

Eric Liu

So hello, this is Eric Liu and I will be recording Yeli Zhang today. The date is currently Sunday, March 5, 2023. I am doing an interview over zoom, and this interview is on energy for my Civ class final essay. Do you consent to being interviewed?

Yeli Zhang

Yes.

Eric Liu

Okay, cool. So just to start, where are the different places you've lived for extended periods of time so far?

Yeli Zhang

I grew up in China. Mainland China. So I stayed there until up to 27 years old. I came here for higher education, then stayed here since then. So I lived in both place, quite equal time, 20 some years.

Eric Liu

In China. Did you stay in the same city or same village the entire time or did you move around a lot?

Yeli Zhang

I moved around, but not a lot. So I grew up in a small city in mid-west of China. Then I moved to Beijing, which is the big capital city of China, and then stayed there for my college and graduate school.

Eric Liu

Okay, I see. So in your process of moving around, can you describe to me your method for moving around between these different cities back then versus, for example, how you travel now?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, back then, like when I grew up, we didn't move around at all. We just stayed in one small city where I grew up. A lot of times the transportation is walk or bicycle. So we go to school. We went to school walking. Most kids just walk to school and walk back. So the parents, if they go anywhere, like far, they bike, used bicycle, and then the most they going to do maybe bus or train. So that's my transportation. You really see like almost nobody, no family has car, so maybe like only the institutions or companies, they have a few cars, but that's for business. So like family, they don't have cars. Most transportation is just walking or bike. Then it's long distance. Right. So I grew up and went to college.

Then we just use mostly the train. So just from one city to another city, the most convenient and the most used transportation method is train. Not much planes, not much flight, and the bus is another one for short term, like a long distance trip, it's a bus, but if it's really like from a far away city, you're going to take a train.

Eric Liu

How long was the walk to school and stuff?

Yeli Zhang

You mean like the walk to school?

Eric Liu

Yeah, like how long did it take you to walk there?

Yeli Zhang

Not too far, like maybe typically like 15 minutes to 30 or 40 minutes. So a lot of times like that time, I live in a small city. So you typically go to school close to your home, so the walk is not too far. And then even like elementary school yeah, you walk like half hour max and it's quite safe. So you just walk by yourself.

Eric Liu

Okay. Did people not have cars because it was so small or was there another reason?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, it's also poor. Nobody can afford car. And the car was very rare. Naturally, you just walk or bike like little kids. Most times just walk, but when you go to high school, some kids bike to school.

Eric Liu

No gas stations are around if no one really had cars?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I actually never recall gas stations because you never pay attention to those things. I think there may be like in the entire city maybe one or two gas stations because there's not so many cars when we were little. Of course, when we grow up, when I'm into like high school, middle school, then you're going to see more cars. And I know there's taxi coming to cities; there's a taxi become available. So there may

be like a gas station, more gas station, but I just never pay attention to that because I don't have cars. So I never pay attention to the gas station.

Eric Liu

Right now in the city, back in China, have cars become more common?

Yeli Zhang

Oh, there is a huge change. Right. So when I moved from small city to Beijing, which is a capital of China, it's already like there's a big difference. So definitely there's more cars, more like taxi, more bus, everything is more but even that time, that was early 90s. So still like the major transportation even in Beijing is bicycle. So people go to work, go to school, go to shopping or whatever. The major transportation for family is still bicycle. But then there's bus. Bus is another big one. So we always take bus to go to work if it's far. So already like you see the change, gradually you're going to see from no gas station or like a rarely gas station or rarely car, you're going to see over years more and more come on the street and the street become more and more crowded and gradually people start to own family car. But even like before I left Beijing, I think still most of the major transportation is still like a bicycle for family. But taxi becomes very common so easily you just go like if you want to go somewhere, the taxi is everywhere in Beijing, so you just wave and the taxes stop. So you can take bus. But taxi become much more so that's a big change. China from the 80s to 90s definitely you're going to see the transportation big change year after year.

Eric Liu

Are you saying like a lot from public transportation to private transportation?

Yeli Zhang

Yes, more towards beginning. Right, there's not much need of public transportation, but then you're going to see more and more need of public transportation. So there's a lot more public transportation on top of that, then private transportation also start to become more and more popular.

Eric Liu

I see. So why do you think private transportation became so popular. Was there a lot of advertising going on? Where did cars start coming?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I think it's just because China become the economic booming during those years. So people had more money. Right. So income increase, and there are car imports to China. So there's more private car available, affordable, the people, of course you have private transportation. It's always more convenient,

right? Public transportation. So the rich people, whoever can afford the transportation, they will buy family car.

Eric Liu

Okay.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I think it's a combination.

Eric Liu

So what would you say is the difference between China now and their transportation compared to, for example, the US.

Yeli Zhang

Right now, I think China, because the population is much more right, higher population than the US. So I just see a lot of traffic jam, especially big city, the traffic becomes big problem.

Eric Liu

Oh, I see. Does that make people want to use something besides cars then?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I actually don't know. Like right now in China, people want to go back to more public transportation or they still want to keep private car. I would think they still want to have the private car because it's more flexible. But if you use a car to go to work, like commute to work and come back, it's a lot of time waste on the road. So I think a lot of family even if they have family car, private car, like daily commute, they may still take the subway just like in New York City, maybe similar because China, like most people live in a city, so they still use public transportation to go to work. So the car is more for entertainment. Like we can drive somewhere or go shopping for those things.

Eric Liu

Interesting.

Yeli Zhang

And it's quite different for us because it's more spread around. So I see a lot more like commute, use your car to commute than in China.

Eric Liu

Okay, yeah, that makes sense. Okay, cool. So I guess besides transportation then what were some other significant differences between your childhood in China versus your life now in America?

Yeli Zhang

A lot of difference. So my childhood in China, for example, we live in more like apartment. And a lot of times that time you don't have heating, you don't have air condition, summer, so you just use fan. Open the window, use the fan. In the winter you just use heating which goes through the stove. You just have open fire with coals or something like fire. Firewood, right? We don't have hot water in our rooms. So you just need to boil water. Like anytime you need some warm water, you need to boil yourself. So there's a lot difference.

Eric Liu

So where do you get the coal and firewood from?

Yeli Zhang

So we buy it from market. That's actually the place. You just sell it. So you just buy it and like on the street; the people will help you, right? So you purchase whatever number of kilos of coal. Then they're going to help you transfer to your home. And a lot of times, like in your apartment building, you're going to see like the coal going to store it right outside of each floor there's a place like outside the door, there's some public area. So you just store it in that place and then until you use up, then you'll go by again.

Eric Liu

I see. What about firewood?

Yeli Zhang

Firewood, same thing. So you also store almost same place as the coal. You just use them side by side together. So if you think of now, it's not that safe, but that's how we did back then. So each family outside of the door, you're going to see a pile of coal and firewood just stored like neatly in that place. And then you just take off and then use up and then refill.

Eric Liu

If you use firewood and coal for the same thing, was there a reason why you had both?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, because when you start up fire, you need the wood. I think typically you have the wood first and then coal later. So it's a combination. Most time coal is amazing at heating because it lasts longer, but you need the wood to initially start.

Eric Liu

Is it difficult to light the coal?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, it's not easy to light the coal. You need to use wood. I start with the paper cardboard a little bit and then wood. And then finally coal. The heat gradually heat up the coal and the coal start to burn.

Eric Liu

So was it very like dirty? It smells very bad.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, it's smoking, right? So each family has the coal on fire; I don't know how to describe it, but there's a cube, that guides the smoke going out outside. So afternoon, like evening, people cooking, you're going to see every family. There's smoke coming out from the window from that tube, like the chimney. But it's not chimney, it's connect to the stove. So there's tube. It guides like smoke to outside. Even inside you can still smell, right? Because it's open fire. So you can still smell the coal. And sometimes it's dirty. So it's black. Over time you're going to see the kitchen and the wall is getting dark.

Eric Liu

So do you have to go and clean it every once in a while?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, you have to clean like repaint or do something like this. So maybe every like before New Year, people clean the house so they can sometimes repaint the wall. Okay. Yeah, because over time it's become like the smoke make it to brown and dark brown color.

Eric Liu

For the coal and firewood, was one more expensive in general than the other? Or were they both cheap?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I don't remember exactly. Like I was little at the time, so I don't know how expensive or cheaper. But coal is definitely more expensive than firewood. So it's more expensive because coal you can only buy; it's not you can't find it anywhere like firewood. If you live in a village. People live in village, they never buy firewood. So they just go outside and pick the wood and they dry themselves? Yeah.

Eric Liu

Okay. So the coal, did it have to be shipped from somewhere far? Is that why it was like expensive.

Yeli Zhang

I think there's a factory, so there's coal factory, so there's like wholesale coal. People get wholesale and for us to go to market. So that's retail. So it's kind of a chain of supply. I'm sure there's mining place and get the coal to factory then they kind of cut it into more like a manageable size. Then they go to wholesale and retail when we buy it's kind of a chunk which you can handle, you can carry. And then even like, at home, you have to also use hammer to break it to even smaller piece.

Eric Liu

Oh, interesting.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, it's very raw. Then later there's another type, so they make it into more like a round shape. So it's called a different name. So that's much easier to handle. So people use that as well. And it has less dark smoke. So there's a different type. So that's how we grew up. It gradually changed from originally, really, like very dirty to something like less smoke and easy to light and more easy to organize. It's become like a nice round shape, like cylinder type. Okay. Yeah.

Eric Liu

Better quality.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, better quality. Also, I think they did some engineering to that coal, right? Did something to the coal. So it's no longer like coal or the coal, like rock shape.

Eric Liu

Did it get more expensive after they did that.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, those things are more expensive than the coal itself. Because it's user friendly. Right? When it becomes user friendly, it's more expensive.

Eric Liu

But did most people buy the user friendly one?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, as time change, gradually people will adapt to the user friendly version. It's a progress from very original, very poor quality. A lot of dark smoke gradually changed to lighter smoke and then easier to handle. So it's over a time of change, like ten years where I grew up, so it's improving. And here [America], of course, very different. When you use everything clean, you don't see coal at all. At least when I came to the US. Yeah, I never handled coal here at all. It's always the heating. It's all come. Natural gas, air conditioner, it's all natural. I don't see coal.

Eric Liu

You guys didn't use natural gas back then? All the heating energy came from coal and firewood? No natural gas?

Yeli Zhang

No, I think in the early 90s, so when I went to college, that's become more like natural gas. There's more natural gas comes and the building heating, I think it's also I don't know, it could be natural gas. So in college, I no longer at least at the college I went, I didn't see coal. We don't need to use coal to get the heat. So the entire building dorm was heated somehow. But we just see the heating panel right in each room. But you don't need to like, burn fire. You don't need to burn coal to get heat. That was early 90s. It's already a big jump, big change.

Eric Liu

Was there like any electricity back then.

Yeli Zhang

When you had to use yeah, electricity. I grew up always there's electricity.

Eric Liu

Were there like outlets or was electricity just for lights?

Yeli Zhang

There are outlets because later we have TV also there's outlets, but of course not like right now. So everywhere outlets that time. It's most of the electricity for lights and the TV. We don't use electricity to cook, so electricity mainly for light.

Eric Liu

So can you describe how cooking worked back then compared to in America?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, cooking very different. So we use a lot of local farm. Almost every day. People go to morning farm or evening farm. I know my parents, after they finish work, they just pass by market and they pick up whatever fresh vegetable, whatever they want to cook. So they bring home and they cook. When I was young, there's no refrigerator. So basically just almost every day you buy something. Right. Then you cook and eat. So I would say it's more fresh than right now. Right now. Like we go shopping one week, right? Put in fridge and you just cook. So cook very different. I would say that time it's a lot more fresh. Not much storage. Right. No fridge. And local, everything grow is local.

Eric Liu

So you could see the farms where they grew at?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, even that time, I think a lot of stuff for right now standards, it's considered organic because there's not much pesticide to spray on the vegetables. So it's actually more organic. Of course, the food is not as diverse as right now, not abundant as right now. Compared to now, I think it's more expensive because the salary was low and food is a big portion of the living cost.

Eric Liu

Back then.

Yeli Zhang

Of course, if you just compare the money number, it's not more. But if you look at how much we earn right. Monthly, the salary and how much we spend on food, food is a big portion of the salary. Yeah. So it's relative. The cost of living is more back then because the salary is not high, the money we get, the income is low, the food is a big cost.

Eric Liu

Okay. Did you ever grow your own food then?

Yeli Zhang

I didn't. My parents, because they work, so they don't grow. They never grow anything. So we always buy. But that time, China is big agriculture country, so village, a lot of people live in village, they grow. So like my grandparents, they grow their food.

Eric Liu

I see.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah.

Eric Liu

Okay. And then once you, I guess, get your food and you bring it back, what do you use to cook it? How do you actually prepare the food?

Yeli Zhang

So for preparing the food, we don't buy like half prepared, so everything starts from scratch. So you buy like a vegetable or meat, everything. Like you have to start from scratch to cook. It's the type of the food, because we buy a lot of things just locally grow. So it's always like you eat similar type of food, you don't eat exotic type of food. You don't actually see a lot of variety; there's not many food transport from other places. So a lot of people just live on locally grown vegetables and local, like for example, pork or beef, most of them are locally grown. I don't think there's a lot of transportation to get food import from and send from another city to here. So there's more like, I think more isolated. Each place just have their own kind of food, typical food. And then we always cook from scratch every time, I think every family, rarely people go to restaurants because it's too expensive. So people just always like buy vegetable, buy meat, they cook at home, eat, and then that's how we do it. And then now, of course it's very different. So you see a lot more variety of food. You eat a lot of different types of food, and then the food can come from transport from all over the world. Yeah, even like China, I think right now there's a lot of food not locally grown. So it's the transportation from different cities, different dishes. It's more become like definitely not local animal.

Eric Liu

So the meat versus veggies, when you buy the vegetables, I'm assuming they are very fresh, right? Like it was picked very recently. When you go to buy the meat, do you buy it from where they raise the animals right there and then do they kill the animal that day or the day before?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, because sometimes there's no fridge, right? No long term storage. The winter is easy, so the meat can store a little bit longer. But summer, in just typically a few days, the meat has to be sold and cooked. But that time back then, we don't eat much meat at all. Meat is not a daily dish. It's more like you eat like once a week, that's about it. Once for two weeks or something like once a month. It depends on each family situation. Meat is not a daily thing. So, yeah, egg we eat, meat is not daily dish in the summer. Yes, you get a lot of fresh vegetable, but winter a lot of the vegetable, it's kind of stored vegetable, right? So like Chinese cabbage, that's one of the main dish for winter, main vegetable for the winter. Because that can be easily stored, like in an underground cell. Actually, that time we do have people who know how to store it covered up, but outside. So it makes the vegetable not go bad too quickly. So for winter vegetables, you don't get like a variety of vegetables. Like right now here [in the US], you get whatever vegetable, basically summer, winter, there's no difference. Right? But that time, the vegetable we eat in summer and the vegetable we eat in winter, very different. I remember when we had to eat in fall. We get all the tomatoes cut up, wash, and then cook it and then put it in jars and steam, kind of to kill the germ and then kind of seal it so it can last longer later on. Yeah, we do it in fall. Right. So like tomatoes still we have a lot of tomato. So we just kind of try to preserve it like a home preserve process. It's just kind of like a canned food. Right. But you do it yourself. Not in a factory. So you just cook it and steam it to kill the germ and then seal it. And then you just use it, like during wintertime.

Eric Liu

Okay.

Yeli Zhang

And also like cabbage. Right. You also do something like a fermentation process. So you make it you add spice and you sew it up [in container]. They give it flavor, but then you open it in winter and they just taste a little bit like a fermented vegetable.

Eric Liu

Okay, I see.

Yeli Zhang

That's a different way to preserve vegetables. So you can use your winter.

Eric Liu

Got you. So it seems like back then there was a lot more, I guess consideration for the seasons and temperature.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, a lot more. People actually live on season, depend on the season. So you see the food, everything, it's very season related. So you get fruit in summer, like watermelon. You can only eat in summer. Winter there's no watermelon.

Eric Liu

Yeah. So then if we go back to transportation on that note, did you still have to walk to school even when it was really cold and snowing? Or was there any changes in transportation based on season?

Yeli Zhang

No change. No matter. Winter, summer you walk.

Eric Liu

Oh, I see.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah. So winter you just wear more, right? Yeah, but yeah, because you don't have cars. However you transport each day, that's your way of transportation.

Eric Liu

Oh, I see. Okay. Yeah, that makes sense for the food. When you cook it, do you put it over the coal? Is that how yeah.

Yeli Zhang

I don't know what you call it. It's kind of stove, but it's very different from the stove in the US. Right. The stove here is either electricity or like, gas. But the stove we had is very, how to say, simple. So it's just more like a container. And then you put the coal, and like firewood, you fire up and then you have the fire start, it's more like camping. So you just have your wok or whatever pot. Right, then put on top. Yeah, it's like you go camping. So you have very simple like the stove is very simple. Yeah. I hope I can show you a picture. But because the coal has smoke, right. So the stove we have, it's a simple container, and there's a place you can connect pipe so the smoke can go through the pipe and go outside and then the inside

you just see the fire burning and you have your wok or whatever you put right on top of it. But then the smoke is not actually directly coming out of the container. It's actually guided through the tube to go out.

Eric Liu

Oh, okay.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah. And some home somehow they build it to guide warm smoke so it goes through the walls. In the winter you can also use that as a heating source. There's different ways it's used: for cooking, but also the hot smoke will be used as heating.

Eric Liu

Oh, that's pretty smart.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah. And some people build especially north of China, people build like a bed, right? Like a sleeping bed that connects to the wall. And then they guide the smoke through the bed then going up [emitted outside the house]. So when you actually jump onto the bed, it's warm. That's a different way to utilize the heat, especially in North China. Because winter is cold.

Eric Liu

Yeah. Okay. So would you say now in the 1990s, after natural gas started coming and stuff, when did people start using coal for cooking food? Because I'm assuming for natural gas, you need to buy new technology right? To handle this different source of energy.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I think the government did a gradual change. So the government push more for natural gas, oil. So it's a different way. So I left China at that time, but I know over years now, you rarely see coal. Nobody use coal to heat anywhere. Even like in village, I don't think they use coal. Maybe in the remote, some very remote village, we still use it. But right now, natural gas is a main heating method okay.

Eric Liu

For cooking, right? And then for in home heating, is it like built in electricity and stuff that like for AC and heating? Do they use electricity?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, electricity. So electricity becomes really like a high demand. Electricity for air conditioning, but winter for the heating is a natural gas. I don't know, like the remote area maybe still use a coal factory do some heating with coal. I don't know. But if you go to just like any apartment building, high rise anywhere, you don't see people handle coal. So at least daily life you don't see there's market for selling coal anymore. So maybe at some factory they still use coal. But at least daily life, you don't see anywhere, you cannot buy coal. And you don't need to buy coal for heating, like cooking or natural gas. And you also like at home, people have the heater, water heater, so they can heat up water and use water heater instead of use a stove to cook, like boil water. So it's become a lot more convenient.

Eric Liu

Yeah, I see. Okay.

Yeli Zhang

And the air conditioner everywhere.

Eric Liu

Yeah. So there's a lot less dependency on seasons, basically.

Yeli Zhang

Yes, a lot less dependent on seasons. So in the past summer, we open the window, use fan to get cool air. Spring, fall, that's good. In winter, we just need to burn whatever to heat up the room. And every morning you have to start the fire to get the room warm because evening, like, when you finish up, like, go to sleep, pretty much the fire is out in the stove. It's out. So evening, it's getting colder. Colder, colder. Morning, actually, I remember it's really difficult to get up because the room is so cold, and then typically parents will get up and then start the fire and make the room, like, get warm. Yeah, but right now, you just don't do that. Right. The temperature become more like you set the temperature and that's the temperature. This life is definitely much more convenient than where I grew up.

Eric Liu

Were there any other aspects of seasons that kind of change, different behavior? Like besides the food that you mentioned and the heating?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, right. So the food is, when we grew up, seasoning and heating, all that season. Transportation also changed a lot. There's a lot of change, a lot of change. But it's not overnight. It's gradually you change.

The technology definitely play a much more role in daily life than vaccine. Vaccine is simple. The life is much simpler than now. So it's very a lot of manual work. A lot of manual. Like, pretty much everything is manual. Like, we don't have a washer dryer, so we just wash our clothes, use hands, and then you just try to dry it naturally and put it on a rope. You just let the air dry. There's no dishwasher. You wash your dishes by hand. It's very simple life. It's more like almost like you camp. It's like tempting type of life.

Eric Liu

Okay, cool. Well, do you think there's anything else I should know about before we wrap up?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, I think overall, over years, I see definitely more technology advanced over years. So people rely more on technology and energy, from very simple original coal to like natural gas or even to some more advanced use of energy. But people's life become more like, depend on technology than in the past. And it's more convenient, definitely a lot more convenient right now than in the past. But in the past, I would think it's more natural. Like if you're really looking for a way of the natural living, I think a long time ago, those are more like close to nature.

Eric Liu

So that actually reminds me when you say you transition or you see a transition from coal to natural gas to a lot of dependencies on electricity, do you know where that electricity comes from? Does it come from a nearby power plant or something?

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, nearby power plant. I know at least in China, each city there's a big power plant. I know the city I grew up, there's a big power plant. So a lot of heating come from that plant. But I was thinking Beijing, there's multiple, so they have to use multiple sources because that's a huge city to feed not only like, the families, but also like companies, office buildings, mall, all that I would think need a lot more.

Eric Liu

I see.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah. But for small cities where I grew up, we have a huge plant. Like all the electricity and natural heating all come from that big manufacturer.

Eric Liu

Okay. So do you know at these plants, do they use primarily coal or are they like nuclear plants?

Yeli Zhang

I know the city I grew up. Right. So that's natural gas one, not coal. Yeah, no more coal. So maybe there's still places use coal, but at least that one is natural gas. Because the place I grew up, we kind of rich in natural gas. Yeah. So I think it also depends on what's more readily available to that place. So they just use that. They intend to use that more than others, which is not available to them.

Eric Liu

Okay, that's pretty interesting. So your location has a lot of natural gas.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, but I think right now, like, for example, my little city, actually they have natural gas, they have coal, they also have natural oil because I grew up in mid-west of China, so they have an area like they have more of this energy to supply. But then I know they also build pipes and send some of the natural gas to Beijing. Right. I'm not totally sure, but that's what I heard. Because Beijing needs more energy, so they have to get from a lot of different sources to feed that big city.

Eric Liu

Yeah.

Yeli Zhang

So they usually get from different sources of natural gas. So different energy from different source. It depends on where you are and how much you need. So I guess there's different combinations.

Eric Liu

So in that city, would you say you had a net, I guess, outflow of energy materials?

Yeli Zhang

Outflow. Yeah, more like outflow. That's because they have more natural resources available.

Eric Liu

So would you say like, energy in your city these days or even in the past is cheaper compared to energy in other cities in China?

Yeli Zhang

Yes. The cost of living, like how much you depend on the energy is less compared to when I grew up. So when I grew up, right, because the country more poor, China back then. Food and heating and all those are like a big portion of your expense. So now I think people, like, their income is higher, so they still need to pay, like food and energy right. For their daily life. But like the ratio compared to when I grew up is less. Does that make sense? Yeah, because when we grow up, the main thing is food, not be hungry and have clothes to be warm. So all that actually is a big portion of your income you need to spend on food and just basic clothes to get not freezing. But here right now, like, I think people at least buy clothes for fashion, not just for basic needs. And also the heating or the food, they can eat a lot more, different variety, and they can go to restaurant when they want to. So it's heating. Like, summer, they use air conditioning. When winter, they use the heating. They can enjoy all this, but it's not cost them, like, fortune to do all this.

Eric Liu

Okay, so do you think okay this trend was a result of China becoming a richer nation since it had a lot of natural resources and it was able to export more?

Yeli Zhang

I don't know, like, it's export or import. I don't know. But I know, like, the country. Right. Overall, like, in the past 20 to 30 years, it definitely richer. So the average life standard, it's definitely better. People, each family, they can afford a lot more than back then.

Eric Liu

Yeah, I see.

Yeli Zhang

And the food is more, like, abundant right now than in the past. In the past, you don't get to pick food. You just need to eat to make sure you're not hungry. But right now, people can pick. It's a very different so the lifestyle changed dramatically. Definitely become better life.

Eric Liu

So you mentioned clothing earlier. Back then, when you bought clothing, did you buy clothing or did you have to make it yourself? Just like, for example, food, like, you buy the materials.

Yeli Zhang

It's a combination. So a lot of people actually make clothes yourself. So you just get a cloth. You just sew yourself to make clothes. And you can also buy, but you really buy maybe just once a year, you buy a few times. That's it. Most times you wear the same clothes. You just, like, change for, like, few times. When it gets dirty, wash. And then you have another thing, one to wear. So it's not like you wear different clothes every day. Different style? No, it's just the same clothes. Maybe like, we have a few sets for the entire year. Winter, you need to wear thicker, right? Like a warmer one. So you have like, a fatter one, but summer you just have slimmer one. The clothes is very limited. You don't consider fashion that much. It's just people wear very similar clothes, and it's very common. Like, you wear the same clothes every day for a week. Right. So it's not like right now, if you wear clothes for a week, no change. People are going to look at you like, strange. But that time, it's so common.

Eric Liu

It's very, like, a lot of work to wash and stuff.

Yeli Zhang

Yeah, a lot of work. Because washing is all manual, you wash it, parents don't have time. So when we grew up, my parents have to work like, six days out of the seven days. Right? So they work six days only. Sunday is a day off. So they wash clothes and they prepare for next week. You do it manually. We don't also buy clothes. It's expensive. It's a lot of money. That's why people don't have a lot of clothes. So maybe, like New Year, like, kids will get new clothes, right? They have paid and put on the new clothes. So that's the day, like, you see a lot of kids wear new clothes because that's Chinese New Year; on maybe a birthday, another new clothes. But then the rest of the year, you don't get clothes. You rarely see, like, people change clothes.

Eric Liu

Yeah, I see. Okay, well yeah. Thank you for taking the time to do this interview.

Yeli Zhang

You're welcome.

Eric Liu

Awesome. All right, we can wrap up here then. Once again, thank you.

Yeli Zhang

Okay. Yeah, sure. If you have any questions, let me know. Bye.