States and I got a job offer at UMass Medical School.

SM: That's great.

SM: So what was China like when you left? Do you go back? Have you been back in the 11 years that you've lived in the United States? Or not so much?

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Y: Yes, I did go back. I think three times or, yeah, three times or more. [laughs]

SM: How did others in your home country treat you when they knew you were leaving?

Y: Oh it's pretty good. So yeah I, you know, finished all my degrees there. And I actually enjoyed the life there.

SM: [mm-hm] So, did you want to come to the United States?

Y: At 11 years ago?

SM: Yes. [laughs]

Y: [laughs] Yes, I actually—I want to see how America looks like—looked like—and, you know, for maybe in my field. So the environment is—the research environment is—was more advanced in the United States.

SM: Is that why you chose to come to the United States? Because of your career? And not another country? Or not stay at home in China?

Y: I, yeah, I think it's mostly for my career. Yeah.

SM: [mm-hm] So what was it like coming here? What was the actual journey like? How did you get ready for your trip to come to the United States?

Y: So it's the first time for me to, to go abroad ...so actually the journey was a like very fresh, and you know, it's an unforgettable experience for me. So it's interesting. So, I, before I came here, so I have to apply, had to, apply for the visa and because of my research background in biology, so I got a background check and then so it took maybe three weeks to get clearance. So then I booked a ticket and yeah and so. It's a long and tiring trip to fly here. But I had a pleasant experience.

SM: Are there many layovers on the way here?

Y: Just the one stop. So I flew from Shanghai to San Francisco and then to Boston. So yeah, so on the plane I actually made some friends. I talked to the two persons next to me, sitting next to me. And one was an American guy and then the other one was a Chinese student. So the guy helped me to, you know, put my luggage—carry my luggage on the overhead bin and helped me to fill in all kinds of forms. [laughs]

SM: [laughs, interrupts] I know, there are a lot of forms on the plane, right?

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Y: That was so nice. Yeah, so yeah, I feel like the American people are so nice, and then the Chinese student, we actually went together to go through the customs [United States Customs and Border Protection] and then they checked the luggage. So actually it's another, another hardship for me. Because you know I got help and made friends.

SM: So the trip sounds like it was actually stressful but fun at the same time in a way because it's kind of an adventure. So who—was there anyone who came with you when you moved to the United States, or just you?

Y: Just me. Yeah, my parents, my sister, and my nephew, all my relatives in Shanghai. They send me to the airport, and it's like a very emotional moment for me because it's the first time for me to live so far away. And whenever I studied, my home is—was close by and always have my relatives live around. So actually it's the first time that I live without them around. So it—we, yeah, actually my mom started to cry when I have to leave the country. And then, you know, it's a very emotional moment. Yeah, I still remember that. They actually waited in the airport until my flight departed. Yeah.[laughs]

SM: [mm-hm] That's nice, though.

Y: Yeah. [laughs]

SM: What did you bring with you?

Y: Oh, actually I have two big luggages and one carry on. So I actually brought almost everything.

SM: [interrupts] Oh, you did? [laughs]

Y: [laughs] I'm not sure, you know. [laughs] I brought like even pots, like bowls, plates, and the covers, like clothes, everything. I mean.

SM: You probably wanted the things you were used to cooking with, right?

Y: Yeah.

SM: Or things that were the comforts of home and the familiar when you came here especially coming to such an unfamiliar place. What did you leave behind?

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Y: Leave behind?

SM: What did you not take with you from China?

Y: Well, that's lots of things. Because I only came, you know, with the stuff I brought—have to—can only fit in two luggages. [laughs] Cannot brought—bring too many things. Yeah. Too many things here.

SM: What was it like for you when you first arrived?

Y: So when I first arrived, it was night. It was night. So I, yeah, I got here very—no, it's not very late. But my PI [Principal Investigator], my boss, picked me up from the airport. Yeah so on the way to Worcester, so I looked like around the outside, so I found it actually was quite different from China. So we passed several towns, and I found that okay, this is America. This is like a village.

SM: [laughs]

Y: Where I grow there's no—not too many high buildings, and, you know, the house just like scattered. It's like not very dense. So the houses are separate.

SM: [interrupts] Exactly, yeah, the population's not very dense.

Y: And not many people walking on the streets. And not like, not like, ablaze with lights. It's a little bit late in the nighttime. Yeah, so that's kind of different from what I imagined, imagined (____???)

SM: Because where you're from there's a lot of lights, tall buildings...

Y: Tall buildings and lots of people. [laughs] Even like, yeah, at night. So ...

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SM: [interrupts] Even late at night.

Y: Yeah. So.

SM: So what changes in lifestyle did you have to make when you came here?

Y: Uh.

SM: And feel free to read from any of your notes at any time.

Y: [laughs] I think I, yeah, possibly, I have more to say about yeah ...

SM: Sure.

Y: For the ...

SM: [interrupts] Go ahead and add anything you have to say, yeah.

Y: When I first arrived so, yeah, so when I just got here and we went to the apartment. The apartment—my colleague already like found an apartment for me before I came here. So, so then, we got there, but it's late, so I couldn't be able to meet with the-- someone from the lease office. So actually [laughs], so I have to stay with—stay at my boss's home.

SM: That's interesting. [laughs]

Y: (_____????) Cause I couldn't get in, yeah. So then...

SM: [interrupts] What was that like? Was it a little strange both meeting your boss in person and then having to stay at his or her home your first night in the country?

Y: No actually. So he, my boss, picked me up. And he's—I found he's very nice; he's very easygoing. So, so then, so I feel like a warmth.

SM: Nice.

Y: When I just got here, okay I said, that's really good. So, so yeah. I feel like it just made my arrival easier, easier. So 'cause I knew nobody except him. So then we have to—then he—his wife just, you know, organized the room for me, and so that's a—I feel like, yeah, warm when I just got here. So then the second day I was able to meet the lease officer. So we—I signed the contract. But I found it difficult, difficult, to communicate with the...

SM: [interrupts] With the leasing person.

Y: Yeah, leasing person. [laughs] 'Cause I don't—didn't understand the contract very well. And I had hard time to talk to the electricity company to open the—to turn on the power.

SM: Oh, yes! Did they have any translators on the phone, or no, you had to...

Y: No, actually, I had to seek my boss's help. [laughs] It's a—I found—okay, it's the language is a problem, the language is a problem for me.

SM: So that was --- must've been - a big change from --- for - your lifestyle being able to speak in your first language and then coming here and not knowing the language fluently. It ---- was it hard to adjust to stores, to other people? What was that process like?

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Y: Yeah, it's really hard for me, for me to communicate in the beginning. So my English was not good, you know. [laughs]

SM: [laughs] Yeah.

Y: Even though I had—because we don't speak English, I mean in daily life, in daily life in China. So it's really hard for me. So, so yeah, I feel like some difficulties then, and America has different lifestyles...

SM: [interrupts] Yes!

Y: -- comparing to China. So yeah.

SM: So have you dropped any customs that you had at home? Or any habits that you had at home because you felt pressured to do so? To kind of fit in with the culture here in Massachusetts or here in the United States?

Y: Dropped some habits?

SM: Habits or customs. Because you wanted to kind of fit in with the culture here that might be a little bit different from the culture back home.

Y: Let me think about that.

SM: You can come back to it, too. Yeah.

Y: [laughs] So, yeah maybe, what I can think of now is, so we don't have—I mean after I got home from work, the only thing is to stay at home here. At the beginning so—even now so at night, people just stayed at home. I mean enjoyed their home life, family time, but in China we

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have lots of, you know, restaurants and shopping center. So at night, so we can still can like go outside to enjoy the, you know ---

SM: [interrupts] So.

Y: [finishes] nighttime.

SM: So - do you think it's much more social at night where you're from in China or where you were studying in China in here in the United States? At least in this particular part of the country, people go home after work and watch television, or cook dinner, or something. And --- is that --- -am I getting at the right thing? So yeah, - so it's not as social here in the United States as it might be where you're from?

Y: Yeah, it's kind of like that. It's not—after work people—I mean people here enjoy family time. So yeah—we can—yeah, it's true like the social life is not as much as in China.

SM: So it's a little less exciting here for you, maybe. Because it's a great place for a career, but there's not much night life going on and there's not much, you know, socialization, yeah.

Y: Social life. Yeah, yeah.

SM: So, how were you treated when you first arrived to the United States?

Y: Oh, treated?

SM: Yeah, how, how did people treat you? Were people treating you well or poorly? It sounds as if your boss and his wife treated you very well, but did other people treat you well or poorly? Or what was your reception like when you came here?

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Y: Oh, I really had a good, nice impression when I got—people were so nice, people were so nice, and they treated me very well. So yeah.

SM: That's great.

Y: So yeah. So , I got here, and I saw the apartment was nice.

SM: That's nice.

Y: It's different from , it's different from the dorms in China. They have like a stove, whatever, kitchen, and then the dishwasher, or everything. But, no furniture! [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Y: It's totally different from China. So yeah, so I because I brought almost everything, so I can survive, I can survive for a few days until like friends like took me to shop the necessities. I was so lucky to have some friends who helped me to go through all of the process at the beginning. So two active postdocs, they came like two months earlier than me. So yeah, they helped me because they had gone through it. All the processes, so like orientation, and how to apply credit cards, how to, yeah... [pauses, sound of notes being shuffled]

SM: Feel free to, - you can read from your notes at any time. That is perfectly fine. We want to capture everything that you want to tell us.

Y: They did a physical examination because it is required.

SM: For jobs here, yes. Interesting, right? [laughs]

Y: Yeah. And buy insurance. And how to, yeah, choose your doctor. So everything they had gone through that, so it's really helpful for me. And I was also lucky to meet some friends, like schoolmates from China. And they took me to do grocery shopping. They took me to the like a yard sale to get secondhand furniture.

SM: Do you have yard sales in China? I love yard sales! [laughs]

Y: I think nowadays, they possibly do.

SM: They do, yeah? [laughs]

Y: Online business and (___???) . First time for me to see the yard sale.[laughs]

SM: It's interesting, right?

Y: Yeah, it's interesting.

SM: [laughs] Because you could just --- if you're driving --- you can see yard sales, or - just - garage sales in the United States.

Y: Yeah, yeah. I still have the furniture that I bought 11 years ago.

SM: That's great. [laughs]

Y: Yeah, I still have that.

SM: [laughs] So did you change your name at all when you came to the United States, or you stuck with it?

Y: No, I yeah...

SM: I notice that a lot of our students Americanize their first names because it's very tough - tough - for people from the United States to speak some of the Asian languages. Even the names, so....

Y: So, my name is tough, too.

SM: Yeah. But it's your name! So you want to keep it, right? [laughs]

Y: No, I didn't change my name.

SM: So - are there - is there anything I'm leaving out? One, one thing you must really miss is--- was it very difficult in terms of customs? I'm going back to an earlier question. The food is so different here from the food in any other country, right? So what do you miss all the products you could get at home? Are there any restaurants or markets that are similar to home, or is the food completely different from what you were used to in China?

Y: Yes, the food is different. So I actually go to both American supermarkets and some Asian markets. I can get most of stuff I like, yeah. Some Chinese food and some, you know, American food, I also like to try. So actually, I enjoy the American food, but most of the time, I just cook Chinese style, the Chinese food.

SM: At home?

Y: Yeah, at home.

SM: I have, I have a friend who's married to someone who is originally from China, and his in-laws were visiting and his father-in-law said to him, "I don't want any more American food."

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Well, he said to --- because my friend doesn't speak Mandarin, he said, "I don't want any more American food. Please take me out for some Chinese food." [laughs]

Y: [laughs] There's some Chinese restaurants here, even in Worcester, yeah, yeah, sometimes we go there, that are good.

SM: That are good. That are more authentic than other restaurants.

Y: Yeah, yeah. I know there are like many American Chinese food. I don't often go there, but I don't like to try the real Chinese food here.

SM: So are there anything --- is there - anything else you really miss about China that we don't have for you here, in the United States, specifically in Worcester? Or is there a large enough Asian community, or Chinese community, where you can some of those things here?

Y: You mean in terms of food? Or everything?

SM: Food, just customs, things to do. I mean when you celebrate holidays, our holidays are completely different from your holidays.

Y: So yeah. So there's some Chinese communities here. Like even in school. So we have - like four--- two big festivals. Chinese festivals, like a Moon Festival and Chinese New Year. At UMass, they organize a party, and we communicate at the time. We just, you know, get together. And they also---there's a Chinese church here in Worcester. So it's like a social, social time. You can meet Chinese friends there. So, yeah.

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SM: That's nice. Okay. So next question. What is it like for you now? What were your hopes for yourself when you came here? And have you realized these hopes? What were you hoping your life in the United States would be like, or your hopes or dreams, or ...

Y: I came here just for, for like, career. So I think I did a good job. I think, I yeah. [laughs]

SM: [laughs] Well, you're still here 11 years later, so ...[laughs]

Y: [laughs]

SM: So you must be very good at your work is what I'm saying. [laughs]

Y: Well, I don't—it's not super good, but I am satisfied, with, you know, all the achievements. So yeah, I work hard, actually, because I know it's harder for me like as a foreigner here. And I have to work harder, and yeah, most of the time, I just spend on working. So because the competition is high here. [laughs]

SM: Absolutely.

Y: And the language is a problem for us. So yeah, so I am satisfied with what I gained here. I had by my hard working, I got my green card, and I bought my apartment. Yeah so, I am very happy with all of this. So I settled down here. I can say that, yeah.

SM: So you said the whole time you've been treated pretty well in the United States. You haven't faced any anti-immigration pressure, any racism, anything, that some of the things we struggle with as a country in the United States. So are you treated well now? Are you treated better now than you were before? Is it kind of about the same as when you first arrived? You've noticed no prejudiced, - prejudice, - on the part of natives to the United States?

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Y: It's pretty same, yeah. I yeah, I yeah, it's pretty good.

SM: That's good, yeah. [laughs]

Y: Yeah I have, like for me, my social life, my social circle is kind of small. So lab, home, and then...

SM: [laughs] Yeah.

Y: So my bosses are—I have gone through two bosses. I go from one lab to the other lab. They're, both of them, are nice. One, the first one, is Chinese. The second one is American. So both are so nice. So I'm so lucky. And because I'm, you know, I'm also a good employee, so.

SM: I'm sure you are. [laughs]

Y: It's mutual, the relationship is mu-tu-al?

SM: Mutual, yeah yeah . So that's great that you've been treated well the whole time you've been here. Has your initial impression of the United States changed over time? Or do you feel the same way as when you first arrived?

Y: About the Americans?

SM: Yeah. Did—do you feel differently about the United States now as opposed to when you first came here over a decade ago?

Y: So when I first came here because I didn't have a car, so I didn't open my world to... [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Y: [laughs] ... America too much. So it's limited.

SM: Yes.

Y: But now my life is kind of opened, and I, you know, it's like the world is—my world is kind of –how to call?

SM: Expanded?

Y: Expanded, yeah, expanded. Yeah so I did like care about more, like American society, more than when I just got here. So yeah, maybe so. How to say that? So I didn't care about, like.

SM: You don't care, when you first came here, maybe you didn't care about what was going on with our politics, or our news, or entertainment. But maybe the longer you've gotten here, maybe you're consuming more like, for example, movies or television or English language books or something.

Y: Yeah, I did care more about the, the—everything related to me or to people here.

SM: So what do you think are some - some of the differences or some of the similarities about the cultures here and your home country that you've noticed?

Y: The culture is quite different, and so... [sound of notes being shuffled]

SM: Sure, go on to your notes, that's fine. Notes are good! [laughs]

Y: Yeah. So one, I can give you some examples.

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SM: Sure.

Y: Like the kids here, I feel like they're have more freedom to, to like discover their interests or to develop themselves. So in China, the students had like a really hard time like just for study 'cause they have more pressure in China. And I think another thing is like—how to call—maybe the teenager or the birthday, they are more independent, so after 18 years old. The parents, you know, just maybe.

SM: [laughs] Bye. Not really, but yeah.

Y: [laughs] Just because they start to be independent after 18 years old. But in China the parents, you know, gave too much care to their kids. That's why I nowadays, I always educate my nephews, so just to be independent. Don't rely on your parents too much. So...

SM: Sure, but it has its negatives and its positives, right?

Y: Yeah, hopefully.

SM: Because you don't want a society that has no focus on family, right?

Y: Yeah, you still need to like educate your kids in a good way. Just to be mature or to be, how to say, be careful, but you know nothing, the things are not correct. You have to give them like education instructions. That's definitely, yeah. [sound of notes being shuffled] And let me see I think.

SM: Take your time. And I'll just ask you after you find that a couple of more questions and then we'll go to your notes and see what everything we've missed that you want to fill in.

Y: Yeah, okay. So you can reorganize. [laughs]

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SM: Your organization is just fine, I'm sure. I'm sure it's more organized than I've ever been in my life! [laughs] Did you find what you were looking for, or not yet?

Y: I mean the difference between American and...

SM: Chinese culture.

Y: ... Chinese culture. So, the thing is like tips. The tips?

SM: Tapes?

Y: So we don't have the, the, tips. So if we eat in a restaurant, we don't pay tips.

SM: Oh, tips, tips! Yeah, that's what I thought you were saying, yeah! Oh, no tipping, right, yeah?

Y: No tipping in China, yeah. That's a difference.

SM: Is that because they, the servers in restaurants, are well-paid at restaurants? Because in the United States, they're paid very poorly, and that's why we have to tip.

Y: They're well-paid, yeah.

SM: Okay.

Y: And then the difference in the system the, the splitting the bills? Nowadays, I heard from my nephews they do the same way. I think it's pretty good.

SM: Okay, so one person - how does it work in China then? Is it the person who invites the person to lunch or dinner who pays?

Y: Yes, yes.

SM: Interesting.

Y: Or like, sometimes if my relatives and my family they go for lunch or dinner together, they all always want to pay.

SM: Pay? The older people always want to pay for the younger people? Not necessarily?

Y: Both want to pay, yeah, both want to pay. So. It's like a good way -

SM: [interrupts] Are there arguments about who pays the bill? [laughs]

Y: Yeah, because, you know, we're a close family, so we always want to treat the others.
[laughs]

SM: That's nice, though. [laughs]

Y: Yeah. But here we don't need fights with each other, so. [laughs] Yeah, yeah, okay, so we're good there.

SM: Okay. Now have you noticed differences in what is expected of men and women in the United States?

Y: I heard about that. Like women were paid unequally.

SM: [laughs] We are not paid equally to men in this country. Even when we do the same work.
[laughs]

Y: [laughs] But I didn't feel like in my position because I think they have standards. So, I don't.

SM: Yes, yeah. In your, in your field, we call it in the United States, and you probably know this, a STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] career, and there's a big push to bring women into the field. So that's probably why it's about the same? But if you are at actual universities, sometimes the pay scale is not equal if you're a professor [whispers] between men and women. So. [laughs]

Y: Okay. [laughs] I'm not at that level yet.

SM: Yeah, no. It's a problem in this country that men and women are paid unequally. Is it the same in China? Or are men and women paid equally in China?

Y: I - I - have no idea about that, but I don't think so.

SM: You don't think so? Yeah. So were your expectations of the United States met? Was it - are you happy here? Did you expect better or worse, I guess is, when you came here? Or the same?

Y: I think while I have no idea before I came here, I knew really little about America. So I didn't have like too much expectation. [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Y: So (____???) Okay to do a good job here to—so.

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SM: So because you didn't have expectations you weren't—you had no big dream that was destroyed or fulfilled when you came here? You just, you didn't know what to expect. So it was a whole new thing for you.

Y: Right.

SM: Okay. So I have just two more questions on the sheet, and then we'll go to your notes and see you can fill in whatever you want. Okay. So what does your culture mean to you?

Y: It means—it still means everything to me. Yeah, it's actually in my daily life, actually I can say that. So yeah, I still like Chinese food. [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Y: I have most of my friends are actually Chinese. So, and I talk to my parents regularly, and I miss them, you know. We celebrate Chinese festivals. We actually also care about what's going in China. Yeah I think, yeah, [laughs] still in my daily life.

SM: So do you feel more connected to the culture in China, or more connected to the culture here, or about the same?

Y: I think it's about the same. It's a mixed, mixed culture. I actually enjoy this mixture.

SM: [laughs] Yes.

Y: So I talk to my families, and I, “What happening here, what's happening here,” and I actually want to like positively influence them about the good things here. All the good things here and I also like introduce some Chinese culture to [laughs] my friends here.

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SM: That's nice! [laughs]

Y: Yeah and brought every time I went home, I always brought Chinese food and, and like gifts to them. To let them learn. [laughs]

SM: That's a great gift! [laughs] So is there anything else you want to add about yourself, your family, or culture? And now is when we can [snaps fingers] go to all your notes and see what we missed.

Y: Yeah, my family like they—my close family, they live in China. So my parents, and I have two sisters and they have their own family. I have relatives in Shanghai, Beijing, and I also have relatives abroad, like in Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. So my parents came here three times. Come to the United States. And they enjoyed visiting here. And being with me. So I took them to many places in the cities. They were happy, and they said—oh, they never dreamed they can come to the United States. It's a really pleasant experience for them. And then my nephew, he came last summer for one month.

SM: Oh, you must've loved that! How old is he? [laughs]

Y: He's 19 years old.

SM: Oh, he must've had a great time.

Y: Yeah, he had a great time. He, he enjoyed, yeah, visiting here. And he may want to come for maybe master's study, or yeah. [laughs]

SM: [mm-hm] He's in university now in China?

Y: Yeah, he's in university now. So yeah.... [sound of notes being shuffled]

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SM: What cities were you able to visit with your parents?

Y: Washington, D.C.

SM: I love Washington! It's great, isn't it? Yeah. It's so historical and at the same time new, and - there's always, there's a good energy there.

Y: Yeah and New York.

SM: My favorite city in the country. [laughs] Yeah.

Y: And what else? The Niagara Falls. [laughs]

SM: That's exciting, too, right? [laughs]

Y: Exciting. Oh, Los Angeles. We flew there, and then from there we went to Las Vegas.

SM: I haven't been to Vegas! [laughs]

Y: It's awesome.

SM: Is it?

Y: Yeah. Many places, so.

SM: That's great. What did your parents think of Vegas? Because it's so different from the rest of the country, right? [laughs]

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Y: [laughs] Right. It's so different, yeah. So. [laughs] Yeah it's different from even the Worcester area, Boston area. So we actually gambled a little bit. [laughs]

SM: Yes. [laughs]

Y: Yeah. Every place is like fresh to them. Yeah, even to me. [laughs]

SM: [mm] Sure.

Y: I'm always full of curiosity. Everywhere, you know. [sound of notes being shuffled]

SM: Was it hard to get used to driving in the United States? Because seeing all the signs in English instead of seeing—is your first language Mandarin? Is it?

Y: Mandarin.

SM: Mandarin. So was it very strange to come and start driving and see all the signs in English? And not knowing the rules of the road.

Y: Yeah. That's hard for me.

SM: Yeah.

Y: 'Cause I was—I, I didn't know how to drive before I came here even though my boss told me, "Oh, better to learn driving." [laughs]

SM: Yes. [laughs]

Y: I didn't like take it seriously before I came here. But then I found, okay, no car then I have no legs. [laughs]

SM: [laughs] In this area, yes. Maybe not in New York City.

Y: Right, so, but I was so scared of driving. So at the beginning, I have to be dependent on my friends for grocery shopping. But eventually I [laughs] took a driver's lessons. Yeah, so yeah, it's hard even though I bought my car, I still was scared of driving. [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Y: Yeah and I was not familiar with all the rules even though I took the test. Yeah.

SM: People drive very aggressively in this part of the country. So other parts of the country, not as much.

Y: Right, but I gradually like got familiar with driving. From a short distance from my home to my apartment to the school, I started practicing. [laughs]

SM: That's a great idea! Yeah.

Y: And then my colleague was so nice and so brave. We—he—she, actually, sit aside of me, and we went to a little bit of the place that was a little bit of distance like Framingham or Natick. [laughs] So yeah, I did appreciate her help in my driving. So and told me, instructed me, you know, all the rules, all the signs, yeah.

SM: And it's scary to get out of Worcester, too, because Worcester is very congested. Well, for the United States, and then go to another place like Framingham or Natick. I feel as if it there's a lot of traffic there as well, too.

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Y: A lot of traffic. And but it's okay, it's Route 9. It's just so (____???)

SM: While there's loads of stores, if you like to shop. So there's lots of shopping opportunities.

Y: So Route 9 is still my favorite, you know, most familiar route. [laughs]

SM: [laughs] So, what is, what is the difference in terms of like shopping in the United States, and not food shopping, but the stores are much different. And everything is set up much differently from China, isn't it?

Y: Yes, it's true. So the first time I went to the mall, I feel it's different. So all the stores are inside of the mall. But in China, they're all over, they're separated. So. And another difference is- you can just walk around in the stores and no shopping assistants following you. But in China, they always have someone, "Do you need help? Do you need to try this on?" So, I feel like okay if I try it and I didn't buy it, I feel like a pressure on me. So, so, I like the way here. So, nobody...

SM: [interrupts] There's less sales pressure in the stores, then when you're shopping for clothing, or electronics, or something than there is in China? There's less, fewer, sales people?

Y: Yeah here, they are fewer. But still, yeah, some even nowadays, you know. Another thing is we can negotiate in China. Like the price ...

SM: [interrupts] You can negotiate the sales price in a store? Interesting.

Y: Not like a bigger store, but for some like private shopping stores, yeah. And I know like many foreigners they like to go to some market. Like (____???) many, many stuff there, and they can negotiate there. The price they're asking may be higher, so if you don't negotiate, maybe you get

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them at a higher price. So all of the people there, the salesperson, they actually can speak English. [laughs] So they have—they're experienced.

SM: [laughs] So where you're from in China, is there a whole—like you were saying there's food and restaurants. Now, is there a street food culture, too as well where they have carts all over the place and it's kind of open air and people gather and socialize for eating, drinking, and just kind of hanging out?

Y: There's some, I mean, in some place they have street food. And we have lots and lots of restaurants, so maybe every two or three stores, like every two or three—how to say place, places, you can find a restaurant. So yeah, people are eating there and they have their social life there.

SM: I feel, I feel as if we don't have as much of that at least in this part of the country because of our climate because it changes so much. It's so cold in the winter and then very humid in the summer. So what did I miss? What did you want to tell me about you and all your accomplishments here and coming to Worcester and? What did I miss in my questions?

Y: I think it pretty much. Let me see if I can add something.

SM: Sure.

Y: [sound of notes being shuffled] Let's see. Yeah, this is my conclusion to this country. What kind of journey? [laughs] Yeah I can go (___???). It's a challenging journey with some difficulties, that's for sure. Exciting journey. To experience different culture and the environment. And a satisfied journey for like self-improvement. And some achievements are not so great. But I'm satisfied in my settlement here. And a thankful journey, journey for all of the help, yeah. People are nice, and I got lots of help.

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SM: You got lots of help, but you have tremendous accomplishment to get your PhD and to have the highest level education that you can have, that's, we don't go any higher than a PhD except for postdoc work. So, that in and of itself before you started your career in the United States is a huge accomplishment.

Y: Uhhh. [laughs]

SM: You might not see it that way, but it is! [laughs]

Y: Yeah, but I'm not educated here like for a PhD, so right after here this is a kind of a job position. So I still need adjusted, adjusted too much, yeah, adapted to society.

SM: A PhD in China is still a PhD. [laughs]

Y: Yeah, it's a PhD. Yeah, without a PhD I may—it's a little harder for me to get a position here, yeah.

SM: Oh without an American PhD. Is that correct? Is that what it is? Without a PhD in the United States?

Y: No, no, no without a PhD in China, I cannot apply postdoc position here.

SM: [mm-hm] But, you, you have a PhD.

Y: Yeah, yeah, I have a PhD.

SM: Yeah, yeah [laughs]. That's what I'm saying, you already have your PhD, which in and of itself, is a big accomplishment! [laughs]

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Y: [laughs] Thank you!

SM: And then coming to a foreign country, not knowing the language, not knowing anyone here whatsoever, that's a huge risk. It's a huge, huge, huge step.

Y: Right. That's - that's true.

SM: Yeah and being successful here. Having a successful career, making friends, buying your own home, learning how to drive, negotiating a culture and a system which is so different from what you grew up with for the first twentysomething years of your life.

Y: Yeah. It's a challenge, yeah, it's a challenge. [Sound of notes being shuffled] Yeah. Pretty much. Oh another difference I've noticed when I just got here about the UMass, the university. So I didn't find any like grand gate when I got to (____??). This is the UMass Medical School?

SM: [laughs] Where's the entrance, yeah?

Y: [laughs] It's like no gate.

SM: There's no gate, there's nothing, it's kind of in the middle, right?

Y: Right. Several buildings there. It's a difference.

SM: I don't think even Harvard Medical School has a big, grand gate either. [laughs]

Y: No, yeah, I went there several times.

SM: [laughs] Yeah. Now is that a thing in the universities or the medical schools in China, or the universities, do they have big, grand gates at all the universities?

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Y: We usually have, yeah.

SM: Interesting.

Y: And we have like a security guard, there, yeah. Not here.

SM: So not just anyone can walk in from the street and just visit.

Y: Yeah, so, security is... [laughs]

SM: Security is very high in China.

Y: I also noticed that the daytime is longer in summer.

SM: Is it?

Y: Yeah, then in China. [laughs] Yeah.

SM: Is there a big difference too coming to a much younger culture? Because China is such an older culture and has habits for thousands of years. Whereas most of our culture, besides the Native American culture, is only a few hundred years old except things we've brought over as immigrants.

Y: Yeah, maybe you can say that.

SM: Sure. So, is because Chinese culture is so, it's ancient. It's several thousand years, whereas culture in the United States, besides our Native, Native American culture is only a couple of

hundred years old. So is that a big thing? Because we don't have really old buildings anywhere in the United States.

Y: Yeah, the maybe oldest building here is, I think, maybe a hundred years, hundredsomething years old. This area.

SM: In this yeah, there are some small pockets where you can go to like Salem which will have buildings from the 17th century. But most things are from 18th -

Y: 18th,

SM: - 19th, 20th, 21st century.

Y: Yeah, it's okay for me. It's kind of like modern, modern country. And I like to know American history better, you know, 'cause it's another—it's not a long history, so I think, I..

SM: [interrupts] So it's easier to learn because it's not as long. [both laugh] Whereas Chinese history is very difficult because there's so many dynasties and so many changes in government, consolidation, breaking up, so.

Y: Yeah I was like listening to like Chinese history on like a video. [both laugh] It's too long, so I never finished that. Yeah, yeah I watched American history—about American history and about Chinese history, yeah. I'm learning. I have some—I watch some, but I still, but I'm still learning both, yeah.

SM: So did we get everything? Is there anything else you want to let people know about your history? Your history coming to Worcester and becoming a huge contributor to our life here in Worcester? You might not see that, but for someone to come from another country and have such a high level position is a huge thing and Worcester is really a city of immigrants.

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Y: Oh, Worcester is?

SM: It is, yes. And for a while we didn't have many, as many immigrants, but we have many more immigrants coming to Worcester recently.

Y: Yeah, so, I would like to share my experience with them. And I...

SM: Sure, yeah.

Y: First, I try to help them, help them. I know how tough it is when I just got here. I yeah—I'm glad—I mean my experience can help them. I will try my best to help the immigrants. It's hard to settle down here. You can get it if you want, yeah.

SM: [mm-hm] Anything else? [laughs]

Y: I think that's pretty much.

SM: That's great. Thank you so much for interviewing with me today. We so appreciate it.

Y: Thank you so much.

SM: And thanks very much.