

Campus Event Reflection 1

SAHS-GE 2003

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Instructions:

Write a brief (250-word minimum) reflection.

Your personal responses to experience and/or issue:

What details did I notice? What emotions did I feel? How has this experience affected me? What questions do I have about American culture or NYU after attending/witnessing this experience? How is this similar to/different from a comparable experience in my home culture?

“OMG! I think the professor just had eye contact with me. What should I do? Should I go and talk to her? What should I say?”

This is what I thought when I was at an event last week. The event was an Orientation Welcome Mixer. It was held by our department, along with the Department of Psychology and Social Science. I thought it was a good chance to secure some free food so I went, and, unsurprisingly, dived in the ocean of small talk.

It was 3PM. The event was carefully prepared and the food quality was beyond exceptional. I was enjoying some juicy pork buns and a cup of Starbucks' dark roast. And then I saw a group of professors I am familiar with. It's the beginning of the semester and I haven't talked much to professors. I was standing there, chewing, and wondering if I should step up, make a move and join them. Then I saw Professor Ravi and I was pretty sure he saw me, too. Suddenly, my hesitation kicked in. I felt that my brain was crazily trying to pull out some tactics for small talk, such as “Should I stare at people when talking?”, “How to not make weird smiles?”, and “What to do if I don't catch up?”.

With the thoughts that I am strong, I am good, and I am the master of small talkie, I joined the group. Thankfully, the professors were super nice. They didn't

embarrass me at all. Instead, they pretty understood the shyness of international students from East Asia and encouraged me to overcome my inner hesitation. We had a nice, 5-minute chat with topics covering researches, schoolwork, weather, and favorite pets. When I left the group, I was no longer fear of small talks and sudden encounters. I was grateful that I made another progress in my transition from traditional Chinese culture to American culture.

I know that there are many Chinese students who are very shy about talking to people in public space. This is partially because of language barrier, that we are well trained to listen, read, and write but we are not so well in oral English. So often, Chinese students write nice email letters and achieve good grades but are lacking participation in class. I think students from East Asia share same thoughts with me.

Another reason is that International students from East Asia are not familiar with American vernacular. In China, students are taught with very formal traditional written English that might be weird if used in oral communication. It takes time to get used to what American people generally say in daily life and sometimes the process can be bumpy. I am saying this because it took me six months to be able to order food smoothly at McDonald's, without getting staffs rolling eyeballs to me.

So, at end, my little advice to international students from different cultures is to take every chance to learn. Just like studying abroad, getting blended in is another challenge that requires patience, courage, and practice.