

Participant P2

School Experience: Diverse public school (with a Chinese student community)

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and tell me when you came to the United States?

Response:

My name is Ruilu, and I am 17 years old. I am currently attending a high school in the United States and will begin twelfth grade after the summer. I moved to the United States in the summer of 2023 and have now lived here for about three years.

2. What was the biggest challenge when you first arrived in the United States?

Response:

The biggest challenges were language and cultural differences. I was unfamiliar with many everyday English words and expressions, so I often could not understand what people were saying. Besides language, I also had to adapt to a new living environment and deal with practical issues such as housing.

3. Can you describe your experience learning English?

Response:

Most of my English learning came through school rather than independent study. Before coming to the United States, I learned English through regular classes in China. After arriving, I continued taking English and writing courses at school. Occasionally, I would memorize unfamiliar vocabulary that I came across online, but I did not spend much additional time studying English outside of class.

4. Do you remember a moment when language made you feel excluded, embarrassed, or misunderstood?

Response:

There were many moments like this, but the experience that stands out the most happened during my tenth-grade chemistry class. Chemistry was already a difficult subject, and it also required strong English skills. I struggled to understand both the lessons and the assignments. We often worked in groups, and all of my group members were American students who already knew each other well. I

could not follow their conversations or join in. Even when I tried to participate, they usually ignored me, which made me feel embarrassed and isolated. Throughout the entire school year, I felt like I was invisible in that class. My group members rarely acknowledged me, and even the teacher seldom called on me to answer questions. The feeling of being excluded lasted for a long time rather than being a single moment.

5. Do you feel like the same person when speaking Chinese and English? Why or why not?

Response:

Deep down, I believe I am still the same person, but I behave very differently depending on the language I speak. When I speak Chinese, I can express myself freely, enjoy conversations, make jokes, and confidently share my opinions. When I speak English, however, I rarely talk at school. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I prefer to stay silent. If someone speaks to me in English, I usually respond quietly with only a few words. From other people's perspective, I almost seem like a completely different person.

6. Has moving to the United States changed the way you think about being Chinese?

Response:

Living in the United States has actually strengthened my Chinese identity. When I lived in China, being Chinese felt ordinary and I rarely thought about it. After moving to the United States, I became much more aware of my identity as a Chinese person. At the same time, I also realized that being Chinese can sometimes bring practical challenges, such as difficulties related to education or future employment. Because of this, my understanding of being Chinese has become more complex.

7. When do you feel most Chinese? Can you give an example?

Response:

I feel most Chinese whenever I encounter people, places, or events related to China. For example, when I am one of only a few Chinese students in a classroom, when I attend Chinese class, or when people talk about China. Seeing the Chinese flag or hearing the national anthem also makes me strongly aware of my Chinese identity.

8. When do you feel most American? Can you give an example?

Response:

I feel somewhat American when I notice that my daily habits have gradually changed because of living in the United States. For example, I have become used to drinking cold water, and I often share my everyday life in America on Chinese social media. At those moments, I realize that my lifestyle has become similar to that of many international students and immigrants living in the United States.

9. Have you ever felt caught between two cultures? Can you tell me about that experience?

Response:

Yes, I feel this very strongly. In the United States, I find it difficult to become part of local American social circles. Most of my friends are still Chinese, and I rarely build close friendships with American classmates. At the same time, I have gradually become disconnected from life in China. When I see updates from friends back home, I realize that many things have changed, including new places, trends, and daily experiences that I no longer know much about. It has become increasingly difficult to relate to conversations with friends in China. Overall, I feel that I do not completely belong to either society.

10. If you could describe your identity in one sentence, what would that sentence be?

Response:

I am a Chinese international student studying in the United States.

"Throughout the entire year, I felt like a transparent person in that classroom."

Participant P2

学校经历: Diverse public school (有中国学生)

1. 请简单介绍一下自己, 以及你是什么时候来到美国的?

回答:

我叫瑞露, 今年17岁, 目前在美国一所高中就读, 暑假结束后将升入十二年级。我是在2023年暑假来到美国的, 到现在已经在美国生活了大约三年。

2. 刚来到美国时, 你遇到的最大挑战是什么?

回答:

刚来到美国时, 最大的挑战首先是语言, 其次是文化差异。很多美国日常生活中常用的词汇我都不熟悉, 经常听不懂别人说的话。除此之外, 我还需要适应新的生活环境, 处理住宿等各种生活上的问题。

3. 你能描述一下自己学习英语的经历吗?

回答:

我的英语学习主要跟着学校课程进行, 并没有花很多额外时间专门学习英语。在国内时, 我就是正常上学校的英语课; 来到美国之后, 也继续学习学校安排的英语和写作课程。平时偶尔刷手机时遇到不会的单词会顺手记下来, 但整体来说没有主动进行系统性的英语学习。

4. 你是否记得某个因为语言而感到被排斥、尴尬或被误解的时刻?

回答:

这样的经历其实很多, 很难只举一个例子。印象最深的是十年级的化学课。化学本身就比较难, 对英语能力要求也很高, 我当时既听不懂老师讲课, 也很难理解题目内容。化学课经常需要分组做实验, 而我的组员都是美国本地学生, 他们彼此很熟悉, 我既听不懂他们聊天, 也插不上话。偶尔主动参与, 他们也基本不会回应我, 让我觉得十分尴尬。我能明显感受到自己被孤立, 整整一年都像一个“透明人”, 不仅组员很少理我, 老师也几乎不会主动叫我回答问题。这种被忽视、被排斥的感觉持续了很长时间。

5. 当你说中文和说英文时, 你觉得自己是同一个人吗? 为什么?

回答：

我觉得内心还是同一个人，但表现出来的状态完全不同。说中文的时候，我可以很自然地表达自己的想法，喜欢聊天，也会主动开玩笑、说服别人，整体非常自信。但说英文的时候，我几乎不会主动开口，在学校大多数时间都保持沉默，只有和华人朋友聊天时才会偶尔说几句英文。如果别人主动用英文和我说话，我通常反应比较慢，只会简单回答几句。在别人看来，说中文和说英文时的我几乎像两个不同的人。

6. 来到美国以后，你对于“中国人身份”的理解有发生变化吗？

回答：

来到美国以后，我对中国人身份的认同反而变得更强烈了。在中国的时候，我只是觉得自己是中国人，没有特别多的感受；来到美国之后，我更加明确地意识到自己就是中国人。同时，我也开始意识到，中国人的身份有时会带来一些现实困难，例如未来升学、就业等方面可能会受到一定影响。因此，我觉得中国人身份既意味着认同，也意味着需要面对更多挑战。

7. 在什么情况下你最能感受到自己是中国人？能举个例子吗？

回答：

当我身边只有一两个能够说中文的华人同学时，我会特别意识到自己的中国人身份。此外，上中文课、看到与中国有关的事物、别人提到中国，或者看到国旗、听到国歌时，我都会强烈感受到自己是中国人。总的来说，只要接触到与中国有关的人、事或物，我都会更加意识到自己的身份。

8. 在什么情况下你最能感受到自己像美国人？能举个例子吗？

回答：

当我发现自己的生活习惯慢慢受到美国环境影响时，我会觉得自己有一点点像美国人。例如，我现在已经习惯喝凉水，也会在国内社交平台分享自己在美国的生活。当我分享这些美国日常的时候，我会觉得自己的生活状态越来越像其他留学生或长期生活在美国的人。

9. 你有没有感到自己夹在两种文化之间？可以分享一个相关经历吗？

回答：

这种感觉非常强烈。在美国，我很难真正融入本地学生的朋友圈，到现在为止，我的大多数朋友仍然都是华人，平时主要用中文交流，很少和美国同学建立深入的友谊。与此同时，我国内的生活也逐渐脱节。每次看到国内朋友分享新的校园生活、城市变化或者新的流行事物，

我都会发现自己已经不了解这些内容,聊天时也越来越难找到共同话题。现在的我既很难完全融入美国社会,也越来越难回到以前熟悉的国内生活。

10. 如果让你用一句话描述自己的身份认同,你会怎么说?

回答:

我是一名在美国留学的中国留学生。