**Transcript of group interview with Olivia, 18th November 2019** *(this is a pseudonym)*

The researcher’s speeches, actions and summaries are in roman text, the interviewee’s speeches are in italics.

1. I thank Olivia, and remind her that I sent her the interview questions before. I show her what she said in the pre-course task about what critical thinking meant:

*Being critical of what been told, don’t jump to conclusions easily.* [Olivia]

1. Kathy: So, have you changed your mind about what you think critical thinking is?

Olivia: Ah … I think I changed a little bit, ‘cos, before that, ah, I was very, like envy those people who stand their, like, belief very firmly, ‘cos I always been persuade, like this way, and this way, I change my mind very easily [Kathy: right]. So I think that’s the critical thinking, because they know what’s the right answer. But for now, I think it’s just they are good at persuasion [Kathy: right] and – but, I’ve still got my problems, cos … I think about it, why I change my mind so easily it’s because I don’t have much knowledge to support my belief. So if there’s – like the climate change, if you - I only think climate change is climate change before, but if you try to like explain it in a political way, I will fall for that. I will say, “That’s right!” So I fall to that conclusion. But at the third class, you said the – like –

Kathy: This was the one about framing. The third one.

Olivia: Yeah yeah, framing. So it’s like the way how you – approach the solution, the question, so … For now, I think, I’m not really bad at critical thinking, it’s just I don’t have [whispers: how you say] don’t trust myself enough [Kathy: OK]. That’s what I think.

Kathy: OK. OK. So, I’ve actually got two questions here. One of them is the definition of critical thinking, what does it mean to be a good critical thinker, which is one thing, the definition. And the other thing is changes in *your* thinking. So if we just maybe focus on the definition for now [Olivia: OK]. Before, you thought that it was, um, ah, you’ve got what you wrote down here, being critical of what you’ve been told, and not jumping to conclusions. But you also thought it was being sure of your opinion, and you felt that you changed your mind too easily before [Olivia: Yeah]. So do you still think that critical thinking is – is not changing your mind and being sure of what you think?

Olivia: Oh. This way. Uh, jump to the conclusion easily is - it means ... once you told me something, yeah, I believe that is the conclusion for that question.

Kathy: OK. Right. Um, but you said that before the course you thought that - is that right, did I understand correctly? – before the course - you told me that before the course you thought that good critical thinking was not changing your mind.

Olivia: Yeah.

Kathy: Do you still think that good critical thinking is not changing your mind?

Olivia: No! [Laughs]

Kathy: OK, so tell me about that.

Olivia: OK. I think that has to do with some information bias? No. It’s a belief thing. So, it has something to do with your culture, your, like, your life experience, that … make you confirm with what you believe. But I think I grew up as a people who has a great empathy [Kathy: Right]. So before that I think the bad thing, so that makes me swing all the time, but for now I don’t think like you have one opinion for the whole life, that’s critical thinking, cos, things change … and … you are getting more and more knowledge when you, like, grow, grow up? [Kathy: Yes, yeah]. So the belief, the idea, has to change all the time, so … critical thinking for me now, I think [pause] it’s not about one conclusion or one belief, it’s like you can sort out your conclusion with the resources you have, the information you have, you can sort it out with the logical way [Kathy: Yeah] and use that to kind of persuade someone else.

Kathy: OK. So for you critical thinking – so, you’re talking about now.

Olivia: Yes.

Kathy: So now, for you critical thinking is partly about supporting your belief, your argument with evidence, because you talked about bringing in

Olivia: It’s not about belief, it’s like – we shouldn’t have one belief [Kathy: Right], it’s just using the, like the knowledge, the resources you have to sort it out [Kathy: Yeah], a question, like, how to say, sorry, ah, balancing your evidence, sort of like that.

Kathy: OK. So it is about evidence, it’s about using evidence, for you –

Olivia: And logic thinking

Kathy: And logical thinking, and its about balance, you say, now, you think it’s about balance

Olivia: Weight, I have to use the weight, to -

Kathy: Yeah, you said it’s about balance

Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah, weight, which one is -

Kathy: Yeah, OK, I’m just sorting out the different things. And for you critical thinking is also about persuading other people … you said.

Olivia: That can be a way of *using* critical thinking.

FROM THE EMAIL OLIVIA SENT ME AFTER THE INTERVIEW TO CLARIFY HER ANSWERS (SEE BELOW)

2. Have you changed your mind about this [what critical thinking means?]  If so, how and why?

*Yes, before this course I only knew the general idea of thinking critically. Now I understand more in details that a good critical thinker is someone who doesn't just passively take what's been told, but actively analyses the information and think independently to have a conclusion of agreeing or disagreeing* [Olivia]

Kathy: Yeah! A good point. Yes, indeed. OK. So, there’s what you think critical thinking *is*, on one side, and on the other side there’s your *own* thinking, right? So, it’s possible to have a strong idea of what critical thinking is, but perhaps not feel that you are doing that? Or feel you are doing that, um, OK. So there’s the definition of critical thinking [Olivia: Mmhm] so we talked about what is it, OK? [Olivia: Mmhm]. How about *your* thinking?

Olivia: My thinking?

Kathy: Yeah.

Olivia: About …?

1. Kathy: Because here you s-, it says um, “Do you think –“ [Olivia: Ohh] so there are two things [Olivia: OK] this is critical thinking, this is a definition [Olivia: OK I understand] and over here there is what - *my* thinking what is *my* thinking like? So before the course started you – I asked you online to say whether you think you are a good critical thinker, and you said no [Olivia: Yeah (laughs)]. So now, do you think anything has changed in your own thinking?

Olivia: Yeah, I have more confidence with myself, ‘cos ah, how to say, with all this ques-, not questionnaire, quiz [Kathy: Yeah] you have in the class [Kathy: Yes]. And I’m thinking, I’m quite good at it! [Laughs]. Before that, I was stay in my country, China, till 20 years old, so I don’t have – all my life I, like, studying, and having fun, with all this drama, uh, on the TV. [Kathy: OK]. Dramas [Kathy: Yeah]. So I – we don’t talk about politics or critical thinkings a lot, we just take what they teach us, and I believe that, very much! [Kathy: Yeah]. And after I come to UK for the undergraduate, and there was one class, there’s one, like assignment, uh, presentation, is, I choose the topic is like the, how is it [whispers: “Oh, my God”, drums fingers on the table] “The Great Wall”, no, no, no that – oh, I forgot the – oh! “Censorship”! [Kathy: Censorship]. “Censorship”! I choose the topic “Censorship”. So I do some research, [takes deep breath, laughs] and all I can find is all the bad things about China [Kathy: Ah!] So I’m like, am I being fooled for my 20 years? Whole life? [Kathy backchannels throughout the following]. What I’m being told is totally wrong? Is the, what’s the news here, what I find on Google, that’s the correct things? So I question a lot, and after that I take a Global Relation course, and they are teaching those things completely different from China, so I always question - I’m not a critical thinker. ‘Cos I don’t have all this knowledge outside of China, so – After that I don’t believe in myself [Kathy: Yeah, right] completely! [Laughs].

Kathy: You lost confidence [Olivia: Yeah!] in your own critical thinking.

Olivia: Yeah, and I also got questions from my classmates, ask me about the Tibet question, Taiwan question and for this year we have Hong Kong problems now so. [Takes a deep breath] I’m like, I don’t know how to persuade them with my knowledge. Some evidence they said, or they have, it’s wrong in some way, but I don’t know how to express myself, I don’t know how to explain it to them. But they are really good, I think it’s because they are really good at English, and I don’t know how to argue with them! [Laughs]

Kathy: That can be a factor, certainly, yeah. Are they, em, is this your undergraduate course?

Olivia: Yeah.

Kathy: So were they mostly, um, home students, like British students?

Olivia: Yeah, yeah. We only got four Chinese in my class. So in the first year, I really – I live in [unclear - Insu? Presumably student accommodation], so we have ten roommates. I love talking with them, ah, like we discuss issues or, whatever. But I’ve learned that I lose confidence. And – I don’t know, is it anything with the psychology, ‘cos I – I hate what China only tell me the one story they want to tell. But I love China because I grow up there, and - there’s something I believe, I can’t change it, ‘cos I really think that’s true, ‘cos I live there for 20 years. So, I shut myself down, and don’t talk to anyone and I read books, like the Ted talks, some psycholo-, psychogic- [Kathy: psychological] psychological books [Kathy: Yes. Books of psychology, yeah]. Yeah. Uh (pause] I still not gain any confidence, but after that I like, I started to know more about the economic - economics, and politics, in China [longer pause] but still I’m not good at persuasion, so [pause] so I question myself, a *lot*.

Kathy: But you said, um – well, when we talked about what critical thinking is [Olivia: Yeah], persuasion was one part, you said it something you can use critical thinking to do [Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah], so it’s not the whole story

Olivia: Sorry, I go on

Kathy: No, no, it’s fine. And then you said, these activities in my workshops gave you a bit of confidence [Olivia: Yeah], because you discovered actually you’re quite a logical person [Olivia: Yeah]. So can you think of any examples, from any of the workshops?

Olivia: Oh, yeah. Uh [pause], last workshop, we have three questions, let me see - the coin thing. [Kathy: Yes]. That’s one thing. [Kathy: Tossing the coin.] Because we have that in my Master’s degree, so I know the answer! [Laughs].

Kathy: Yes, what’s your Master’s degree in, I forget, Economics?

Olivia: Yes, Economics and Finance. [Kathy: Yeah]. And the second one, I think it’s this group? They have the question, let me see [drums fingers on table]. Oh, the feminist! Like –

Kathy: The feminist insurance salesperson.

Olivia: Yeeeah! I got the wrong – oh, no, I got the right – uh, the girl who was with me in the same group-

Kathy: I think her name is Sharon, I think her English name is Sharon.

Olivia: I’m not sure. She has the answer for the feminist. And I have the answer for the insurance [Kathy: Uh, huh] person? Insurance salesperson. [Kathy: Salesperson, yeah, yes]. So. I was talking to her that the insurance person, they has a large range of people, but the feminists they [unclear: show?] up to a small group, so, mathematically [Kathy: Yes], statistically [Kathy: Indeed] that’s the correct answer [Kathy: Yep], but she don’t believe me, so, I’m like, OK, I know the answer, that’s the correct answer, but I don’t know how to talk, to explain it to you. And we have the question, so - let me see [drums fingers on table, pause]. Oh, my God.

Kathy: Do you want to know what the third question was? In that group?

Olivia: Oh, third, third question is my question.

Kathy: Yeah. So it was the one about the fighter pilots [Olivia: Yeah], fighter pilots, and it was about – you gave a very good answer to that, I remember [Olivia: Thank you!] because I watched the video again, and you said, it was about, um –

Olivia: There’s a lot of, like, vari- ables?

Kathy: Variables, yes.

Olivia: Variables can an impact the, uh -

Kathy: Indeed, that’s exactly what you said, and you said perhaps the feedback that the fighter pilots get is only a small part of the [Olivia: Yeah] and, yeah - you turned out to be right, actually. So, um, so the critical thinking course has improved – it’s changed your thinking, by improving your confidence.

Olivia: Yeah.

1. Kathy: OK. Any other ways I which the course has, um, changed how you feel about yourself as a critical thinker?

Olivia: I’m not sure the critical thinker part [Kathy: OK] but we have a question about the Norwegian, they think about the climate change [Kathy: Yes. Yeah]. And, I think about my life. I’m doing the same thing! As they do. [Kathy: OK. Tell me about that]. Uh, it’s not about the climate change [Kathy: No], because I don’t really care about the climate change [Kathy: OK] and getting the benefit from how China deal with the climate change [Kathy: OK]. So, I don’t really care, and the – I think those people who suffer from the climate change live really far away from me [Kathy: OK] so [pause]

Kathy: Well, we’ll come back to climate change later, but you said something about you are like the Norwegian people.

Olivia: Oh! Yeah

Kathy: But not climate change [Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah] some other reason. OK, so tell me about that.

Olivia: I’m not a vegetarian. I love chicken, pork, beef, but I can’t kill, like chicken, I just – never think about it [Kathy: Yeah]. That makes me feel better.

Kathy: If you don’t think about it, you feel better?

Olivia: Yeah, yeah! And that class, I asked you, they, like blind their self, are they, like, mentally health? [Laughs]

Kathy: You talked about mental health –

Olivia Yeah! ‘Cos, they are like tricking, no, not tricking, hypothetic? Hypothetic –

Kathy: Hypocritical.

Olivia: Hypocritical [Kathy: Yeah]. So, there must be a reality, and what they deal with the thinking in their brain, so I’m thinking, is there anything might cause their mentally unhealthy [Kathy: Mmmm]. But, I’m doing the same thing, like, all the time.

Kathy: I think there’s, there’s a number of quotes about how they, they, they said themselves, the people in that study, the Norwegian people, they said we um, something like um, we live in a different reality [Olivia: Yeah], we think in parallel [Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah], we think one thing but we live another way, so it’s this idea of, um, sometimes people call it “doublethink”, or another term is “cognitive dissonance”, and it means the same thing. It means, em, you know, trying to believe two things at once, or, knowing the truth and just, um, not knowing it [Olivia: Yeah], choosing not to know something that you actually do know. So that’s very interesting, so you felt you were doing the same thing with your food choices. [Olivia sighs heavily]. But now you’re aware of that.

Olivia: Yeah, but still I’m going to eat them [Kathy: Yeah] but, not thinking of killing animal life makes me feel better – not better, it’s, how you say, if I think about it, it’ll make me worse. [Kathy: I see]. So I don’t think about it.

Kathy: You don’t think about it. So, would you say that before the workshops you were not aware that you were doing that.

Olivia: Yeah

Kathy: Yeah. OK. So that’s the kind of thing I mean. [Olivia laughs]. You’re more self-aware now [Olivia: Yeah!], because of the workshops. Anything else? About the way your thinking might have changed?

Olivia: Yes, there’s one more, there’s one more thing, let me think. Oh! The bystander effect.

Kathy: Yes.

Olivia: I survived from an earthquake [Kathy: Oh, wow!] in 2008, that’s a very large earthquake and a lot of people died [Kathy: Yeah. Yeah, I’m sorry]. But when the earthquake happened, I was sitting in the class, in the classroom, I was doing, how to say, the one before primary school and high school, that’s, uh-

Kathy: The one between primary school and high school? Before primary school? Kindergarten?

Olivia: No, no, no, before high school.

Kathy: Oh, well, it depends, what – the Americans say junior high

Olivia: Yeah, junior high

Kathy: How old were you?

Olivia: Oh, my God, I forgot. Uh-

Kathy: Teenager?

Olivia: Uh, fourteen, fourteen. [Kathy: Yeah]. Uh, and when the earthquake happen, we can see the things shaking, and we have a construction beside our school, and the [unclear: earth?] is shaking very heavy – and nobody move in our classroom. And, after, like, I have to say, ten seconds? And someone shout, like, let’s run out of the classroom. So that’s when we ran. [Kathy: Yeah]. So I think that’s the bystander effect, ‘cos at that moment my brain just go blank, I’ve no idea what’s happened [Kathy: Yeah]. Even the all these evidence show there’s the earthquake, but the earthquake noun didn’t pop up in my brain.

Kathy: Did you look around you to see what other people were doing?

Olivia: Yeah. I did!

Kathy: And what were they doing?

Olivia: We just look at each other.

Kathy: Yes. So that’s the bystander effect. [Olivia: Yeah!] And then somebody says, “Get out!” and then you go.

Olivia: And that’s the one who always do the different things as us. [Kathy: Ah! (Laughs)]. Really! ‘Cos I’ve been a good girl for all my li- before high school, I have to say, before high school I’m a very good girl, in the, how you say, traditional way? [Kathy: Yes] [Olivia sighs] And we have a boy who transferred from the other school. He did the things completely different to us, we don’t play, like, games [unclear: he did], we don’t – swear, swore, swear? [Kathy: Swear, yes, bad words. He does!] [Olivia laughs] Yes! [Kathy: Yeah]. And, when the earthquake happen, he’s the one who shout, let’s run, and we followed him. And I think that’s the moment I feel like, when you are a good student, don’t mean you are a good person in the society. He’s a bad student [Kathy laughs]. He’s not good at, like, maths, or Chinese, or anything else, but –

Kathy: But that wasn’t my workshops that made you change. That was the earthquake.

Olivia: No, but I didn’t think about it. [Kathy: Oh! OK] Before. That’s when you said the bystander [Kathy: effect] effect [Kathy: Yeah] on our fire alarm test thing? [Kathy: Yeah]. That’s how I think - you asked us, is there anything, like, in your life connected to those four, five effects [Kathy: Yes] and I think it through, that’s how the earthquake come up in my mind.

Kathy: Yes. So it made you – made sense of it, it made you think about –

Olivia: Yeah, I never thought about it. I just - I always make fun of it, like, “oh yes, we were so stupid”, like, never think about it, but I never think about the bystander effect, we don’t believe our instinct, or we, oh, we – is that why we fall for what the authority said? ‘Cos we don’t believe –

Kathy: Um, well, you say you don’t believe your instinct, but one of your instincts, the psychologists would say that one of your instincts is to look around and see what other people are doing.

Olivia: Oh, that’s our instinct?

Kathy: That is – one instinct is to run because you see evidence of danger, that’s one instinct, but another instinct is to see what everyone else is doing, so what we were doing with that workshop about Risk and Probability, is to show that our human nature and our human instincts sometimes stop us from being logical. [Olivia: Ahh!] So it’s kind of another instinct to look around and see what everyone else is doing, so both of these instincts were kind of fighting inside you at that time, I think. “Oh, earthquake, I feel numb because I don’t know what to do and I’m scared, but no-one else is moving” [Olivia: Ohh!]. I don’t know - your question about, does that make us, does that make us obey authority, well, um, the reason we have stewards, like um – Were you here when we had the fire alarm and we had to leave?

Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kathy: So remember there was a steward teacher in a yellow jacket, and she said, “Get out! Put your mobile phone down! Get out!” [Olivia: Yep] So, um, the research that was shown by that clip, they also said that if an authority figure tells you to leave [Olivia: You will leave], you will leave. [Olivia: Yeah] Yeah. So it is, so it is connected. [Olivia: Oh!] Interesting! [Both laugh].

FROM OLIVIA’S LATER EMAIL (SEE BELOW)

4. Do you think this course has changed how you feel about yourself as a critical thinker, or about your own critical thinking skills?  If so, how and why?

*I don't think I was a critical thinker, but I believe I am capable of being one from now thanks to this course.*

*Firstly, this course rebuilds my confidence by helping me to differentiate critical thinking and debate. Instead of output ideas, critical thinking is a way of analyzing and intaking information. "Framing" and "in-groups" help me understand that people from different backgrounds would think diversely and they might have biases they don't even realize. Even though I can empathize with different groups of people, I realized I'm an individualist and supporting the hierarchical system in the class discussing "Two cultures". Also, quizzes in classes have shown that I'm not weak in thinking logically, which is a crucial critical thinking skill.*

*Secondly, this course offers me a chance to rethink my life experience and identify myself. For example, "individualism" is a term I knew by definition but never put myself in a situation to think whether I'm an individualist or collectivist. Same as "future discounting" even though I'm an economics student. After this course, I realized that I've been passively studying for twenty years without understanding because I never think independently. Applying knowledge from the textbook to real-life examples and analyzing its validity or limitation can be a starter of developing critical thinking skills.*

*Last but not least, this course builds my awareness of some human nature and emotions (such as optimism, risk aversion, availability bias, the bystander effect) that might influence my decision-making process or result in learning with prejudice. Bearing these human nature/factors in mind helps me to be open-minded to ideas that go against my instincts and give these ideas a thorough consideration and analyze.* [Olivia]

1. Kathy: Anyway, you were starting to – Thank you very much for that. The other questions were about climate change, so before, um, climate change [reads from paper], you said, “I hope we can do as much as we can to prevent this issue getting worse. However, considering the situation in my country, China, the priority now is to create more job opportunities and reduce poverty. So sometimes we have to sacrifice some environment and natural resources for economic growth.” [Olivia: Yeah] So that’s what you thought before. [Olivia: Mmhm] So have you changed your mind about that now? Or do you think more or less the same thing?

Olivia: I changed the first sentence. [Kathy: OK the first sentence]. I change my mind for the first sentence, we do as much as we can. [Kathy: OK] Well, we have a class, you talk about the individualism and the collective [Kathy: collectivism], and in the individualism example you choose the Tea Party. Green Party or Tea Party?

Kathy: Tea Party. [Olivia: US] So they’re a political group in the US who are very, very individualistic, yeah.

Olivia: Yeah. I think might belong to this group. No, no, not belong to, like -

Kathy: You’d have to be American to belong to this group! [Olivia laughs] You sympathise with them.

Olivia: Yeah. So, its like, I threw the responsibility of protecting our earth to other group of people, so I don’t have to – because, we already pay our tax, so it’s government’s responsibility to do – good things? Not good things, like – ‘Cos, when we live in the globalism, we have to have the same pace with other countries, even though we don’t even, not it’s not even - people who don’t care about the climate change or the earth at all, they have to do some things to, like, keep the same pace with others – peer pressure?

Kathy: So you’re saying there’s competition from - countries? That don’t care? You have to –

Olivia: No, sorry, let me put it in another way. It’s like, uh – when we have a group people, they think climate change matters [Kathy: yeah], I have to agree with you. I couldn’t say, I don’t care about it [Kathy: Right]. That’s also another issue.

Kathy: That’s peer pressure.

Olivia: And you said there’s something we couldn’t say in a group.

Kathy: You mean, in my workshop?

Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kathy: Yeah. I was talking about, yes, the in-group [Olivia: Yeah], if you’re with your in-group, you cannot – sometimes, there are things it’s difficult to say. [Olivia: Yeah]. In that group. [Olivia: Yeah. So, I think -]. So you’re saying that when you’re with people who care about climate change, you don’t feel you can say, “I don’t care”, you feel you have to agree with them.

Olivia: Yeah. [Kathy: OK] And most of countries they are at the group of, like, argon – argonha – [She can’t think of the English word and starts laughing].

Kathy: It’s late! It’s late! [Olivia, laughing: sorry!] You’re running out of, uh, English!

Olivia: [Thinking] Ohhh. There’s a lot of country join - form? to discuss the climate change. Hagun, hagun –

Kathy: There’s Copenhagen [Olivia: Copenhagen!] There’s several meetings [Olivia: Yeah] I think the last one might have been in Poland, I don’t remember, but anyway –

Olivia: I know American back out [Kathy: yeah, so -] that’s the one I’m talking about. [Kathy: Right]. It’s like – we have to join this group to be a in-group, to be in-group.

Kathy: Oh! I suppose – You could think of that group of countries as being an in-group, I guess.

Olivia: And sometimes you have to be in groups to have your impact over the world, so - For me, personally, climate change – I don’t want my country spend a lot of money on climate change, but if that’s the way to gain, like, trust from other countries, I will say that’s a good idea.

Kathy: How interesting! [Olivia laughs] I never thought of countries being in an in-group, I guess you’re right. So, ah, OK, so you don’t, so, OK. Anything else you’d like to say about any changes to your ideas about climate change? Because we had climate change in a lot – did you come to all the workshops? Which ones -

Olivia: No, I didn’t come to the first and the second.

Kathy: Oh, that’s right. So, three, four and five. And there was quite a lot about – information about climate change in Workshops three, four and five. So, um did any of that information have an effect on your thinking about climate change?

Olivia: I really believe in climate change, but I just don’t [very quietly] care. [Laughs]

Kathy: You don’t care about it. You believe in it [Olivia: Yeah!], so it’s not that you don’t think its happening

Olivia: Yeah, yeah, I know it’s happening, I know the earth will end tragically, like 200 years later, after that.

Kathy: OK. So you see it as a long, a long-term –

Olivia: Or a hundred years. I know we will be suffer from what we did, what we did before or what we do, what we are doing now [Kathy: OK], but, it’s like, I care about nowadays, I don’t care about the future.

Kathy: Do you remember what we called that in Workshop 5?

Olivia: Yeah! I – I [drums her fingers on the table]

Kathy: This is an economics term, actually. You don’t remember it? It’s called future discounting.

Olivia: Yeah! Future discounting! [Laughs]

FROM THE EMAIL (SEE BELOW)

5. What did you think or feel about climate change before starting the course?   Has this changed since then, if so, how and why?

*I still stand for my previous answers. But the way of thinking this issue changed. Before this class, I answered "I hope we can do as much as we can to prevent climate change getting worse" with instinct which I realized is hypocritical. I knew that is the "Right" way of answering environmental questions. But now I see it as an economic and political issue, and I think it is a good idea to investing money to protect the environment as an exchange for global reputation and convenience.* [Olivia]

1. Kathy: OK! Um, so is there anything else you want to say about the course?

Olivia: Just a second. Oh, uh [pause] I still don’t know what critical thinking is. [Both laugh] When you ask me before, uh, what’s your definition for critical thinking now, I don’t know. I still don’t know. But your course has changed my thinking a lot. The first thing is the framing. [Kathy: Yeah]. I never think things in that way. Although we have essays, we have to discuss a question in different aspects, I never see it like framing, because I’m just like, I need evidence from politics side, and I need evidence from economics side. But I never think framing can change our way of dealing issues. [Kathy: Yeah]. Like - I think that must be something to do with don’t participate in politics in China, cos we never thought about, I never thought about the policies they made, they have to evaluate the risks, and all this sacrifice they have to make for the policy. But now I’m thinking, some policies they are really bad like [whispers] One Child policy. [Kathy: OK] [Olivia laughs].

Kathy: Don’t worry, no one is going to hear [Olivia laughs]. It’s all confidential! And they gave that up anyway, didn’t they?

Olivia: Sorry?

Kathy: The One Child policy is being relaxed.

Olivia: I’m the benefi – ? [struggles to find word]

Kathy: The beneficiary

Olivia: The beneficiary of that, ‘cos we value – in old time, they still value the boy more than girls. But when the One Child policy come, I’m the only one they can have, so they have to -

Kathy: Love you!

Olivia: Yup! [Laughs] they don’t have choice! But they have to put all this, all their, like, resources on me, [Kathy: Yeah]. If I was born, like thirty years ago, I couldn’t go to college at all, and I will only have the choice to come here. But the One Child policy has solved China’s problems [whispers: in one way] although we had bad effects, but that’s what you have to sacrifice, when you solving a problem you can make a – oh! You should, I should say that! [Clears throat, pause]. We don’t have a, like, perfect solution for one issue. We just have many good solutions, and we have to pick one, from that. That’s how, like, different parties, they saw the issues, like if you think it’s a climate thing, you will do it that way. An if you think it’s an economic thing, you will do it that way.

Kathy: Yeah, exactly. I mean, you talked about politics, and you know there’s an election coming up.

Olivia: Yeah. 20 December?

Kathy: 12th of December [Olivia: 12th of December]. It’s very unusual for it to be in the winter, but anyway. So you might want to consider, I don’t know if you just turn off the TV when the election -

Olivia: I don’t have a TV!

Kathy: OK. Anyway. But if you notice, um, in the newspapers or media or whatever, the radio, the politicians are all talking about the same issues, but framing them differently. [Olivia: Yeah!] For example, I’ll give you an example, this might be useful for you to observe, immigration [Olivia: Mmhm], so you can frame it as, “oh, it’s a really good thing for the country, because we need, um, nurses and doctors, for example, from overseas, we don’t have enough”. Or, it’s – “immigration’s a problem because we have too many people here, and they’re all using our services, and we don’t have enough resources to look after everyone”. So it’s the same issue, framed in different ways. And you might notice that, if you’re interested, I don’t know if you are. You might notice that with the policies are being kind of advertised and pushed in the run-up to this election. So – this is going off topic a little. It might – as you come from a country that has a very different political system, it might be interesting for you just to watch TV occasionally on your laptop, you know you can watch it online, just to see what kinds of issues are being talked about, how they’re being framed. You know sometimes -

Olivia: But I saw a drama, its not a drama, it’s drama named “Newsroom”, it’s from America, and it’s talking about journalism. It’s like they using the election, or the [drums fingers] po, pay – propaganda?

Kathy: Yeah. Propaganda is a word.

Olivia: OK. That’s the – there’s another one. Paging, patient, pay – [sighs] Campaign! [Kathy: Right] Campaign. They are aiming at a specific group of people [Kathy: Yes]. They know what they believe, they know what they want to hear [Kathy: Yeah]. So they talk what they want to hear [Kathy: Exactly. Exactly] to win their votes. So sometimes it’s not they really believe that, it’s not the politicians they really believe that, but they are – try to get the most votes.

Kathy: Yes, that’s framing, again. [Olivia: Yeah] You know, framing things according to your audience.

Olivia: But, I have one question [Kathy: Yes?] When sometimes people are – arrogant? They don’t listen to other people’s – you know, that’s *really* wrong! And you want to tell them what – it’s not what’s correct, but there’s another side of the story you want to show them, but they don’t listen, they really don’t listen. Is there any solution to that?

Kathy: Ah! [Sighs] Um, ye- well, I would say that sometimes you can’t get people to listen. [Olivia laughs]. Um, and maybe learn not to be like them, because we talked about framing things in different ways, and I also talked about – and culture. I talked about how people have different perspectives because of their frames or where they come from or their culture, and so we should be willing to look at things from different perspectives. [Olivia: Yeah]. So I guess there’s nothing you can do about someone who just won’t do that, except learn not to be that person, you know? [Olivia: Yes] I think what I was trying to get across, the message I was trying to get across in the one about framing and the one about culture is, we really should try and understand other people’s perspective and listen to other people. Listening’s really important.

Olivia: Yeah, that’s what I think I am doing all the time [Kathy: That’s great], but it bothers me.

Kathy: Bothers you - ?

Olivia: Yeah! ‘Cos, when I have empathies at all the stories, even we have some story like very brutal, I can understand, like the criminals.

Kathy: Oh, yeah, but that’s not exactly listening to a point of view, is it?

Olivia: I can [unclear – sort? thought?] of a way to understand why they are doing this [Kathy: Yeah].

Kathy: But that’s not an argument. I was talking about people’s points of view [Olivia: Oh, OK]. People’s arguments. So, like, I was giving the example of the Americans who think that it’s their right to have guns, “don’t take my gun away from me, I must have a gun”, [Olivia: Yeah!] and to begin with, it’s easy to think, that person’s crazy, but if you unders- You don’t have to agree with them, but if you understand that it’s because they come from an individualistic culture, and their culture is, look after yourself, look after your family, don’t leave it to the government, it’s your job to do that, then I kind of get where they’re coming from, I don’t think they’re bad people any more [Olivia: Yeah] . So that’s, that’s what I mean. It’s understanding other views, rather than -

Olivia: Yeah, that’s my question. That’s what bothers me. I can understand the both sides, even the third party, or the fourth party. [Kathy: OK, great] I can understand all, why are they doing this. So, I don’t have a conclusion!

Kathy: Yes, but remember what we said – oh, you missed the first one. Perhaps you should go back to the, um – all the materials are available for the workshops you missed. So if you go back to Workshop 1, we looked at this very question. So we looked – we had, um, it was a quiz about climate change, and each – it was a multiple choice, or a True/False answer, quiz, and each of – imagine there’s a question with three answers, each answer had some evidence to back it up. So you could find a source that agreed with A, agreed with B and agreed with C. So the question is “But, what’s the right answer?” And the answer is, you need to look at the sources, and see whether you trust the sources. Right? So if you have four or five points of view, and you’re confused because you don’t know which one is right, look at the source, look at the person who’s saying this, or the organisation who’s saying this, or look at the evidence they’ve got. Does that make sense?

Olivia: Yes, it makes sense, but I’m just like, I’m not a decision maker [Kathy: Yeah]. I fall for all those -

Kathy: Yeah, but that’s why you should have a look at the stuff for Workshop 1 because what you need – you need to judge, you need to judge the source. I’ll give you an example. So, um, one of the questions was, something like, how much will the temperature rise if we don’t do anything, if we don’t change anything we do [Olivia: Mm-hm]. Um, it won’t rise at all, it’ll rise by two degrees, it’ll rise by four degrees, or something like that [Olivia: OK]. And the source that said, it’s not going to change you don’t have to worry, nothing bad will happen, that source was the Heartlands Institute. That sounds really good, the Heartlands Institute, “Institute” sounds really reliable, but if you look at them closely, you’ll find they’re funded by the oil industry.

Olivia: Oh, OK.

Kathy: OK. Now I don’t trust them, because of course they’re going to say there’s no problem, because the oil industry’s giving them money, and the oil industry wants to carry on selling oil. So it’s not so reliable. OK. But the source that says it’s four degrees, that was the UN, and their panel of scientists. OK, so the UN, that’s more trustworthy, they’re scientists, OK, we can maybe believe what they say. So it’s a question of, um, just deciding who is more trustworthy.

Olivia: OK. So it’s something to do with, how to say, information bias? Confirmation bias.

Kathy: Well, confirmation bias is about, “I want to believe this, I’m only going to look for evidence [Olivia: Ah! OK] that supports that. So an example might be, for example, you want to believe, that, um I don’t know -

Olivia: Oh! I know. If you want to believe China is bad, you won’t listen to all these other press said China is doing a good thing. [Kathy: Yeah!] Something like that?

Kathy: Or, the other way ‘round! Yes, indeed, exactly. So, that’s confirmation bias. But really, you should just, you should look at all the evidence, and check the sources. So, um, you decide – ideally, [sighs] if you were a perfect human being [Olivia laughs], a perfect critical thinker, you would not make up your mind until you had looked at the evidence, and you’d made sure that evidence comes from a reliable source. And the evidence that comes from sources which are going to be biased, like, um, I don’t know, for example, the Chinese government is going to say good things about China [Olivia: Mm-hm], maybe you should look at other sources for example [Olivia: Mm-hm]. Yeah.

Olivia: OK. I know what, what your meaning, now. But [sighs, pause]. What should we do if we don’t have the sufficient resources, informations, I mean.

Kathy: Well, ideally -

Olivia: ‘Cos we, we – there must be something new about the topic that comes up. Like, if we are, like, examining the climate change, there will be a new newspaper, new research, new report, will come up [Kathy: Yeah] and we will never have the, how you say, enough information, for ever.

Kathy: Well, uh, we’ve got quite a lot of information already, and you can base your opinion on the information you’re got already. But it’s a good point, because one of the things I said at the end of the confirmation bias one, which you missed, number two, I think it was the end of that one, is you have to keep your mind a bit open [Olivia: Yeah]. So you decide, well, the evidence so far says, climate change is real, and it’s caused by human beings, OK, for example, but there might always be new information, so you must be ready to change your mind. So the problem comes when people absolutely will not change their mind, so it doesn’t matter what you tell them, it doesn’t matter what new evidence comes. So being fixed all the time is bad. And even scientists really believe this. So they, you know, if you’re a good scientist, you’ll always be ready to consider new evidence, and ready to change your mind. And sometimes that can be quite difficult for people. Because maybe they’ve built a career, or something [Olivia: Yeah], or they’ve built their identity on believing this, and they feel comfortable.

Olivia: They will lose a lot if they change their mind.

Kathy: Exactly. Exactly. Like I said in a previous workshop, sometimes change is painful, and sometimes critical thinking is painful. But ideally, you would keep an open – even if you decide, “so far I think this”, you’d be able to keep your mind open, and accept new information and not just reject it, because it doesn’t fit with what I know already.

Olivia: Is criticial think- uh, a good critical thinker is like, try as hard as much to make sure you’re like, psychologically thing don’t affect your, like, don’t affect you, how you see all this evidence? Like that, right?

Kathy: Psychology, what do you mean? [Olivia: unclear]. Well, I tell you what I think you mean. So, there are various, uh, human factors [Olivia: Yeah! The human nature of the - ] that affect your thinking. So, um, for example, wanting to be in the in-group. You don’t want to be the person that says the thing that’s different. Your friend who says, “There’s an earthquake. Leave!”, he didn’t seem to care about that. [Olivia: Yeah] yeah so, wanting to just think the same as everyone else, that’s one factor, other factors are, um, you’re wanting to keep your own belief because that’s your identity .

Olivia: Yeah! That’s what’s the best for you. It’s the way keep – don’t change is the best way for you.

Kathy: It’s comfortable, it’s not always the best way. The comfortable way [Olivia: comfortable, OK]. But sometimes it’s not the best. Other reasons for not believing what you don’t want to believe, um, ah, emotion can get in the way [Olivia: Yeah, yeah, yeah] so, um, optimism, we had something about how people don’t judge probability very well because they’re optimistic, they think things are going to be better than the evidence suggests. There’s all sorts of factors that make us human, so not necessarily bad things, but they affect our judgement, or they affect our thinking. And it’s good to be aware of them. [Olivia: Yeah.] The way you say you’re now aware of the bystander effect, and you’re aware perhaps of other things that are affecting your thinking. [Olivia: Oh!] So I think for me, I think you asked earlier on, “I still don’t know what critical thinking is”. I think it depends who you ask [Olivia laughs]. There’s lots of definitions of critical thinking, but I think for me, the most important thing is, be aware of yourself. [Olivia: OK]. So, what factors are affecting *my* thinking

Olivia: OK. Ohhh! [Claps hands]. Thank you!

Kathy: So, I hope you’re happy with that.

Olivia: Yes! Yes!

**6. Is there anything else you would like to say about this course? added above to the interview text.**

*The content of this course has introduced me to an unfamiliar world which was painful at the beginning since so much confusion stuck in the head that needs to clear up. But I can see the benefits of practicing critical thinking skills. I would really appreciate more critical thinking related courses as I find this skill is significant for not just academic study but also in life.* [Olivia].

Kathy: I feel I should let you go now [interview ends. Thanks are exchanged.]

The following is an email Olivia sent to me a two days after the interview: The relevant bits are added above to the interview text.

Dear Kathy,

Thank you for being patient with me on Monday's interview, I'm sorry to find some of my answers digress from the topic of discussing Critical Thinking. So I go through course materials and notes again and reorganized my answer to your questions below. I hope it can help your studies because this course is really interesting and beneficial. If there's anything I don't express clearly, please email me and I would love to provide explanations to it.

1. Before starting the course, what did you think critical thinking meant?  What did you think a good critical thinker was like, or did?

Being critical of what's been told, don't jump to conclusions easily. Same as in the interview.

2. Have you changed your mind about this?  If so, how and why? added above to the interview text.

Yes, before this course I only knew the general idea of thinking critically. Now I understand more in details that a good critical thinker is someone who doesn't just passively take what's been told, but actively analyses the information and think independently to have a conclusion of agreeing or disagreeing.

3. What did you think of your own critical thinking before starting the course?

Not a critical thinker.

4. Do you think this course has changed how you feel about yourself as a critical thinker, or about your own critical thinking skills?  If so, how and why? added above to the interview text.

I don't think I was a critical thinker, but I believe I am capable of being one from now thanks to this course.

Firstly, this course rebuilds my confidence by helping me to differentiate critical thinking and debate. Instead of output ideas, critical thinking is a way of analyzing and intaking information. "Framing" and "in-groups" help me understand that people from different backgrounds would think diversely and they might have biases they don't even realize. Even though I can empathize with different groups of people, I realized I'm an individualist and supporting the hierarchical system in the class discussing "Two cultures". Also, quizzes in classes have shown that I'm not weak in thinking logically, which is a crucial critical thinking skill.

Secondly, this course offers me a chance to rethink my life experience and identify myself. For example, "individualism" is a term I knew by definition but never put myself in a situation to think whether I'm an individualist or collectivist. Same as "future discounting" even though I'm an economics student. After this course, I realized that I've been passively studying for twenty years without understanding because I never think independently. Applying knowledge from the textbook to real-life examples and analyzing its validity or limitation can be a starter of developing critical thinking skills.

Last but not least, this course builds my awareness of some human nature and emotions (such as optimism, risk aversion, availability bias, the bystander effect) that might influence my decision-making process or result in learning with prejudice. Bearing these human nature/factors in mind helps me to be open-minded to ideas that go against my instincts and give these ideas a thorough consideration and analyze.

5. What did you think or feel about climate change before starting the course?   Has this changed since then, if so, how and why? added above to the interview text.

I still stand for my previous answers. But the way of thinking this issue changed. Before this class, I answered "I hope we can do as much as we can to prevent climate change getting worse" with instinct which I realized is hypocritical. I knew that is the "Right" way of answering environmental questions. But now I see it as an economic and political issue, and I think it is a good idea to investing money to protect the environment as an exchange for global reputation and convenience.

6. Is there anything else you would like to say about this course? added above to the interview text.

The content of this course has introduced me to an unfamiliar world which was painful at the beginning since so much confusion stuck in the head that needs to clear up. But I can see the benefits of practicing critical thinking skills. I would really appreciate more critical thinking related courses as I find this skill is significant for not just academic study but also in life.

Best wishes,

Olivia