

Section One

Person interviewed: Jennifer Chou

Interviewee's title: Founding member and former Deputy Director of Programming at Radio Free Asia

Date, time, and length of interview: November 1, 2015 2 p.m - 1 hour, 15 minutes, 50 seconds

Objective: To understand and learn more about the career path and experiences of Jennifer Chou. We were especially interested in her effects on US/Asian relations as a whole.

Section Two

For pre-interview research, we searched Ms. Chou's name on Google. We received few results, but did find a link to The Weekly Standard. Ms. Chou wrote for the China blog from 2007-2008.

In order to prepare for the interview, we searched Ms. Chou's name on Google to find any information that we could. We browsed the blogs she wrote for The Weekly Standard in order to get an idea of her writing. She sent Ericka weblinks, which were then distributed so we were able to read blog entries of hers. To formulate interview questions, we brainstormed about the different information we were interested in finding out about her. For these questions, we tried to pick a range of them that covered early life, education, work with Radio Free Asia, and future plans.

Interview questions:

1. We know that you were born and grew up in Taiwan, could you tell us a little bit about your childhood and what that was like?

- a. (Probing) Was there one “ah-ha” moment where you knew you wanted to be a journalist?
 - b. (Probing) Can you tell us a little about your parents and what sort of influence they gave you as a child?
 - c. (Probing) How did your mother feel about you being a journalist?
2. Could you talk about your college education?
 - a. (Probing) In college you studied literature, and went on to do what?
 - b. (Probing) What gave you the idea to write your dissertation on reportage
 - c. (Probing) When the Department Head told you there were few spots for transfer students in journalism, did you accept it, or did you realize it was wrong?
3. When you came to the US, can you tell us the differences between the cultures?
4. Could you tell us about your experience and work with Radio Free Asia?
 - a. (Probing) When you were approached to start Radio Free Asia, what was your initial reaction?
 - b. (Probing) When you started, it was 1 hour/day, what was the time frame of Radio Free Asia growing
5. What were you most afraid of when starting Radio Free Asia? How much professional experience had you had before, were you prepared?
6. Did you ever face any criticisms when working for Radio Free Asia?
 - a. (Probing) How did you convince accomplished journalists to work for you?
7. We know Radio Free Asia was responsible for covering news that mainstream media did not, was there a common theme of uncovered news in mainstream media?

8. What would be one of your biggest accomplishments while working with Radio Free Asia?
9. What are some examples of favorite stories you've covered yourself?
10. Could you tell us about the Human Rights Network?
 - a. (Probing) When you submit the proposal to the UN, what are you hoping changes?
 - b. (Probing) How did you create the draft?
11. Have you ever been wrong or unable to verify or confirm human rights violation details
 - a. (Probing) Did you feel disappointed [because you couldn't find the source?]
12. Did you ever work with someone you didn't necessarily agree with? If so, how did you combat that?
13. Is there anything you would've wanted to change while working for Radio Free Asia?
14. What do you suggest for a woman who wants to successfully pursue her career of choice?
15. Is there one person you think is the most interesting that you've had the pleasure of working with?
16. Can you tell us about how being a woman influenced how you led in your profession?
17. Can you talk about some of your greatest accomplishments?
18. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us? Anything we missed that you'd like to talk about?
19. Did you choose to study in the US because you were not able to study journalism in Taiwan?

20. After you got your PhD, what did your professional life look like leading up to Radio Free Asia?

21. How many different dialects do you speak?

Section Three

1. Did you get complete answers to your questions? Explain.

Ms. Chou gave us very thorough responses to each of our questions. At times, she answered more than one question with one response. During other instances, she gave various examples of her life experiences within the response of one question. For example, she mentioned that traveling to the U.S. was not a huge culture shock because she grew up watching American programs on TV as a child. This gave us an idea of what her experience was like when she first came to the states, and it gave us more background information about her influences growing up.

2. Was your interview structured, unstructured, or mixed? Explain.

We went into our interview prepared with questions to provide structure to the interview, but also prepared to ask unplanned questions based on Ms. Chou's responses. Our interview began with our planned questions, with some small follow up questions depending on the response. We started with questions about Ms. Chou's childhood. We then asked some unplanned follow-up questions about her career path and the reasons why she chose to become a journalist. Her answers indicated possible gender influences, like when her professor told her she that she could not become a journalism major because women do not often go on to use their education due to having domestic responsibilities. Later on, we would use these hints to ask some questions about her opinions on gender in the workplace. There were many instances like

this where we asked questions based on her responses rather than staying with the questions we prepared. Overall, our interview was primarily unstructured with substantial planning and planned questions going into the interview.

3. What probing questions did you use? Explain.

When Ms. Chou answered our initial questions, she gave certain answers that increased our curiosity, leading to probing questions. For one question, we asked Ms. Chou to tell us about her college education. She began telling us about how she initially majored in English and went to speak to an administrator about transferring into the journalism program. The administrator told her there was little room for female transfers because they often got married, had children, and stopped working. Megan proceeded to probe and ask how Ms. Chou reacted to this experience with the administrator, and whether she accepted this answer from him or realized it was wrong. We were surprised to find that Ms. Chou was initially an English major, and even more surprised to hear the response from the administrator when she attempted to change majors. To find out more about Ms. Chou's feelings, we had to come up with an unplanned probing question. For example, we asked her broad questions like, "who was the most interesting person you've encountered." She answered saying she met a blind advocate. We probed her response by asking what made him so interesting, which made the question more precise, and we went on to ask how having this experience shaped her career choices. It was evident she felt admiration for this person because he faced personal adversity, however he continued to help others despite being blind. From the interview, we could tell she thought highly of this person, and there was a sense that she strived to help others in her own way.

4. Explain your team approach. That is, who did what?

During the first day the project was introduced, Drazen created a Google Doc. We each wrote our own portion of the introductory email, and when allowed, Ericka sent the email to Ms. Chou. During class time, we all created and contributed interview questions to a different Google Doc that Drazen created. Since most questions of our interview questions were put together during class time, only few were added outside of class by Drazen and Ericka. Ms. Chou kept in correspondence with Ericka via email, exchanging pre-interview research links/information and interview date/time proposals. The day of the interview, all four of us arrived at Humanities between 1:30 and 1:45 to set up prior to the interview. Drazen brought her laptop and we each brought headphones in order to hear Ms. Chou. During the interview, we took turns introducing ourselves. Megan and Drazen asked most of the interview questions, but all four of us asked at least one. In class, Drazen, Raven, and Ericka started working on the paper by filling in any information we could. That week, all four of us met to work on the interview write up. During our meeting, Drazen and Megan worked on the Process slide, Ericka worked on the Content slide, while Raven added to the write up. Until we finished the write up, we each added information where we were able to. Before our presentation, Drazen and Ericka met up to finish the PowerPoint, where Ericka recorded the audio content for both slides. Due to faulty audio, Ericka re-recorded the slides at home. Prior to submitting the write up, we all looked over the paper and added any final touches.

5. Did the interviewee give you any documents or references to articles to read, or did she mention other people for you to talk to (or research)? Explain.

In the first email to Ms. Chou, we asked her to provide any information that she wished for us to know in order to formulate our interview questions. She responded with the link to the

blog articles she wrote for The Weekly Standard (weeklystandard.com/author/jennifer-chou), which we initially found after searching her name on Google. During our interview, she told us about one activist she worked with, Chen Guangcheng, and how interesting she thought his story was. Because of our interest in his story while she was telling it, she sent Ericka the links to two blog articles she wrote for The Weekly Standard, which were then distributed to the rest of the group (weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/8921wkpg.asp and weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/602forjl.asp). These links were helpful because Ms. Chou was able to provide us with background information to become more acquainted with her written work.

Section Four

Interview Notes: Jennifer Chou grew up with a supportive family. One thing that was interesting was that she experienced American culture through TV programs. Her parents encouraged her to get an education, despite the Confucian society she grew up in. When Chou was in college, she attempted to change her major to journalism, but was denied. She explained that “transfer spots were for men because they would not be wasted on women who leave to have a family.” This did not stop her. She finished her undergrad, and went on to pursue journalism in the U.S. There she insisted hard works was all she needed to become successful. She was following the republican campaign, when she was approached to be a founder for Radio Free Asia (based off of Radio Free Europe.) When she was asked, “are you afraid of a challenge?” she took a leap from the job she always dreamed and finally accomplished to pursue something new. She explained that above all, you need to do what you are passionate about and you need to work hard at what you love. She loved to cover the stories that mainstream media would otherwise

ignore. She spread knowledge in a way that allowed her to combine her love for writing with her own ideal of increasing awareness in Asia and all over the world.

Consider what was said, emerging trends your interviewee mentioned, different interpretations, and recommendations for follow up interviews.

Ms. Chou spoke with an undertone of humility and an undying belief in hard work. In all of her responses, she spoke not as an successful woman but as someone who simply went above and beyond in all she did. She never spoke from a place of privilege but rather ignored social connotations of gender and race, because to her hard work overruled all. Those who recognise gender as an obvious social factor may have a hard time with some of Chou's responses. However once we recognize that she speaks from a place where gender was viewed very differently, we realize that her opinion is likely a product of her time. We would be interested in hearing more about Chou's thoughts of Confucian society and how they contribute to her opinions on race and gender in America.

One recommendation we can give to future interviewers is to take note of how their interviewee reacts to the questions. Ms. Chou very strongly feels that accomplishments should not be tied to gender. Although we know about gender inequality from class, she felt that, "saying someone's accomplishments were great *for a woman*" is disrespectful because it belittles the accomplishment. Knowing this prepared Drazen to answer one of Chou's questions: "is this project for a women's class, or women only?" Drazen responded along the lines of, "the class does acknowledge women, since it is 'Women in U.S.-Asian relations,' however this project is more focused on individuals, men, women, Asian, or not, who have major accomplishments. We're reporting on how the career trajectory was accomplished and what inspired people to end

up where they are today.” I think Ms. Chou appreciated the response, since she felt she was picked for her work and not solely because she’s a woman.

Section Five

What aspects of the interview did you find to be particularly meaningful?

Ms. Chou’s advice to us was particularly meaningful. She believes that she is very fortunate to match her passions with her skill sets and actually love what she does every day. She encouraged women to read, read, and read some more. She stresses the importance of passion in curiosity inside their desired field. This passion allows her to work toward something meaningful. Moreover Ms. Chou encourages women to work over and beyond expectations. She explained using the instance where she worked the soundboard in her entry level job just because she wanted to learn how to do it. Not only did she go beyond her job description by working the soundboard, but she also explored a new aspect of the journalism career by doing so.

Ms. Chou’s take on gender allows us to recognize the importance of self drive and passion rather than focusing on the drawbacks of gender differences. Unlike Ms. Chou, many women could have been deterred by not being able to pursue their desired major. However Ms. Chou continued on to work in journalism despite the adversity she faced. She believes that “there is no substitute for hard work” and that women and minorities will not be affected by career discrimination if they commit to working hard. Ms. Chou was extremely humble and brilliant. She is truly an example of an hardworking person whose impactful work continues to alter the foundation of US/Asian relations.

What aspects were not useful?

Speaking with Ms. Chou was an amazing experience. All of her wisdom and advice was extremely useful. Her story was interesting from start to finish. The entire interview process taught us a lot about the journey to finding our perfect career. In all, there was hardly any material that was not useful.

What more would you like to know?

Upon reflection there were a few more things we would love to know about Ms. Chou. One thing we did not hear much about was her personal life. We learned that she has a husband, but did not inquire about if she had any children. Based on that response it would be interesting to find why or why not she decided to have kids. We could then inquire about how her career played into her family choices.

Ms. Chou's opinions on the gender were interesting in comparison to her life story. She strongly believes that gender does not and should play a role in an individual's career. However one of the major reasons she did not become a journalism major was because her male professor told her that he would not give her a spot in the major. She was told that women do not actually make use of their education and end up wasting it as when they get married and become homemakers. We would be interested to ask what exactly made her want to switch to journalism and the first place. Also we would like to explore more about her opinions on gender.

We would love to receive an update on the outcome of her current project with Human Rights Network. At the end of the interview she explained to us about the she was currently editing. The report was about the documentation of human rights violation cases in China. A draft was already submitted to the United Nations. The report was made public about two weeks after the interview. We would love to know if her report was able to make any waves or cause

any change once the final report was published and sent again to the United Nations. We also would be interested to hear about any other up and coming projects with the Human Rights Network.

What other in-class presentations did you find particularly useful? Explain

Presentations during class were useful in highlighting how much women can accomplish regarding, but not limited to, US-Asian relations. Personally, I (Ericka) found the presentation on Mary David incredibly moving and useful. Considering how young she appears, she has accomplished an extreme amount through shedding light on human trafficking. She does this in creative ways such as pageants, spoken word, and other forms of art. This allows her to share her knowledge in schools and other areas where a standard presentation on human trafficking may not have normally been allowed. Through her work, she is educating the youth, which will help to better identify victims of trafficking - something that is particularly useful in the fight to end it. She also identifies as a “woman helping the world,” and does not define herself to just Asian or just American. If I had not been assigned to interview Jennifer Chou, I would have loved to interview Mary David to learn about all of her work.

I (Drazen), also found Mary David intriguing. She uses her platform as a dancer, beauty contestant, and spoken-word performer to bring human trafficking to light. One of the hardest parts about advocating for a cause is creating a dialogue between yourself and the target audience. Mary David is captivating by her many talents and her physical beauty. I think she has a great advantage because I can imagine younger girls aspiring to be like her. She in turn, educates the younger generation, and allows people to talk freely about her mission.

Another interview I learned from was Nancy Davis Lewis'. Although the interview "went wrong in every way possible," I found this to be helpful for future interviews. I learned that the group has timing issues, as the interview was held on daylight savings. Apparently, Hawaii does not follow daylight savings, so it made using Adobe connect awkward because the scheduled time that the group agreed on, wasn't mutual because of this technicality. Looking back, our group didn't ask if Ms. Chou was in the Eastern time zone, so this problem could have happened to us, but luckily did not. This is something I will definitely make sure to clarify if I conduct an interview via Adobe Connect again!