The objective of this study was to compare the dietary intake of international students living in America as opposed to their intake while living in their home countries.
How do international student’s dietary patterns change after moving to the United States?

What are their perceptions of American diets compared to their native diet?
### Review of Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studying in America</th>
<th>Dietary Acculturation</th>
<th>The effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 17% (n=764,495) of students studying outside of their home country are enrolled at American colleges</td>
<td>The way a foreign individual changes their dietary practices as a natural reaction to being immersed in a new culture</td>
<td>In the US, dietary acculturation often involves increased intake of foods high in empty calories and low in nutrient dense foods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of Literature:
American diet and its impact on health

Characteristics
- Convenience or pre-packaged foods
- High in sodium and added sugars
- Low in plant foods

College students at risk
- Eating out and Fast food
- Snacking
- Skipping breakfast
- Grocery shopping

Obesity rates of college students have risen from 12% to 36% from 1991-2004.
Effects of dietary acculturation on international students living in the US

- Weight gain
- Raised blood glucose levels
- Larger portion sizes
- Increased snacking high in added sugar and salt
- Skipping meals
- Skipping breakfast
- More frequent consumption of fast foods
Methods
Focussed on food intake and perceptions of the American diet.

Questionnaire was edited for clarity following pilot test.

Collected and analyzed using Google sheets.

Submitted to, and approved by, Ouachita’s International Review Board.

Paper copies of questionnaire to 31 international students.
Demographics

**Home countries of participants**

- South Africa
- South Korea
- Honduras
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Brazil
- Japan
- China

**Age Range of Participants**

- Age in years: 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18

**How long have you lived in the US?**

- Number of participants:
  - Less than one semester
  - One year
  - Two years
  - Three years
  - More than three years

**Genders of participants**

- Male
- Female
Results
Results: Intake

How often do you eat at restaurants in the US?

How often do you eat at restaurants at home?
Results: Intake

Do you eat dessert more often at home or in America?

- At home: 65%
- In America: 6%
- About the same: 29%

Do you drink soft drinks (Coke, Sprite, etc.) more often at home or in America?

- At home: 68%
- In America: 6%
- About the same: 26%
Results: Intake

Do you eat meat more often at home or in America?
- At home: 48%
- In America: 23%
- About the same: 29%

Do you eat vegetables/fruit more often at home or in America?
- At home: 68%
- In America: 19%
- About the same: 13%
Results: Intake

Do you eat larger portions at home or in America?

- At home: 84%
- In America: 16%
- About the same: 0%

Do you try to make sure that you eat healthy meals?

- Yes: 81%
- No: 19%
Results: Perceptions

- **Do you think you have a healthy eating pattern in your home country?**
  - Yes: 94%
  - No: 6%

- **Do you think you have a healthy eating pattern in the US?**
  - Yes: 32%
  - No: 68%
Results: Perceptions

Do you consider the American diet healthy?
- Yes: 6%
- No: 94%

How much has the American diet influenced your eating patterns?
- Very much: 3%
- Some what: 45%
- Not at all: 52%
Results: Perceptions

- Do you believe that food is important in determining your health?
  - Yes: 100%
  - No: 0%

- Are you concerned about how the food you eat affects your body weight?
  - Yes: 94%
  - No: 6%

- Are you concerned about how the food you eat affects your health?
  - Yes: 90%
  - No: 10%
Conclusion

International students studying in the US are susceptible to dietary acculturation as evidenced by increased consumption of desserts, soft drinks, and meats, decreased consumption of vegetables, eating larger portion sizes and dining more frequently at restaurants.

International students perceive the American diet and their eating pattern in the US as being less healthy than their usual diet. They recognize the impact of food on one’s well-being and are concerned about the impacts it has on their health and weight.
Limitations

- Sampling was not randomized, and the sample size was small.

- Sample was taken from a private, Christian university in rural Arkansas, and is not representative of typical international students.
Implications for Further Research

A structured interview with international students to identify the specific ways in which their dietary patterns have changed since moving to the US.

Collection of anthropometric data (BMI, waist circumference), and lab values (blood pressure, serum glucose and triglycerides) to see the clinical impact and risk for disease that dietary acculturation may have had.
Questions?
References


