

## Oral History Transcript

Jason: So uh. Hello, my name is Jason. Today is the 27th of May 2022. Today's Thursday oh no today's Friday. I'm interviewing Darwin Yu through Zoom for the UCSD race and oral history project. For the purpose of this project, do you agree to grant the University permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Darwin: Yes

Jason: Ok, so now that I got that out of the way. How are you today?

Darwin: I've been fine, wait I'm doing fine um just Friday today, almost the end of um our spring quarter at UC San Diego, and doing pretty well and hopefully to end this, this year this school year's my first year here really well, for the 2020 uh 2021-22 year.

Jason: Uh, What. Tell me about yourself.

Darwin: So, my name is Darwin Yu, I'm a student, uh first-year undergraduate student to be exact. I go to UC San Diego and I'm finishing the the last quarter of my first year, and even though it has been very time-consuming in my own parts, and all this stress coming in as a first-year uh first year in college. I I feel I have a lot of needs to work on myself, and I'm excited to work through both bouncing my classes, club roles, social life, work-life, etc. To describe myself to others I'd say I present myself as outgoing, visibly emotionally expressive in how I talk to other people, and especially to either people that I'm close with or or strangers; and although, although I know about myself that my attitude could fluctuate at times of the situation, depending on my own personal life circumstances, or the environment, that I am around so I'll say I am more of the introverted side though because of my hobbies and interest in my real life but then I do want to continue to embrace and involve myself in the community that supports me and might be able to involved with. Then there's a lot of people that I get to meet the future.

Jason: So anything of specific note that you'd like me to know about before we go into the interview questions.

Darwin: Yes, so, yes, as you know, I am a first-generation student. I'm full Chinese. Both my parents are born in China, and are also Chinese and they're born and raised and they had me in America. So I am a Chinese American, and I grew up and raised in the American culture, and both my family and myself are within that United States area from Sacramento and towards Elk Grove, California.

Jason: So, I guess, like to get to know little bit. Get know a little bit more about you. Could you describe your upbringing?

Darwin: Yes, so I would say to be very specific my childhood and myself my upbringing towards college. my childhood wasn't as memorable as to me compared to others others that I've talked to about the childhood stories or others there. Their years is like just elementary school, or The time of family. I don't resonate with a lot of those memories since I think a lot of the childhood was mostly about me being kind of isolated from. As a first-generation student I couldn't do as much. a lot of um a lot of activities that other um children would usually do. Because um my family were was little financially unstable. During their integration towards to the Americas to California, and because because of that, and the hardships with being living as an immigrant, and also transitioning from China to America. My parents fluctuated from being in China then to America back and forth until they're trying to settle.

So once my childhood. I would say that. I did have a lot of trips a lot of like from Hawaii, China, San Diego. Other places around America that we we couldn't find a set place to live. We settled in Sacramento in a house, but it was also with my other cousins who live at California as well at the time. So it was like it's like a like a very family home with both my cousins, aunts and uncles,

and siblings living in one home, and I don't have much memories in that place besides the photos in my house besides my kitchen. But I would say that's I'd have very have a very very low key time of being with parents, and then being with myself, since they have to take care of their own financial responsibilities at work and now is mostly a home with my grandparents. So with that childhood I would communicate with Cantonese so that's my first language.

Talking with them. my parents family members and my little sister as well because of that's where we grew up and raise as in and Then only until then, when my sister was born. and the change from me being involved in my family culture to academics. Since they couldn't care for me as much since my sister's birth, and then also financially, financial problems within being immigrants. We moved to Elk Grove, California, which is a lot more of the suburban areas, but it made a split with my cousins, and aunts and uncles apart, and then to live. My only so that I would live only if my family back home. So that's me, I at least from my childhood I was mostly alone and only focused on academics. I would be enrolled into tutoring classes, Kumon. Try to study as much as I can because of my parents, focused on just academics and success with being that model minority of having the. I would spend most of my time towards academics and towards working so that my parents could find time to work for sticking to my sister and take care of my family, their home. Yes, we do also house my grandparents as well. So I'll say that's within my child there is not much I remember. I was, but it was mostly my grandparents because my parents have been working at least the type of memories I remember and spend time a lot on the Internet's online era, online culture because I didn't have that connection with my parents and other kids that's resort to the online cultures of Internet, Youtube, etc. with just being alone that family computer and have to get through my elementary school years. Try to meet new friends, and just being kind of alone within that area within that myself, because I could only think about

academics as a as a sole future for me to the fullest too. and describe my high school experience with passing school. I'll say that's from the big immigrants and having that model minority culture I didn't really go into high school years as a as fully fleshed out. And it kinda really kind of hurt me in the long run as I felt immense pressure to succeed to get praise from academics, and I had a sense that this wasn't the right way since that wasn't really happy, I wanted to be happy with the way my social life was, my family life and and in turn obviously my grades plummeted and didn't feel, as that I was doing what was well enough within high school. Then I would say, the biggest jump from where I am today. To my upbringing would be the people I surrounded myself with in high school. I'll say those those expectations kind of mellowed out in the future as uh I think my parents understood how how challenging it is in America within expectations, I can never really succeed. So I think you had to give me a lot of leeway to understand, to help myself. provide myself to those achievements, the future, and and also with my friends. That I made within high school that got me to a culture that's what that separated me from me in middle school that introverted type of culture of just being alone doing trying to succeed in academics on the grades, and then trying to try new things, so maybe to explore like volunteering, community service events, actually applying for positions. Going to different fields, such as I was in MESA. I was hanging out with engineering building a lot of the projects within a whole group. I found that capturing myself that being in a group really help me learn how to actually talk to socialize within the high school culture and then I can find what i'll be like passionate about especially in the future, for now. And those people around merely laid the foundation for what I could do and pursue to today, and let me take into college if like that understanding that I had that support group and in order to learn more I will have to understand

that's I I know there's people around me and that's within my family life, and my social life both will intervene and help me provide myself for these upcoming college years.

Jason: Okay. Thank you for telling me all that. So, you mentioned that you come from an immigrant family, and that you kind of like live by like the Chinese American model minority mindset, I guess. So could you tell me a bit about like your parents, and like how they were like when you're growing up

Darwin: Of course so, to start off my parents are in their fifties right now. They're both born in Guangzhao, they were in China, and they traveled to the US in 2001 and after they haven't they had my brother older brother who was who's born in China and raised in America after moving in 2001 so I don't but I would say that's within the model minority I have. Their mindset of being to succeed was from how they've been Americans and they viewed how their other friends or relatives, children, how they succeeded through hard work and effort. To succeed in as a minority within America that's oh because because these children are succeeding because of their hardship and the amount of pressure they give them. That that did translate to my parents that they had to do the exact same to me. So within a lot of my childhood with like other attitudes, would lead to success. As in chores, academics. It didn't really transfer or do with the equivalent to them how different that American education was to China and Chinese education that was a lot more competitive compared to other countries. And with that it was a lot more harder for me to transition from elementary school to the high school with a lot more. A lot more challenging and academically harder courses that it actually made me more pressured to succeed to live up to my parent's expectations. But then, at the same time it made my mental uh, gave me, provided a lot of mental stress, and it didn't help with the the distance that my family would provide, because they were so far apart culturally and culturally far apart and diverse the American was

compared to Chinese person and I'll say because of that. That disconnect that in order to support me, It was really hard to let them know that because of how how how different we were in terms of culture. And because of that, I didn't know most about their childhood or the way they were before we moved to America, and it really makes really hurts me to say that like I wish I knew I knew a little bit more about my parents, besides their day to day lives here today. I want to see I wanna know that more farther apart. I don't want to talk about the school work or gifts or success. I would want to know about their past and what they have, and struggled with before. How I could translate that to them with my experience as well. so on.

Jason: Is there anything you wish for your parents because of like this disconnect in your family from all the the differences in them?

Darwin: I do really wish that they could enjoy their life from hopefully their past from. But even though I don't know their hardship or what they had to face from back in China. I do know they didn't they did not attend they didn't attend a higher education like such as college. Both my both my parents, and obviously they had their own lives from from pictures I've seen. I do wish they they hope they had to. They get to live their youth, and also enjoy their lives even with having us with having me and my siblings. I understand that as an immigrant, or going, or being in a which a different country is such a hard transition to go through. And they do deserve their time and efforts that they gave to us, and to give it to them.

17:30:59 I just hope to provide that to them because for trying to foster that culture that I was growing up in, and I'm hopefully the they get to live up to they theirs in the future.

Jason: So, you mentioned that for Cantonese is actually your first language, and I guess that's sort of like what kind of binds some of your family members together. And speaking English sort

of like a new factor into the family dynamic. So what other obstacles came from the language barriers?

Darwin: I'll say that Cantonese as a language I grew up in as a as the first language I had to learn just from the culture from my parents, from my relatives. And I would say it did come easy to me back in my childhood because I obviously didn't have to think about too much about education and learning too much, and I it wasn't what's an obstacle with back then that it is now because of the growth I have in America and only being around the culture. I've only been to China, China at least 2 other times that I wouldn't know of and and and it does pain me to say that like the culture that I have and the language barrier does become an obstacle to understand that culture. For example, like the for Chinese culture, we have a lot of honoring for our our ancestors and our relatives back in China those who are deceased. We'd offer like shrines or culture of going to the graves or funerals for that and its in a specific way that Chinese culture implemented through incense or prayers. But within my like the language barrier. I am unable to translate that to how I would do it in the future and you see, like as a disconnect from my parents. Understand to know from what they grew up in compared to now. When I grew up, and I did it as just some sort of I just say I didn't need to do as a a burden to go to the shrines. In reality, it wasn't. It would be important to know for the future for my for my grandparents or for my ancestors, and just to honor them, for this is a tradition, for both like me and the my family in the future.

Another obstacle I'd say we just communicating to those relatives, as I mentioned, I have only been to China twice, but I have. I have much more relatives in that country, in China China compared to the ones here and we do have a small relatively small family that comes from that are that do live in America, and because of that I don't have that connection with those in China.

It makes me feel distant. It's really sad about how I can portray myself to relatives. They should know, like my achievements, how I feel about going into a college trying to succeed. And I wanted to share that but it's a little bit harder for me, because I am unable to speak in a way that's sophisticated. They'll speak only basic phrases and it hurts me that I cannot share those, what I've learned because of what I don't know as a Cantonese and that does translate to my future goals of wanting to carry those traditions into like my my family or children that if I want to have that's you know to honor my parents, or honor my tradition and Chinese and China in general, from the parts that I grew up in I want to translate or I want transfer that to my children, and I want to keep learning about Chinese culture and the language as well. I hope to bring it in for for me, myself.

Jason: So, How How has being a first generation student affected your family dynamic since you know, your parents also didn't go to college, and with your other family members, don't have the same experience of like college in America

Darwin: So as a as a family dynamic for first-generation students, the the culture, the culture that comes with American culture and then Chinese culture is very relatively different. Because honestly as I college here is very competitive with so diverse cultures and they don't have that type of system in China. There's mostly just um you finish high school, and then you would transfer into a college. And one thing from here we have a standardized testing a lot of applications you have just a I'd say a barrier to those higher education compared to other countries. And along my parents and at least grandparents don't, have trouble to understand that since the education levels, and also the the the concept of education is very different. And they seem to think it's easier or they seem to think it would be easier, or that is not big of a deal compared to how me and my siblings understand how how hard it is for for us to to learn within



latest competitive environments. But also what does American culture as affected like our social life? And why you understand that having social life is important compared to just understanding grades? I'll say like a family dynamic though with education, I know my sister my sister has struggled with being able to, because, she was she wasn't as academically taught or practiced like I was back when I was a kid, and she had a more privileged life of electronics and the internet that she wasn't as I'd say. [Pause] It didn't show in her academics as much as I was a straight A student as for me. She was a straight Bs and it affected her like her mental health with how our parents and their parents treated and compared. They had comparisons between siblings and her, and then comparisons with other students as well, and I knew of that dynamic as well. It really hurts a family because of not understanding what a child is going through, and without understanding how that culture is important to them. But also it's very vastly different from theirs and with all the work that is expected. It it separates the family and creates arguments with whatever is best for them. When in reality, is that it's up to us decide

Jason: So I know like academics have played a huge part in your life, and like in your entire family's life and it's like a huge focus on pretty much like who you and how your family define yourself so what pushed to attend college.

Darwin: So of course, going back into the American culture thing. It's always of you know like just obviously societal Americans are how culture thinks about college is that if you don't go to college you're not gonna get a degree. You will not go far in life, or you won't see yourself as successful as you would if you were to not get a degree, and I guess that kind of pushed my parents and kind of myself to pursue college to attend a UC of that sort. Obviously grades and high school wasn't as tedious and laborious as compared to college, and although I would take like AP classes, or honors classes. But then that's and they were they were difficult for me at

least for little bits but it doesn't it doesn't reflect what college will teach you. Or doesn't reflect what the real world education, and with careers will look like, and because of that, because of how college has that type of education to go further deeply into a field. And because what I want to pursue is a psychology, cognitive science similarly to or working with person to person, or talking with others regarding health and helping communities in need especially if that's I do think going to college will benefit me the most as the amount of education that comes with college. And then, having that as a foundation for standpoints to where you grow as in the community, the top of the field, and the experience. I do think that it is important for me to attend college. However, I do understand that. I love others who cannot join college or do not decide to join college are able to are still able to go through life and enjoy life, if possible, hopefully more than me. But then mostly about financial. I was. I was in a financially supportive household, so I was well-off. I am able to afford college and experience these 4 years but other others, I understand. That's any college may not be the right, may not be financially available for them. But however, I understand that with myself and they're very different people that are diverse people within the campus that I want to involve myself in.

Jason: So what did you choose UCSD as a college of your choice out of all the other colleges that you could have chosen from

Darwin: So to start off UC San Diego was the only UC that accepted me. I was rejected from the other UCs. But it was also because of the covid I applied during the covid process, and they kind of made my my process application process is a little harder. regarding the competition, or the competitiveness of the application process and going to college. [Pause] Sorry. And then but the reason why I chose San Diego in general, or I pick or picks UC San Diego as a college I want to attend because with their programs in like research and the science programs from the other

graduate schools to the culture here in Southern California, that's something I'm really interested in but then options with community service branching out towards other people to other communities within a place that I would never have learned or never would have experienced or got to know of because I was in the north of California, Sacramento. And because of what I wanna pursue within psychology programs. They do have a lot of support within developing PhDs. And even though myself, I I don't think I'll be pursuing that PhD programs. I do want to hit the to grad school, and also get that experience that I I am able to do through clubs classes and interactions with San Diego and I do think UC, will benefit me majorly because of the name of UC, University of California. But also as a way to expand by what I did on high school by taking classes and then reflect what I want to do in passion within the classes that I take, and also the people that I meet even outside of the UC as well.

Jason: So you mentioned that you were applying for colleges during Covid, so I guess that obviously affected your transition from high school to college. So to begin with this question I'd say do you remember the day that, like your school shut down, or maybe just like, what happened when the quarantine started. I guess, like do you remember the exact details?

Darwin: Oh, yeah, I I would say, I do remember the majority of the exact day that or more or less the the week, the day that I remember that I had the message or the email regarding that the pandemic was in full effect, and will not be having school for the next the next year. So that day was around March I believe it's um. March 24th-25th around that time. That's 2020 that was that was the start or that was the the the week before my finals in my junior year of high school. It was it was about to turn to spring break after our finals. So regarding the day was around me and a few friends went to get boba in our home town. Everyone was biking around because it was a Sunday before. Because it was a Sunday that's we're also told the week before that we won't be

having that we got the week off for because of the pandemic and I thought that would be it. Then we'd resume school for the next quarter, and to resume as soon as I see my junior year into senior year. However, I was notified at my friend's house. That covid-19 has a or the yeah Covid-19 in itself, and the coronavirus, the pandemic would shut down all schools, education systems, all all public places and had a mass effect in order to make sure that. Then we would transition into quarantine for the next year which means, I wouldn't be able to experience my junior year and senior year for that process, and at the time I didn't think I was I didn't think too much of it. I I didn't understand the ramifications of what that meant. I just thought it was extra week off, but in reality, I didn't know how serious the issue was, and then obviously how global effect was Covid-19 would be for the next few years.

Jason: So going into college like transitioning high school into college during a pandemic. Since I know like, we're limited at least on your time, and if we continue this later date, if you need, if you're available for us, how has the pandemic effected of your college experience?

Darwin: Oh, yeah. So I'd say beginning of the year, I was we were in a covid we were still in the pandemic. It was after the basic shots after the available availability of Covid-19 or is after after most the most Americans have gotten the vaccine and were able to really go out as these compared to 2021. So I would say that my college experience from going into my first year quarter, online classes were what I was in the norm of senior year, so that wasn't a big change in fact. But I think the biggest change was a lot of the classes finally opened up to be in person as well as you can be excited for, and I would say that going to lecture, even if people masks on it was still was a very new thing, to me and it's really exciting to see that a lot of people at least at a UC, is a for this college are all like dedicated towards their goals, their own goals, and to meet that many people. But my college experience, although this is my first year or this my first year

of college. I hope I see that covid hasn't, won't be affecting the next 3 years of my college experience, and I believe my first year I I believed it went really well and you have to continue this momentum going forward.

Jason: Thank you for telling me about experiences, and of course thank you for your time. If you are available at another time that we can like, add something. I can ask you some more questions. but that will be all for this session. So again thank you for your time and your stories.

Darwin: Thank you so much.