

Research Paper

Introduction

I've been to the States for three times. I still remember the first time I came here when I was 15 years on my own. At first I was really interested in the American food, cheeseburger and hotdogs. But after a few days of eating the American food, I got really sick with the food and I kept on looking for other alternative to the American food. So when I arrived at UIUC, I noticed that for many Asian international students it was their first time coming to the United States. So I was wondering how they would deal with the sudden change in eating patterns; will their reaction be the same as mine or different. So I decided to do a research on this matter.

The purpose of my research is to find out about the change in eating patterns of Asian international students after their first few months of studying at UIUC and the effects of the changes in eating patterns.

Background Information

After doing some online research about the food served at university dorms, here's some background information about the American and Asian dorm food. The food served at American university dorm is mainly buffet style whereby you eat what you like. For every week, the menu has been fixed, all they do is interchange the menus among the residence dining halls. This is to ensure that on any given day, the dining halls aren't serving the same food; therefore the students have the opportunity to eat what they like. Examples of the food that most residence halls serve are fried chicken, fish fillet, hamburger, hot dogs, pizza, pasta, salads and desserts. However, the variety of food served at each dining halls varies among universities. Top universities have the capital and also students from all over the world, so they are able to provide a wider selection of

food to choose from, their dining halls have special bars that have make your own sandwich, Panini, Asian stir fry, Mexican bar. The reason why these food bars have been introduced is due to the change in student's taste and demand fresher and healthier foods; students like to see it prepared and see all the ingredients. Nowadays many US universities like UIUC, Stanford University and Princeton University offer online menus for each day.

Back in Asia, the way food is served is about the same, buffet style however choice of food and preparation of food is a little bit different; mainly composed of fresh ingredients like rice, rice noodles, vegetables and fish which are prepared using quick stir-frying, steaming, or boiling methods. At the Asian dorms, the food is served a different manner. Some dorms serve the food buffet style (don't offer so many variety), but some require you to pay for your own food. They have different stalls that provide different kinds of food, mostly Asian food and some common American food, like hotdogs. The dining halls daily menu are for example, rice, stir fry pork, stir fry vegetable, hamburgers, hotdogs, fries, noodle soup or fried noodles. One very obvious difference is, for breakfast, they'll have corn, porridge, warm milk, dumplings, fried noodles or sometimes eggs. The ingredients used in Asian dorms and American dorms don't vary a lot, just in the way the food is prepared.

Analysis (note : this research was conducted on 1st semester undergraduate students)

From all the data and feedbacks that I've obtained from doing online research, interviews and observation, I've come up with my own analysis. The Asian students that study abroad in the United States normally end up in three major categories.

The first is, during their first month, they gain a lot of weight, then after the first month they start to lose weight. The reasoning behind this is because of the sudden change in the

abundance of food; back home with the money that they have, they'll spend the wisely by not buying too much food till they can't finish. Whereas when they study in the United States, all the dorms provide the food buffet style, when they see so much food, most of them will take as much food as they. One reason being because they want to make the most out of their meal plan, the second reason is because they aren't used to seeing so much food right before them. After the first month, they get sick of the food offered at the dining hall; some lose their appetite when they eat so they eat less. Some look for other alternative food source like eating out at restaurants or take a ways

The second category is those that maintain their weight when they study abroad. This is because of a few reasons. Some of them have been exposed to the American eating habits, so when they study abroad, their eating patterns doesn't vary a lot. The second reason is those with very strict eating habits, very cautious of their diet. They don't take a lot of food even though there's an abundance of food right before them. And they eat right, meaning not consuming a lot of junk food. However this category of students isn't very large.

The third category is those that continue to put on weight nonstop. Now these the ones that either have no self-control over their eating habits or those that live to eat instead of eat to live. Back home they have been consuming a lot of food, however when they come here they still eat the same portions of food; but the energy density in American food is a lot of higher than those offered in Asian food. So they just keep on gaining weight.

Summary

It all started from my prior experience, having a holiday in the United States and summer camps, and now studying at UIUC that made me want to do this research on the how Asian

International students adapt to the change in eating patterns when studying in the USA.

I did observations, interviews, online research to gather the data that I needed to come to a conclusion as to why there was a sudden change in eating patterns, how the Asian International students dealt with it.

Difficulties

While doing this research paper I came across a lot of difficulties, one of them was looking for online sources that were related to my topic. So I decided broaden my research by broadening my search on topics that were closely related with my topic but indirectly. With the data that I've obtained from I linked up all the data to provide and overall view of the entire issue.

The other difficulty was interviewing and observing specific groups of Asian International students. When observing I actually had to socialize with them once in awhile to actually note they change in eating habits. Then when it came to interviewing them, I had to choose my words carefully as to not unintentionally insult them with topics that were either related to their homeland.

Appendix

- Appendix 1

Article 1

Bettelheim, A. (1999, January 15). Obesity and health. CQ Researcher, 9, 25-48. Retrieved November 22, 2008, from CQ Researcher Online, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1999011500>.

This article talks about obesity and health in the United States. It gives us an idea as to why Americans eat so much till they get obese, and when they realize that they've gained so much weight, they look for shortcuts to lose those extra pounds and their answer is dieting. And apparently from research, dieting in the long run as side effects and can be harmful the human's

heart. Besides that, I get a little history of the American food, from when they first arrived in America, their main meal on a typical 18th-century to the present, fast foods. Also in this article, scientists have done research and some have arrived at a conclusion that obesity causes chronic diseases and is second in line after cancer. Also after reading this article, I found out that some people become obese not entirely because of their eating habits but partly because of their gene, they lack a hormone called leptin which signals the brain when to stop eating. I find Bettelheim, A's articles very useful for my research because with these data, I'll be able to further understand the Americans eating patterns, from here compared that to the Asians eating patterns. Also compare how both race deals with obesity.

Article 2

Masci, D. (2001, February 23). Diet and health. CQ Researcher, 11, 129-160. Retrieved November 22, 2008, from CQ Researcher Online, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2001022300>.

Masci's article is about the diet and health about Americans. From this article I found out about how the vast amount of American food evolved from a fast food immense nation to a nation that is slowly changing to consuming more all-natural foods. And that Americans are being more aware of their health and this leads to them consuming supplement pills. This led to over consumption of these supplements pills which has adverse side effects and affects a person's health. Using the information from this article I'll be able to compare how Asians and Americans deal with their health issues through food consumptions, Americans turn to pills, dieting. However after looking at other articles, this trend is slowly changing among Americans, some of them are taking to right approach to ensure they are in good shape by eating properly and doing adequate exercise.

Article 3

Le, C.N. 2008. "Asian Cuisine & Foods." Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America.
<<http://www.asian-nation.org/asian-food.shtml>> (November 29, 2008).

This article talks about the various cooking styles in Asian cuisine and food. After reading article, I have a better understanding of how the three major parts of Asia prepare their food.

The first is the southwest style that includes cuisines from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Burma. Having its roots in Persian-Arabian civilization, the eating of nan (or flat bread) became widespread, along with mutton, kebabs (derived from Turkish cooking), and the use of hot peppers, black pepper, cloves, and other strong spices, along with ghee (a butter oil).

The second major dietary culture of Asia is the northeast tradition, comprising China, Korea, and Japan. This tradition developed to emphasize using fats, oils, and sauces in cooking. In the northeast dietary culture, the foods, spices, and seasonings go beyond being mere foodstuffs as they are also used as medicines to promote a long and healthy life.

Finally, the third major dietary culture of Asia is the southeast style, which includes Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. The traditional emphasis in this region is on aromatic and lightly-prepared foods, using a delicate balance of quick stir-frying, steaming, and/or boiling, supplemented with discrete spices and seasonings, including citrus juices and herbs such as basil, cilantro, and mint.

Using the information from this articles, I have gained a better in sight of how Asian food are prepared, using this information compare that to how American food is prepared; which gave me a better idea of the different eating patterns of the two different ethnic groups.

Article 4

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<http://www.gicare.com/pated/edtot36.htm>

2. Health and Beyond - <http://chetday.com/asiandiet.html>

Before reading this article I already have knowledge about what we Asians eat but after reading this article I get a better insight into what major parts in Asia eat. I got more detailed information about the kind of food Asian eat, and that Asians normally consume more plant food, that includes vegetable, soy bean, nuts, fruits, vegetable oil, grains and many other green stuff.

Second in line are fish and shellfish which is an optional daily food because it is hard to obtain; easily obtainable in regions like the exterior of China and Japan. The ones that are used sparingly by Asians are poultry, red meat. According to scientist, the low consumption of poultry is also one of the main reasons why Heart Attacks cases aren't as popular in Asia compared to Western countries. However this is slowly changing due to import and exports, improvements in technology(transportation, preserving food, breeding) which resulted in the vast amount of food available to anyone that has the buying power.

Also a research has been done, that is Asians consume more tea. One of the main reasons why Asians prefer to consume a hot cup of tea after each meal instead of a cold soda or drink is because a hot cup of tea doesn't cause the food that has just been consumed to solidify which is one of the main reasons why heart attacks are more common Americans. For example, the sudden death of 58-year-old "Meet the Press" host Tim Russert in June from a massive heart attack that shocked millions of middle-aged Americans. This article is vital to my research, because with these information I'll be able to compared that with the American diet.

Articles 5

What's Wrong With the American Diet?

By Chris Woolston - CONSUMER HEALTH INTERACTIVE

This article written by Chris Woolston has given me a better insight into the American diet. According to Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH, Professor of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University, what's wrong with the American diet is that Americans consume too much calories. Twenty years ago the average American consumed about 1,850 calories each day. Today, the daily American diet has grown by 148 calories (roughly the equivalent of one can of soda). That's theoretically enough to add an extra 15 pounds to each person every year.

And that most American diets fall into one of two broad categories: "Western" or "prudent." The prudent diet is a nutritionist's dream. People in this category tend to eat relatively large amounts of fish, poultry, cruciferous vegetables (i.e. cabbage and broccoli), greens, tomatoes, legumes, fresh fruits, and whole grains. They also skimp on fatty or calorie-rich foods such as red meats, eggs, high-fat dairy products, French fries, pizza, mayonnaise, candy, and desserts.

The Western diet is the prudent diet reflected in a carnival mirror. Everything is backwards: Red meat and other fatty foods take the forefront, while fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are pushed aside. In addition to fat and calories, the Western diet is loaded with cholesterol, salt, and sugar. If that weren't bad enough, it's critically short on dietary fiber and many nutrients -- as well as plant-based substances (phytochemicals) that help protect the heart and ward off cancer.

Another reason why Americans overeat is because of the availability of food. With 170,000 fast-food restaurants and 3 million soft-drink vending machines spread across the country, huge doses of calories are never far away -- especially when those soda machines are sitting right in the middle of public schools. Besides that, it's also because of the vastly increasing portions of food served by food outlets. Everyone in the food industry decided they had to make portions larger to stay competitive, and people got used to large sizes very quickly.

This article will be crucial to my research paper, I'll be able to further understand the different eating habits of Asians and Americans. As to why when Asian students study abroad in the United States, why they gain weight so easily and quickly and why some maintain their weight.

-Appendix 2

It all happened about a month ago, and I was at Garner dining hall observing a group of Asian international students. Most of them were from China, Taiwan, Malaysian and Indonesian. I was actually eating with them and remembered that not many of them had hamburgers or pizzas to begin with. Most of them had rice, some stir fry vegetable and a bowl of salad; not exactly your typical American food. They also seem very cautious about how much they eat especially the girls. Then on Tuesdays, at Garner dining hall we have the cracked egg dinner, whereby the dining hall served breakfast for dinner. I noticed that most of the Asian international student after having tried it once, avoided eating dinner at Garner dining hall on Tuesdays. They would either eat at some other dining hall, or go to an Asian restaurant on Green Street. Also during the first month of attending UIUC, I noticed that majority of the students from china ate out at Chinese restaurants like Evo and Mandarin Wok; except when they are short of time or just feeling lazy then they'll eat at the dining hall.

Then on the 30th October, I was having dinner with a big group of Asian international students. This time I noticed that their portion of food was still about the same but what was on their plate was totally different. Majority of them had completely changed their diet; they had cheeseburger, pizza, fries, and nachos with dripping hot cheese and very few of them had salads or vegetables. The minority still stuck to their own diet of not eating fattening food. I also noticed that quite a number of them gained a few noticeable pounds.

On one occasion (29th October), I brought a few of my international Asian friends to PAR to have dinner. When we arrived there, we were a little frustrated with the extremely long queue and the line consisted mostly of Asian students. When we got into the dining hall, what I noticed surprised me, instead of them going for the pizza, hamburger etc; all of them lined up for the stir fry stall to get something Asian.

From here we can see that when you put people in a totally different environment, they'll have to adapt to their surrounding or else they won't be able to survive. However, no matter how much they have to change to adapt to their environment they will always hold on to their roots (origin, culture, where they came from). Or else things will get really nasty, this happened to a friend of mine at Purdue University. When he arrived at Purdue, during the first few weeks he couldn't adapt to the environment, mainly the food and people. He just couldn't let go of the food back home and adapt to the American food and dealing with the Americans, different mindsets culture. In the end, 2 weeks after studying at Purdue, he decides to back to Malaysia.

This various observations are useful to my research paper, because it gives me an insight of how Asian international students adapt to the American food. From the observation I'll have a better

idea of what type of Asian international students to interview, as in are they more westernize or more conservative (Asian), and also the types of question to ask different groups.

-Appendix 3

I interviewed 3 people. All of them are international Asian freshman studying at UIUC.

1. Stanley Cheng from Taipei, Taiwan

Stanley is an International student studying at UIUC currently a freshman and also my current roommate. He was born in Taipei, when he was five years old, his family and him moved to the States to live for 6 years then later moved back to Taipei.

According to him, his eating patterns back home(Taipei) is very different from what he is having now. He normally has Chinese food, like fried rice, stir fried vegetables, fried chicken or beef. Also something interesting, although when he was young, he did spend a number of years in the States but that didn't really help him adapt to the environment at UIUC, but it did give him an idea of what kind of food to expect. Whenever he has to chance to eat out (that means not eating at the residence dining hall), he would prefer to eat Chinese food or Italian food. The reason why is because back home, he has already adapted to the Chinese food and he likes Italian food like pizza and pasta. When I ask him about what he thinks about American food compared to Chinese food, he says that American food are very fattening, unhealthy. He pointed out that American food were either too salty, too sweet, or too oily. Also he mentioned that during the first month, he gained weight, which stabilized in the months to come. I asked him, now when he eats, what's his goal, and he tells me is to lose weight, by eating healthy (more salads, less burgers fries) and exercising.

2. Li Xiao from Beijing, China

Li Xiao is a typical teenager from China. He loves Chinese food. And it is his first time living in USA.

Back home, he would normally have Canton (south part of China in Guang Zhou) food like Soy-Braised Chicken. Also in his meals, he likes to have tofu, stir fry vegetable and pork with rice. He thinks that most American foods are fried food, seems delicious, taste good but not healthy. Don't like the way the vegetable are prepared, just raw vegetable with dressing, at first he found it interesting, but after awhile he got bored with it because he noticed didn't have much taste. What's really interesting is when he asked him what he thinks of American food compared to Chinese food. He says that Chinese foods are more tasty and has a wider variety compare to American but both food are equally healthy; it all depends on how you control your diet. He also noticed that during his first month at UIUC he gained weight because he was eating more due to the buffet style of eating offered at his private housing which is Illini tower (all URH also offers buffet style dining). However he made a statement that, ever since he came to the States he realized that the food really affected his life style. His body wasn't accustomed to the American food (although the energy density in the food is very high compared to Asian food), he felt tired very easily and went to the toilet more often compared to back home.

3. Ni Yingkan from Shanghai, China.

The reason why I picked him is because prior to studying at UIUC, he attended a summer program at Illinois organized by UIUC for 3 months.

It is his first time coming to the United States, during the summer program he said he didn't enjoy the American food at all. He found the food tasteless and very unhealthy. He came to a conclusion

that Americans aren't very skillful in preparing food, and that their foods are bound to several flavors, each not very distinct from each other. Also one thing that he doesn't like about American food is that most of their food is fried or deep fried which is very unhealthy. Whenever he has the chance to eat out he would either eat Chinese food or Thai Food. When asked about how he dealt with the American food during his first month studying at UIUC, he said that he gained weight, not because of the food but because he was following his American friends, by eating bigger portions. Later he discovered that it was a wrong decision so he started eating his normal portions which is how much he used to eat back home in Shanghai.

Conclusion

Asians prefer Chinese food because they find the American food to be unhealthy and also they are more adapted to Chinese food. As we can see, even those that have stayed in the States for a few years still prefer Chinese food.