Exploring Attitudes Regarding Food and Acculturation Among International University Students
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Introduction
Acculturation is when populations move from one country to another either permanently or semi-permanently and in so doing need to adapt and assimilate the customs and culture of their hosts, to “settle” into their chosen population. Globally, The U.S hosts the greatest number of international students; a little more than half of all international students come from China and India. Relocating may involve changes to dietary habits possibly due limited availability of culturally appropriate ingredients and food. Additionally financial circumstances may hinder which types of ingredients and food are obtainable.

Objectives
1. Described subjects according to selected demographic characteristics: Age, nationality, and years lived in U.S
2. Assess food barriers students experience when making food choices or obtaining food
3. Identify and describe differences or changes in diet from place of origin to now

Statement of the Problem
The purpose of this observational study is to assess the food barriers that international students experience when making food choices.

Materials and Methods
The target sample size was 100 students (actual 86 students). Snowball sampling was used to recruit students age 18 and older (inclusion criteria) using a flyer and assistance from student-led organizations. International students at a Southwest university responded to a questionnaire which had a combination of questions from two journal articles, the questionnaire was administered in both paper and electronic formats. The questionnaire asked about demographics, dietary habits, living situation, financial circumstances, self-reported weight change, and perceptions/barriers to obtaining food based on their preferences during the Spring 2020 semester.

Data and Results
Approximately 34% of students were between the age of 18-24, 35% between the age of 25-29, 19% were between the age of 30-34 and 12% of students were 30 years and older. Most common nationalities represented were Indian (27%), Mexican (18%), White (15%), Nepali (7%) and both Black/African American and Chinese (6%). Over half the students (51%) had been living in the U.S for two years or less, 27% had been living in the U.S for three to four years and 22% had been living in the U.S for five years or longer.

Questionnaire responses indicated that 35% students reported always cooking home country meals, 49% reported mostly, 14% reported rarely and 2% reported never. Additionally 24% of students reported adequate variety on campus, 41% reported somewhat and 35% reported that there wasn’t adequate variety on campus. Fifty seven percent of students reported their finances hindered the types of foods they bought but only 20% of those students utilized the food pantry located on campus. Lastly, 84% of students reported being “somewhat” to “very influenced” by the American diet but only 35% of students felt they were shifting to American diet.

Figure 1. Reported ability to find home country ingredients and barriers related to travel and ability to find similar prices, brands and quality products at a Southwest University

Conclusions
The results indicated that majority of students continued to cook home country meals and were able to find home country ingredients. However, some barriers students experienced were traveling to the grocery store and their financial circumstances. Additionally most students agreed that there could be improved food variety on campuses. Lastly majority of students reported being influenced by the American Diet but did not feel they were shifting to an American diet. Similar studies reported financial circumstances influenced dietary behaviors, and majority of students believed there was a lack of food variety on campus. In contrast, this study reported that majority of students were able to find home country ingredients, whereas other studies reported students had difficulty. Lastly this study looked at barriers related to travel, price, brand and quality whereas others did not. This research may help implement more variety and diversity of food on campuses and help promote campus food pantries. Future research could improve by using open ended probing questions, following participants to examine actual choices and obtain domestic student data allowing for a more detailed analysis and comparison.

Citations
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