

## Identity Project Sample Interview

*This is sample interview by a former student for her 10H Identity Project. Note how she reveals her identity through her future fictional self. Please note that this is edited. The final draft actually included more questions, and pictures and quotes throughout.*

You've seen her. Everywhere. In posters, billboards, television, and maybe, if you are lucky, you've seen her in person. She is the successful businesswoman who is the founder of the "hot vacation spot" empire. This Chinese-born American, or ABC, goes by the title Ms. Jessica Li, or, as her colleagues call her, JessWess, Jesayyyy, or Jessie, who graduated from college only three years ago. Now at 23, you and I want to know, who is this young lass? And how in the world did she create this vast corporation? Is she as brainy as her graduation certificate frames her to be, or is she simply a rich kid with lots of connections from her Papa?

I must say, it is pretty nice to be here in Los Angeles, especially when you're seated in a popular café that even A-listers have trouble booking. But as I wait for Ms. Li, I'm feeling pretty fortunate right now. I'm not going to lie. I only had five hours of sleep before this interview, and the beautiful scenery is making it hard to stay awake. The bright warm, sun has risen above the blue sparkly ocean, and the sea breeze is about to make me take a little nap when Jessica Li casts her five-feet-nine inch shadow over me. I feel her presence immediately and I suddenly bounce awake.

Her tall frame gives me a chill of dominance and power, but her body language and aura speaks to me lightly. The sudden intimidation is immediately overridden by her warm, sincere smile.

J: "You must be my interviewer. [Smiles and giggle.] Sorry for the late notice, but I really could not squeeze you into my afternoon schedule. It's really early, I know, but how about this: drink and eat all you want. My treat." [Smiles.]

Even though she sees my unprofessional exhaustion, she laughs it off with gently sarcasm. She even apologizes for making the interview so early. Now what conceited moneymaker does that? I like her already.

A: "You seem like a morning person. You are wide awake already!"

J: [Laughs] "I try. When every minute can be turned into gold, I try to make the best of my time. Time is precious and you must enjoy every second of it."

At this point, I'm thinking, she is prepared for life. She gives inspirational quotes within two minutes of meeting her. This interview is going to be pretty interesting.

A: "Well, I think we can all see that you spend your time wisely. I mean, look at the empire you've created. That's a masterpiece right there. Everybody has seen you everywhere, but nobody really knows who you are or much about your job. How do you picture yourself and your company in your mind?"

J: "Thanks a lot, but I wouldn't call it an 'empire.' It's still a baby and it's still growing... About my job... Well, basically, I own a couple of 'hot spots,' if you will, around the nation. They range from clubs to restaurants, to sports entertainment, and leisure in general. I also have vacation spots in North and South America that serve as a getaway from reality and a break from life. I think everybody needs some time off to just procrastinate, clear their minds, simply relax. It's a necessity to survive. Lucky for me, I get to plan and create such magical fantasies for people and I think that's fantastic."

A: "Did you see all this success coming your way? Was this your dream?"

J: "There are times that I wake up and think, 'this is surreal,' because I did not see it coming at all. Yes, it was my dream and I worked constantly towards it, but it actually becoming a reality is a whole other story. But I can't complain. [Laughs.] Life is good."

A: "Where do you get your inspiration? What made you make such a risky investment?"

J: "Life in general is a risky business. You just never know. And if you live with boundaries and thick Berlin walls, then you'll never get out of that maze. Living on the safe side and staying behind that wall works for many people, but it does not work for me. I don't want to jump over that wall, I want to knock it down, drill through it. And yes, that might kill me, but staying behind that wall would wreck me even more. I've always been motivated to do the impossible and just push myself. I don't take 'no' for an answer.... And if it's something I truly believe in, I put 100% into it. I've always wanted to help people enjoy their vacations to the fullest. That's why I make sure the hotels, restaurants, and areas fun and filled with high energy... I want people to walk away saying, 'Nothing can top this.'"

Talk about perfect timing. Just as Jessica finishes her thoughts, a tall, dark and handsome European hunk, or everyday LA waiter, sets down our meals. Jessica gives a quick, gentle smile, but surprisingly, without a trace of flirtation. My morning omelet is prepared perfectly with two triangular pieces of toast. Of course, there is no butter on the toast. Jessica's meal, penne a la vodka melted with all the cheeses you can imagine, is topped with Parmesan cheese as well. Note: it's seven o'clock in the morning.

A: "Jessica, do you always eat such big meals early in the morning?"

J: [Laughs.] "Yes, actually. The size of my breakfast is almost the size of my dinner, if not bigger. People hate going out to dinner with me because I'm such a pig! I love to eat."

A: "And you don't feel pressured by LA natives and the fanatical idea to eat minimally to stay thin?"

J: "I guess I'm just lucky. I eat all that I want and it doesn't go anywhere. Maybe because I'm tall. But I know that I need to stop eating so much. Not that I'm going to get fat, but because it's unhealthy. But I don't think I'll ever give up food. If anything, I'll just start to work out. Honestly, I think the whole LA idea of being skinny is just obscured. I mean, how can you say that is perfection when you look like you're going to be carried away by the wind? Skinny is not beautiful. Body confidence is."

A: "Did you always think like this? What were you like when you were younger?"

J: "We were the average family and I was not the spoiled little brat. And was I always confident? Well, of course when I was in elementary school, life was great.... We were so carefree and had not responsibilities....[Laughs.] But as you grow up, life does get hard. I was never rebellious as a kid – I was really mature for my age. I was the 'good girl' with straight A-pluses, and just always worked my hardest. I think I was that way because of my father. He's a spectacular figure in my life. He's so dominant and strict, yet so loving and gentle. He always reminded me that I could be a 'dweller among clouds.'" He made me realize that the sky is not the limit. Space is beyond it, and lands beyond the universe exist but they simply have not been discovered yet. And it is up to me to reveal them."

A: "You mentioned that your father was strict. Was that from traditional Chinese thinking? Were there any conflicts between being Chinese and American?"

J: "When I was younger, mainly in middle school, I had no pride for my heritage. I hated being Chinese. Kids were rude and nasty back then and I was sick of being the butt of all the jokes. I hurt a whole lot. They caused me to hate the color of my skin. I felt powerless and unworthy. These memories influenced my life greatly, and continue to do so. But high school was a complete turn around for me. People still

made rude remarks, but I developed a pride for who I am. Learning more about the history of China made me realize that we are a great, smart race. I realized that it was not the color of my skin that made me once feel unworthy; I felt unworthy because I let myself fall into the pit that haters dug out for me. There was nothing I should be ashamed of. I realized that people try to bring others down because they themselves feel undeserving, and there was no way that I was going to let them tear me down so that they feel better about themselves. People are just insecure and jealous; that's why people hate.

A: "Seems like you've been through some rough times in your younger years. Did you experience any conflicts with your family?"

J: "I did... especially with my grandparents. Living with traditional grandparents has definitely influenced my outlook on life. I always felt as if I had to preserve the Chinese elements of my blood, even if I did not agree with a lot of things they believed in. Chinese people are very reserved and I'm not so much. Simple things I wanted to do... pierce my ears, decorate my room, give certain gifts... were discouraged and not allowed. But as much as it was a pain to me, I valued my grandparents because I am Chinese. However, I'm also my own person, so if I strongly want to do something, I eventually pursue it."

A: "So, I'm guessing from your career choice that you love money/"

J: "Yes, I do. I love it because it makes life so much easier and it's like a VIP card for life. I do not believe money is everything or that it buys happiness, but I do believe that money paves a road for many things you get in life. Money is also power. In our world, the more money you have, the more you're allowed to voice your opinion. If I want to change the world, I must get people to listen to me. And the best way to do this is to make lots of money.... I want all the money I can get so I can ensure that the money is distributed fairly.

A: "So, are you saying that your life is all about money-making?"

J: "No, no, no. Don't get me wrong. Making money is important to me, but like I said, money does not buy happiness and it does not buy love. To me, care, happiness, and love are vital parts of life. These are the things that keep me going. If money is lost, you can simply find a way to regain it. But the loss of love and happiness – that is forever."

A: "A final question... Where do you see yourself in ten years?"

J: "Oh, my. Well, I definitely hope I'll be starting a family by then. I want to be a mother of three and I can't wait. I truly hope that I will have impacted the world one way or another. I don't only want to make history; I want to be able to write what's to come."

As the interview comes to an end, we wish each other the best and walk out of the café. As we stroll onto the streets, Jessica whips out her Versace shades and gently places them on her bright brown eyes. She waves her last goodbye and walks toward her Porsche. She still looks intimidating, even from the back. She lugs her big, white Chanel bag on her left arm as she clutches her Blackberry with her right hand. Her dark, sultry mane is sleek and polished even with the humidity. Her California tan is golden and glowing. But she wears only casual short jeans and a white tank top. And on her feet are the comfy, three-dollar, black Old Navy flip-flops, and somehow, they are making the stilettos nearby look ridiculous.