

Bachelor's Project:
Interview with Garfield

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So it's recording now. Do you mind if we turn off the record? <sure> Ummm, so Garfield maybe we can start off uh, just with what we were talking about with uh the stereotypes that exist today and the stereotypes that exist yesterday about Chinese men. Like did you know what people were talking about, what people were saying about Chinese men or whatever? [pause] <About the society over here?> Uh not only the society over here. but what was the society, like society was you know mostly white, white. What were white people saying about Chinese men and about Chinatown?

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Well, because in those days the Chinese only had that much education. So more likely they look at them as uh, um uned-uneducated, group. And what they know to do is just laundry. All those uhhhh you don't have to think those work. You don't have to use the brain. So they don't think about the Chinese that highly. If a white woman go, with a, a, a Chinese uh man they would be more uh, they in the white society they look down at the, the woman. <Did that happen a lot? Did, did white women go?> They don't go with them that much. And the decent uh, uh family don't let the <the decent families?> Yeah, but only those who were uh need the, uh security. So they lived with a Chinese man and more likely it's a street girl <so like kind of?> yeah. They have some prostitution. Pro-prostitute.

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Did you see this often? Or was it <oh yeah> it was because you were

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But not many, they married a white. So then they living together, they living together.

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So they would be married to white man, but they would live. <they would live with a white man> They would live with a white man, but they would marry a Chinese?

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No, no they would live with uh white woman. they lived with a Chinese laundry man or restaurant man. They in those days not many uh, uh, uh, uh university student from the Chinese School but only those who were born in Canada. they uh, the parents try to push them into uh, uh, uh, higher education so quite a number become, become dentists. And well it's uh few is a doctor, engineer, is more engineer. So I know a group that they are in their seventies now. Those are people who were here the early, in the parents those parents came in, in I think in the thirties. So and uh that's what they uhh society look at the Chinese. Among the Chinese not that much highly respect.

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You would not, use the languages. You wouldn't see something like, much interracial marriage or anything <no>. And so you didn't see like you know in the way, you r languages to say 'decent'. Like higher class white women, they would associate with Chinese men?

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Yes, just the average, average woman. Average family, family everything family. They don't think they are, they happy. To get to married to uh, to live with a Chinese man. <How common was it to see?> You cannot. They're not common. There's not too many.

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But most of the marriages between white women and Chinese men were, were white prostitutes and

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Not, most of the percentage is pretty high. I don't know I don't care to study with that.

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Did you make fun of them? This is sort of what we want to ask. They did they come into your restaurant err,

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Oh yeah, we know about it <oh you know about it?> Yeah because the community is so small, you know they had children. Especially in Toronto. [pause] So it's a one uh, uh <What, what did the communities say about it?> Community <The Chinese community> Uh they don't, they don't say much about it. ? they can't say anything. So those who don't have uhhhhhhh, a young, a lady to live with. So they, they get some, they get like say as what, what man get a sex. So they probably get the uhhhhhhh, someone will get introduced a man to prostitution. You know the prostitute. Was this common?> Uhhhhhhh, more likely it's a common. Just, just a for uh for sex. You pay for the sex, that's it.

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Like so it usually just a transaction. <Yeah> sex as opposed, the relationships weren't, weren't very common?

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Because of the barrier of the language <oh really?> Yeah, they don't speak that much? no

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Yeah, no, I, I, I get it. I get it. So how would these, I mean how would this happen. How would, if a Chinese didn't speak much English, would he just, if everyone just sort of knew what, what. Because in the research that we've done, we know that there was a hotel in Toronto where the, uh was what was it called, the, [pause] Continental Hotel. Did, did, did you know of it? Or was there just, was there places that everyone knew this is where they went because the community was so small.

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Yeah, well uh sometime it not just that they go to the Hotel. They used to be those uh single men and they uh living, live in a rooming house. You know what a rooming house is? <yeah, yeah> So and on Elm Street <what street?> Elm. <Elm, elm oh> Its uh they had a few big houses. so they had a place they called a rooming house those are people that lived close by Chinatown. So only single. Just a head in there. So they don't go in there. Those are people who lived there is, is restaurant man. working in a restaurant. And uh because in those days a handful of families, Chinese family, especially for me I knew that those I was uh working. I knew that those who were had a family. Had a Chinese family, and I uh, I'm? I knew 75% of the family. <In Chinatown?> Not, in Chinatown, all over, in, in the city <Yeah, yeah>. Because in those days, and uh those group of people who born, who are Canda-Canadian born, they called the CAA. They have, they form uh organization called the CAA Chinese Canadian Association. So those had uh, uhhhhhhhhh in, in the twenty and the teenagers. So they uh, every Saturday they get together you know girl and boys and they, they go to bowling, that's how, they knew each other. But that's uh the second, second generation. Like the generation like you. Born in here <yeah>

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They needed that sort of association because I guess you wouldn't really meet many Chinese people of, of a dating age.

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See they, they among themselves they talk in English. Those uh who were Canadian born. So then uh so that's how I knew them. So every, every summer they got up to uh, uh a camp from, some people from United State, they came over to uhhhh, you know meet girl or meet boys and uh they'll go up to camp Coochichin. Up to uh rural area and uh thanksgiving some, some people from here go to New York. So they had, they had their uh, uh what did you call social life. So that is among them, those uh second generation born the gen-generation uh, uh older than us they don't do much <they didn't have the, didn't have the option> No they only had Tongs, like the person who write in tongs.

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And the Tongs were all, generally they were basically ?, right?

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Well, every they have uh, a, a banquet for the tongs uh, uh a banquet. So like a Wong and like so they uh, uh, uh. So they, they all get together and have a banquet so they, more likely they in this they know each other and the tongs and because they have the Tong and just you know there is helping each other. They put those newcomer come in and then they find them jobs and uh all of that. You know they help each other very well, with the, within the uh the same name. So the generation like us we come in, they call us uh, uh, uh communists. Those old people called us communists [laughs] because in the '50's they came in. So uh and then that's another, a new, a new generation come in to fill in their game. SO that then we come in or that mostly. I didn't like the ? single, because the government in those days only let those people who married come in <cause they just wanted the labour> Yeah, that is during the war. The uh, uh, uh, uh Korean War, so probably they tried to get the young people to come in. they fill in the maybe, in the, I don't know but uh it's just uh I think they need people join, maybe joining they're force. [pause]

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Did you have, I think that, that's most of the history of Canada is that you bring in people who are of a different race when you need work, you know. Umm and then that happens today that, that's <what the uh the uh government uh the skill people. Which skill people they need in those days> its skill right and you don't see them as people, you see them as work, as a skill <Yeah> Umm I want to take you back to ask if it was so commonly accepted, like this is just people knew that Chinese men of a certain generation they'd only interact with, because there weren't that many women, there were no Chinese women <no, exactly>. Did, were there conversations about the sex workers? about the prostitutes or was it just well these people are here and we're here and this is just something that happens. Because as you said like white society, you know white society has certain stereotypes of Chinatown, has certain stereotypes of Chinese men. Did Chinese men have certain stereotypes of what a white women was like? [pause]

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Well, it's among the like back to the say the language barrier <yeah> so and uh Chinese we do have uh, uh have United Church. They go to Church some of them. But not, not often. So there's the Presbyterian church, there's two churches that's been here for many years and uhhh I think those are older generations. I don't think they ever go to the Church, because today their social life is among them who goes to the same Tong. Like same society, the same name society, like Lee's, the Wong's, the Chan's. So each one had their own uh, uh, uh so Sunday this is how they get ?. they go there and they had a couple of table, they play majhong <right> and in those day only one newspaper. One or two newspaper this uh, uh so they uh just get together in Sunday and

for, for uhhhhh social work it's not much, not much they, they don't have much to do. More likely just work six days a week in those days.

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So the, did they actually talk it just, they didn't talk about their, their sex lives or their personal lives. It was their personal life as the Tong and sex was sort of something that no one talked about. Was just

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Well, you can have the few dollar in your pocket first. You know whose, who, who ? who uh they had homes in, in back in China. So then their wages was so low they had to save some, some money to send home to support the family at home. So they don't have the considered much, much sex life in among themselves <Because you'd have to pay for sex?> yeah, yeah. So this is uh for, for , for that time is very good. So <was, was it expensive? Do you was it or just I mean> I don't know I don't have that experience for that. I heard them say in the '50's and they go to the Hotel they had to pay five dollar or six dollars. See those days in uh five, five cents a newspaper. You had a meal for seventy-five cents. < So that was yeah, so ?> So this uh you can call that expensive. See uh work in the restaurant, they only get twenty-five dollars pay, a week. Ten days a week, no, no ten hours a day for six, six days a week. So it's uh, money is not so good. But in, in those day in generally, in uh Toronto is not that booming anyway <right> You know they, what call [Tongue is a hot tongue]? and they do Sunday is closed. Everything is shut off. And the theatre and the Chinese and the once in a while they get some old film and I don't know who runs it and they have a go down to the, the, the theatre. They rent the theatre out to, so the Chinese, Chinese, Chinese film. Once a, not once a week every other week or sometime and old film on Sunday. But you know those are people, in the old, old generation. they don't enjoy the much entertainment.<of any, of any sort?> Like, like culture. They just uh wanna get ready to ? pretty much um ? Only one days a week. How much they can do? Right [pause] So the interest in uh

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I, I mean this is, this is, this is fascinating right because in my mind as you tell me this I'm trying to uh sort of picture this. So if, in your mind it was work, it was most of the daily life there was no time for you know

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for us, for other things, for especially for sex. Sex it cost money and you had the, and then not this uh in those day I don't think it's any Chinese prostitute. So and you have to know a little bit English

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and the English I mean. Again this is one of things where you realize too, that you realize too that you are the rarity. Not that like [Chinese] you and that this doesn't happen a lot. <no in those days, no> And I'm just gonna, because I know someone else is going to record this, I just said, right now we're speaking English <because they can get by with English> right. Do you think it was, was it lonely though? I mean for me it, it I yeah it was so lonely . yeah it is lonely. But for you thinking now, is it lonely? But because it your idea in those guy, those kin, those times they don't think about lonely. Or they work or they save some money to go home. Every few year they save up the money, worked hard and ? yeah. <but do you agree it's ?> yeah, you said it. <the translation is sad> Yeah, it's a sad. In a way then uh they can buy. [pause] So then the end goal is is, uh some of them, they marry you know. Those uhhhhh not like, like our generation those in the come in and leave. Twenty and thirty of those come in as working class. Many of them, they

marry they had kids at home, they had wife at home. Maybe that keep them going. Think about family, so this more likely to occupy their loneliness. <Do you think it was ummm> yeah. In those day not many folks could read too, you know <so you just?> Yeah. I think it is uh, I feel about it, for my, you know we came in with a little ?they had magazine, we had the we push to bring in from Hong Kong, like a magazine come in and they uh, we had a, a newspaper. Two newspaper, one newspaper is you know it, we owned it five minute finished it and printed news in that. So and for life I don't find it lonely. I always mix with the people. I, I fi, am okay. <You just lived?> Yeah. But I, I highly enjoyed it. you know sometime, you know and this uh called uhhhh not many people had car in those days. You know if among ourselve and the, uh in those people come in the '50's between '50 and '60 those people who can afford to have a car. There would a luxury. So and uh, if um the group get together. You, you know it's like, you become good friend. Once in a while we took a ride this uh, that's how we enjoyed our life. Everyone, this is different days, especially work in a restaurant. It's different day off. they're not the same day, so let me just uh, uh, uh, uh books you're finished, you give it to somebody else to read it. Library don't have any Chinese book. It's not many, not many library anyway. that's why the tax was so cheap. <the what was so cheap?> The taxes so cheap. <yeah> [laughing] <yeah, yeah that's uh. It's funny to think about what's happened today.> Because in everything <?> No, you don't unemployment. We had, had unemployment but nobody can collect it. You pay a little.

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So if it would, the picture that I'm getting from you is that you know everyone knew. There was no time for sex, there was no time for romance, there was no time for sort of, you know the way we see [Chinese], you know. [Chinese] Like the, okay translation [Chinese] is like romantic relationships. The person who is recording this interview will not like me, cause I'm just speaking Chinese a lot. Um the, what I do get from you is like even though uh [Chinese] they must of been pretty close right. The, the friendship relationship, must of been very close as a result. [pause]

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In a way, yes. But this uh, not as close as uh, uh like uhhhhh, uh like, like now. As sex. Among the, among the same sex we don't have that kind of things. You know like uh <that's amazing that you actually just said that. Because that, that's one of the ?> Yeah, so did uh I didn't think we had that homosex around us. <You, you don't think there were homosexuals?> We do have, yeah <Chinese men who were homosexual?> Chinese they this, you know. But in our, in those days we took, we have <you don' talk about it> Yeah. But they do have, we don't talk about. You know just like in, back in at home in school they do have you know, the boys school <when you say back home you mean> China <China, okay>. So this uh I think that this is common like, like all over the world. You know like boy school, you know the English and the boy school. Among themselve and all the ?. Is the, maybe they are not homo, but they are ?, among them like the, the in the camp so they just talk about it. they know about.

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Did, so did yo-you it just wasn't talked about, you knew. You knew personally people were homosexual. there's <no> something that's not talked about. <that's right, especially those days and you know, you> Cause you have to work? <yeah, no> Especially you as

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as face. Mean, mean ? <yeah, yeah.> you don't want a losing face, and they say, 'oh he's a sissy'. [pause] so

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Did you treat them differently? [pause]

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No. [pause] To me I don't think so. [pause] but uh, but they not the common practice. [pause]

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Yeah but it was something that everyone knew about. It was just not talked about. [pause]

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When you came over here, there's a different story you know, you worked and occupy your time. And I don't know how people to get uh, the sex. Some of them they do, you uh they feel if they feel safer, feel ? maybe they uh, they do have uh, uh go to buy sex. But no, uh, uh in the ? in-between the sex of a white woman [pause] ? they can't speak. First they speak, and you don't wanna marry, you don't wanna a, a, a prostitute, right. <yeah> They do have a few uh mixture in, in among Ch, among our community in those days. You know wonderful but uh. <How were these people treated?> What they do, treat them differently when they u, <what does that mean?> Well they look different <yeah, of course they do> Yeah, they look different. Though and they uh, we call [Chinese] <[Chinese] means 'ghost child'> Yeah that's uh, [Chinese] that's means that they mixed. If they mixed from uh, uh, uh [Chinese]. [pause]

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That's funny that you would, and I have to ask you this um why would you call [Chinese] as opposed to [Chinese]. Do you just call someone a [Chinese] and on is called a [Chinese].

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One is coming, come back to the, the [Chinese] like the we called them [Chinese] and the more religious look down at them. They say they are not uh, they are not a human being. Because in those days the Chinese and uh and during the Ching Dynasty <yeah> they were very anti, the Chinese <?> white. and they, they don't look at them as, they say they have green eye, they uh white hair, yellow hair. And especially those Irish men they have red nose. So they look like white, you know. They look like ghosts, they not are not our kind. so in long they are not our kind, they call them from our space, or from the, its uhhhhhhh ghost spirit. So they call them [Chinese]. So it's uh, but then now a day people say, you're not supposed to call them [Chinese] or they call them [Chinese] it's a more formal. <? person> [pause] Same as in the early day they call the call the 'Chinamen' <and no one calls you 'Chinamen' anymore>. China men actually, is a white word. <yeah> It's a noun <?>yeah. Just like English, Englishman, Irishman. [pause]

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So these, these kids were treated differently than <?> Do you think that they belonged to the Chinese community? Or the White community? Did they ever belong?

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they, they had no [pause]. so of them they totally avoid the Chinese community. They go to the white sides <Did they change their appearance? or> no how can they change. That's how they look. Right [pause] I had a few customer, we had a few customer mixture. some of, few of them do very well too. You know one is a politician, doing very well <today?> Yeah.

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do you know this person's name? Like you're saying that his , his mother is a <he say his mother is Irish> But he never says what his mother actually did.

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Well this Chinese his name is uh like Chinese name, Chinese last name. Like Wong, Lee. No you, when I mention that you, you wanna

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I mean you don't okay, like if the name isn't. You don't have to tell me the name is. Also you can also say move on. I mention this because it.

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Yeah it's he, he doing very well. He was a running politic [pause]<wow> [pause] ? <wow> He doing well, well. He's a. He had a couple, couple and ? Yeah this uh, [pause] Its quite a number I knew.

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And they, right now they hid, they don't mention their past. They don't mention their mothers, or they mention their mothers, but they don't

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they, I don't I. This one he mention ? My mother is Irish or whatever. <but he doesn't say what his mother did?> No He's, he's I think he's in his seventies. I, I had no proof, he think but I never the, the mother. The ? come, come early they know, he, he is a mixture. [laughs] Some of the Chinese, they uh, they don't have a son. They uh live with a woman and when they have a, a child,. They even took, even took the white woman back to China and the son was uh, grew up in China. And he speak, he speak uh nat-nati-native tongues. But yet you can look at him he's a mixture. [pause]

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Were there ever any cases of, let's say, and this is, this is common, this has happened a lot. Where a Chinese man had a wife in China and he would also have a wife here. ? I think that the more money you had sometimes this would happen. Did you ever know of a Chinese man who married a Chinese woman in China, and had a white wife in Toronto?

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Oh yeah. Quite a number. They marry two. <So that they would have two wives? Or just> Your one back home, it's just. Probably they just ignore them. <And they would marry a white wife here?> Over here they'd raise children. <and the white wife would usually be a prostitute?> No, no, no don't misunderstand me. that's later on. You know. <oh as the community changed> Yeah. So the later on the that those speak uh, Chinese speaking English. Like you know I can get by and uh I might find a white lady, a white friend. Just like in my uh, my uh, not like my cousins family he got six children. Six, all stay with a married to uhh, a white. So this is this, this change. See you talk about in the '50, in the '30's and on in the '40 and in those day in all the society is changed. It compared to today. Totally not the same. [pause]

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No, did you ever wanna get married? [pause] I mean, I, I < I don't know> You don't know?

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No, well maybe myself and just run away from the responsibility. [laughs] I used to have an old friend, they pretty close. But I know I can't, I can't, I didn't think I can stand being married. you know all individual, it different. So you cannot judge me, myself among the Chinese. <What does that mean among the Chinese?> Well, <I mean> what you think, I think what you think is all the Chinese is we get married <traditionally yes, all Chinese men should get> So my parent, my father tried to force, my parent tried to force me to get married off.

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Are you, wait are you the youngest son or the oldest? <No I'm the oldest son> Wow. you didn't you [Chinese].

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No. Maybe I just uh, more likely I'm a. I don't like my father try to force me to do things. No maybe deep in my mind, and, and he always tried to, me to get married to save his face. Because I'm the oldest one. [pause] So that's uh, the end ? getting older and older you're on your own. So, even you find one, it's too late. Each one you know <what do you mean it's too late? Does it? > Because your life, your life is already set. Right. Who can, who can uh, the fit into? <it's different> yeah. The older you get, the harder they get to get married. ? I knew a high numbers, they don't have a, the husband passed away or they divorce and I don't think I can, I can stand getting, being married. [pause] Well I enjoy myself, my life is a very uh, to me I'm not lonely. <You seem to have a lot> I, I'm home. I have someone to look after me here. And I have the friends, we go out. You know go to casino [laughs] And yeah definitely, definite good group people. I met you know like I find the Tai Chi. Well those are people, well I get along with people very well. [pause]

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do you think it would have been different <If I get married?> Sure. we'll ask that first. If you got married. I mean did you <I don't know> Did you have the chance do you think? or was it just

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yeah I had the chance. But I didn't. [pause] I had a chance, but I just. first I, first of all the lady I knew she's uh married in China too. <okay> I say so maybe if you and I not up to, to fit into uh, her, her shoes you know. [pause] To me I only had to a high eight. High school education from china. So I don't have that much uh, education over here. So there's a different and sometime your, maybe I feel it's I'm not up to uh, to support a family. There too much, too much uh thinking about, to worry about that or about that and I

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yeah, and I think that, that's a this is something that you and I probably have in common. I think, think as Chinese men <yeah> you, you are told that. That's men in general, but I think Chinese men are told at a very young age that you have to be <the responsibility> yeah

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you had uh, for you see. Maybe you. Do you want children now? They will be [Chinese] <No I think that uh> see if a few years later is the lady still going to keep on, keep wanna be with you or. Situation is change. [pause] No?

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Yeah, no you're right. Its uh, it's a very real, and I think that's why you know when we ask questions like this, I think that's why that sort of project like this is important. Is that there are certain ideas of what you're supposed to do or how love or sex is supposed to happen. You know both Western ideas and both Chinese ideas. But when you have a situation like, like that you live through in your young life, and some of the men lived through that was impossible. Like you can't do that.

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No, because especially now its uh, uh the, the living style is getting higher and higher. It used to be we only live in a room, it's okay. Like when your single. but now and you've got to have uh, a car to get by. I don't have a car for twenty years its uh, you know. When I come over here I don't, I never had a car until twenty years later. So now then everybody's got to have a car. Then the, the material thing is a more and how do you fulfill with that? You got a work harder. no. <yeah, no I> Especially when you have kids. To raise a kid is not so easy, especially when you think you've got a support them both. Through university <yeah> Th-think about that you know. How, how do you sacrifice yourself to support for that person if, if you know, if I, if you had a kid. Its

and more they don't do whatever you expect uh, this him to do. Then you are more disappointed.. For the whole uh Chinese generation expects uh you, parent expect you. More likely li-little bit the same isn't it? [pause]

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When you look back at your life now, and when you look back at your life then. Do you wish you could have changed anything? Do you wish you could've maybe had more, interpersonal relationships? do you wish that , you know life wasn't so much about work, it wasn't so structured by the attitudes of the time? [pause]

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No. I would think, I think my life is like I was saying, it runs very smoothly. And I never had the a time which I don't fit, maybe I don't expect things too much. You know for material things. I get by okay, you know. I go I am on especially I was in the restaurant. Its uh quite good and I get along with customer very and even the kid come in. I get along with them very well. So every day I don't feel lonely. when I go to work just like a ? to me. I'm on a stage, I enjoy the customer, I enjoy the people come in. No they see me and we have a lot, different conversation, different thing all there's a day pass. After work sometime we get together, play, play a game of majhong, because before I came to, became I retired, not go to work. I go to sleep and, and again after work an hour, couple hour play majhong. So my life wasn't boring. that's why then I don't feel lonely. So that's my own opinion, it's not for everybody you know. I just like, like I had a friend this uh I was uh gonna get him over here for an interview and he, communicate say, when he came in he's uh even younger, a few years younger than me. But he came in, in the '52, '50 and uh he more likely like a half a, half a Westerner or he speak in Chinese, uh English. He, his children all speak English [Chinese]. that like, his wife passed away, within a couple years he got marry again. So for him, probably he just can't the lone-loneliness. Even though he was, he had children, the children was grow up. So it was different, different person and different opinion. So you cannot use me as a judgement among the Chinese.

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No, no I don't think that when we do this sort of work we never use one person's opinion as <that's right, yeah.> What we do is we try to, you try to illustrate, you try to like you know I wanna say in Chinese but um <variety> I think that when we listen to this interview again what will happen is that we will use, your sort of. Um parts that represent what we commonly know and find parts which you know, are different from the <? being a PH.D you can analyse this> Yeah I mean ? I think that's, that's the funny thing about this sort of work is that all do is analyse. 00:46:58-00:48:23

especially, especially among human. you know it's different, different. One person is different ooo-opinion. right? But all you know, you want to know is uh, about this question when we talk about his ? that's a time. You wanna know the timing among those in those '50. more likely there more single men coming. What they do. You said what, what do uh studying. What they do, how do they over here we talk about how do they, sex life. How to get by, how do they get by. see. So you maybe it's uh you inte few, interview me as one person among those timing and maybe me and I uh maybe sex is not important to me that much. So on that I don't have an urge and I don't go look for woman ?. And look for sex. So that, but if you interviewed oth-other person he'd say, 'okay we going that, we do this.' <right, right> Yeah among those timing, time. Not even my friend.

00:48:23-00:48:28

You know, if you know any of those men who would be willing to talk about it. That, that would be great

00:48:29-00:48:54

Some of them, that's exactly what they ? [Chinese] <[Chinese]> [Chinese]is a exaggerate <oh yeah right> Oh my [Chinese] <oh, oh okay. yeah, yeah> [Chinese]

00:48:55-00:49:03

I'm going translate for the person who's going to take this down [Chinese] means to praise, to overly praise. do you have anything that you want to say?

00:49:04-00:49:08

No. You, you do an interview. ?

00:49:08-00:49

actually after this interview. Uh I, I assist perhaps Elise might want to interview you again. Or at least have interview you again. <about what?> I don't know. I think that like, you know it's so difficult and to, to find someone who's willing to speak as openly. And obviously I think this is to speak as openly about this <very good>. Yeah. Maybe we have more questions [laughter] Stop there.