

# Participant P8

**School Experience:** Public high school in a small conservative town with no other Asian students (the only Asian student in the school)

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

### Response:

I moved to the United States after completing the eighth grade in China and entered ninth grade here. I currently live in a small town in a conservative state and am now in twelfth grade. I have been living in the United States for several years.

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

### Response:

The biggest challenges were language and making friends. Although I had studied English since I was very young, I had never used it in a real English-speaking environment. My school did not have any other Asian students, and I was the only Asian student there. This made me feel a great deal of pressure. I was afraid to speak English because I often could not understand what people were saying and had to ask them to repeat themselves several times. The strong Southern accent and fast pace of conversation made communication even more difficult. Whenever I tried to speak English, I became so nervous that I often stuttered.

## 3. Can you describe your experience learning English?

### Response:

I began learning English in kindergarten. My mother taught me English at home, and I also took classes with native English-speaking teachers. While attending public school in Shanghai, I consistently performed very well in English. However, after moving to the United States, I realized that doing well in written English did not necessarily mean I could communicate confidently in real-life conversations. I gradually improved through everyday interactions in an English-speaking environment.

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

**Response:**

Shortly after I arrived, several Hispanic classmates made stereotypical and offensive comments about Chinese people, such as saying that Chinese people eat dogs. I understood what they meant, but I did not know how to defend myself in English, which made me feel powerless. Besides that, I often felt excluded because my English was not strong enough to start conversations, and very few classmates approached me first. For nearly two or three months, I had almost no friends at school.

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

**Response:**

No, I do not. When I speak Chinese, I can naturally understand internet slang, jokes, and popular culture, and I feel completely comfortable talking with friends from China. When I speak English, however, I become nervous and often stutter. Even after my English improved, I still found it difficult to express genuine emotions in the same way I could in Chinese. As a result, I always felt a certain distance between myself and my American classmates.

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

**Response:**

Yes, very much. When I lived in Shanghai, I rarely thought about my identity as a Chinese person because everyone around me shared the same cultural background. After moving to the United States, I encountered many stereotypes about Chinese people, especially during my first year. Since I was the only Asian student in my school, I often felt like an unofficial representative of Chinese culture. Many classmates were curious about China and constantly asked me questions. This experience made me much more aware of my Chinese identity.

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

**Response:**

Almost all the time. My appearance immediately identifies me as Chinese because I am the only Asian student in the school. Whenever China is mentioned in class, teachers often ask for my opinions or experiences. I also frequently encounter stereotypes, such as the assumption that all Chinese students are naturally good at mathematics, even though math is not my strongest subject. These experiences constantly remind me that I am Chinese.

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

**Response:**

I feel most American when I talk with my old friends in China. They spend most of their time discussing the high school entrance examination, the college entrance examination, and life in Chinese schools, while my experiences are completely different. We gradually have fewer shared topics, and I realize that my daily life has become much closer to that of students in the United States.

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

**Response:**

Yes, very strongly. My closest friends in China have gradually developed new friendships and new lives without me. We no longer share the same daily experiences, and I often cannot relate to conversations about Chinese schools, celebrities, or popular culture. At the same time, I also struggle to understand American slang, humor, and cultural references. Because of this, I often feel caught between two cultures without fully belonging to either one.

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

**Response:**

I am the only Chinese girl—and the only Asian student—at my school. As lonely as that sounds, it is the most accurate description of who I am.

# Participant P8

**School Experience:** Rural public high school in a conservative state with no other Asian students (the only Asian student in the school)

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:

我是在国内读完初二之后来到美国, 直接进入九年级学习。目前我生活在美国一个红州的小镇, 现在已经升入十二年级, 在美国生活了几年。

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, 我遇到的最大挑战是语言和交朋友。虽然我从小学习英语, 但以前从来没有真正使用英语进行日常交流。我所在的学校没有任何亚洲学生, 我是全校唯一的亚裔学生, 这让我感到很大的压力。刚开始, 我很害怕开口说英语, 经常听不懂别人说的话, 需要别人重复很多遍才能理解。一方面是因为当地人的南部口音比较重, 另一方面是他们说话速度很快。轮到我说英语时, 我还会因为紧张而结巴。

3. 你能描述一下自己学习英语的经历吗?

回答:

我从幼儿园开始接触英语, 妈妈也一直教我英语, 还上过外教课。在上海读公立学校时, 我的英语成绩一直很好。但是来到美国之后, 我发现书面成绩并不代表能够顺利进行真实的英语交流。真正进入英语环境之后, 我才开始慢慢适应真实的口语交流。

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:

刚到美国时, 一些拉美裔同学曾对我说过一些关于中国人的刻板印象, 例如“中国人吃狗”等带有歧视性的言论。我大概能够听懂他们的意思, 却不知道应该怎样反驳, 只觉得非常无助。除此之外, 由于英语不好, 我很难主动和美国同学交流, 也很少有人主动和我说话。有两三个月的时间, 我几乎没有任何朋友。

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：

我觉得完全不是同一个人。说中文的时候，我能够自然地使用网络流行语、笑话，也能和国内朋友轻松聊天。但说英文的时候，我总会紧张、结巴，即使后来英语有所进步，也很难像说中文一样投入真实的情感，因此我和美国同学始终保持着一定距离。

## 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：

有，而且变化很大。在上海生活时，我从来没有认真思考过自己的中国人身份，因为身边都是中国人。来到美国之后，由于我是学校唯一的亚洲学生，我经常面对各种关于中国的刻板印象，也经常被同学问各种关于中国文化的问题。我感觉自己好像成为了中国文化的“代表”，这种经历让我更加深刻地意识到自己的中国人身份。

## 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：

几乎每时每刻都会有这种感觉。因为我的外貌在学校里非常明显，当课堂讨论涉及中国时，老师常常会主动询问我的看法。同学们也经常认为华人数学一定很好，但事实上我的数学成绩并没有特别突出。这些经历都会不断提醒我，自己是一名中国人。

## 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：

当我和国内以前的同学聊天时，我最能感受到自己已经发生了变化。他们每天讨论中考、高考以及国内学校生活，而这些内容我已经越来越陌生，也很难参与讨论。很多只有美国高中生或者国际学生才能理解的经历，他们已经无法理解了。

## 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：

有，而且这种感觉非常强烈。我国内最好的朋友已经有了新的生活和新的朋友，我们之间越来越难分享彼此的日常。我无法参与他们关于国内学校生活、明星和流行文化的话题；与此同时，我也很难理解美国同学之间的俚语和流行文化，因此始终觉得自己夹在两种文化之间，无法真正融入任何一方。

**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:

我是这所学校里唯一的亚洲女生, 也是唯一的中国女生。虽然说起来有点好笑, 但这就是我对自己身份最真实的描述。