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### Asian American Satisfaction with Culturally Relevant Food in Binghamton

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## Food Equity & Culture: Asian American Satisfaction with Culturally Relevant Food in Binghamton



PRESENTER:  
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Source Project: People, Politics & the Environment

### BACKGROUND

Food is a lifeline to cross cultural identity and enriches societal appreciation for the diverse demographic that makes up the US. For the Asian American community, which is often deemed the “perpetual foreigner,” when access to culturally relevant foods is neglected, so too is community health. The need to examine and promote access to culturally relevant foods is not just beneficial for individuals of multicultural backgrounds, but also allows for increased empathy for different cultures in all disciplines, from education to healthcare.

### METHODS

- Focus group potluck on student experience with cultural food acquisition in Binghamton (Fig. I)
- Survey to collect demographic information

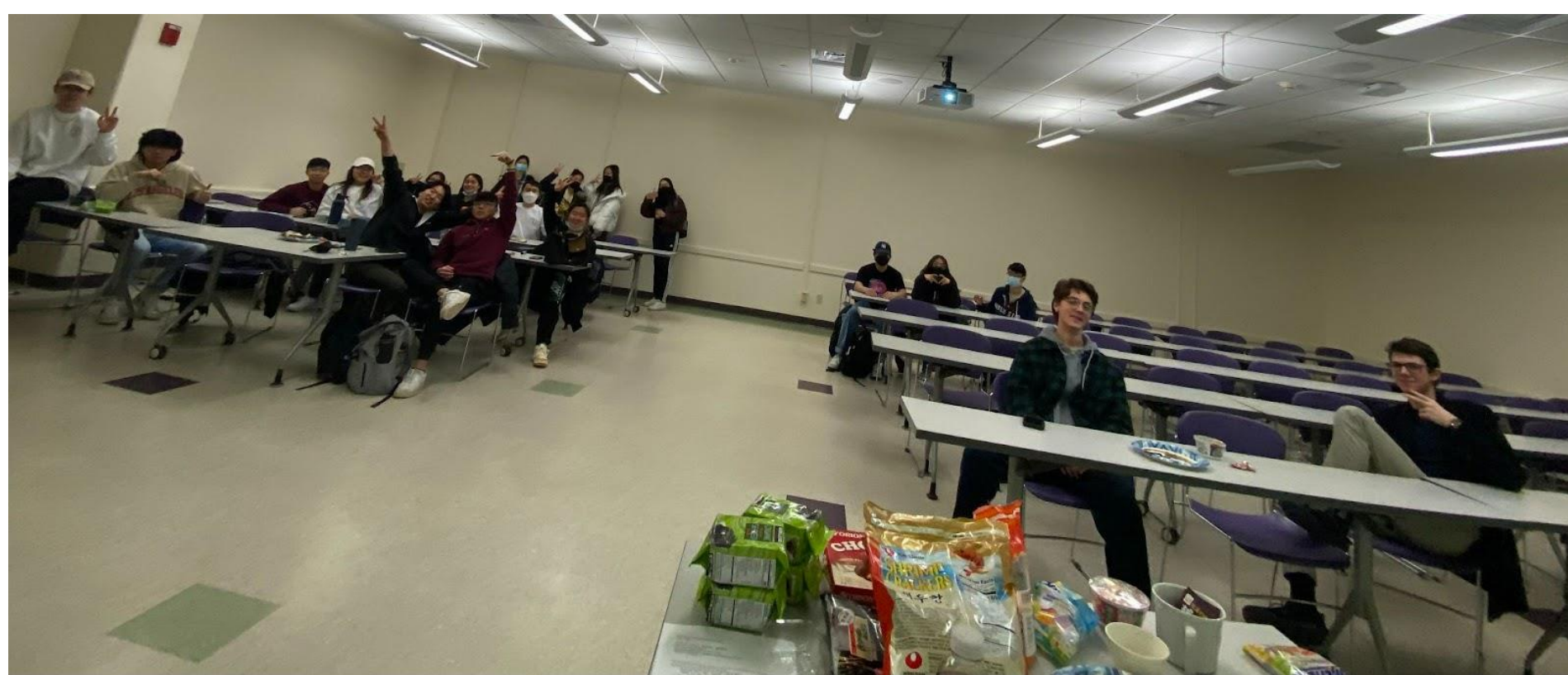


Fig I: Focus group potluck, in which student participants expressed personal experiences with accessing culturally relevant foods and their significance in response to discussion questions.

# Asian Binghamton students are unsatisfied with the cultural food offerings around campus.

Fig II: Popular Student Sentiments expressed in the focus group and surveys and corresponding quotes.

1: Students settle for low quality/availability traditional foods, and travel long distances to obtain foods of good quality

"Korean snacks popular in the U.S. like *Chocopies* are available, but more niche items are not."

"Traditional foods that are found are very small in portion and overpriced like Wegman's kimchi."

"Foods such as pork belly are difficult to find – some orgs travel as far as NYC to obtain ingredients."

"I'm Vietnamese, but often end up settling for Chinese food because that is the most widely available option."



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2: Available cultural food is catered towards a traditional white American consumer

"The packaging on American-produced cultural foods are often uncomfortable, leaning on stereotypes, and very inauthentic."

"Available Japanese food like *yakiudon* and are inauthentic. Options that are available are lopsided, and largely feature (Americanized) Chinese food."

"Available cultural foods are Americanized—like Trader Joe's instant foods" (Fig. III)



Fig. III. Amazon.com: Trader Ming's Mandarin Orange Chicken (Pack of 2); Grocery & Gourmet Food. (n.d.).

3: Representation is important—and school highlights of cultural organizations is lacking.

"Culturally themed nights in dining halls don't represent the full variety of Asian cuisine available"

"Multicultural organizations are good representatives, like with cultural food fundraisers, but these orgs' work is not well highlighted by the school."

"Coming from a diverse background, I knew how to approach new cultures a little better and have more empathy."

"Food is a necessity, but the cultural aspect of it can't be removed. Appreciating the process as much as the final product is what separates appreciation from appropriation."

### Growing up as a “Perpetual Foreigner”

"I was self conscious about the foods I would want to eat, so I deliberately chose a roomie of a similar culture as me."

"While I know a lot about the dominant white culture that I grew up in, I feel like said dominant culture has little understanding of diverse minority communities like mine."

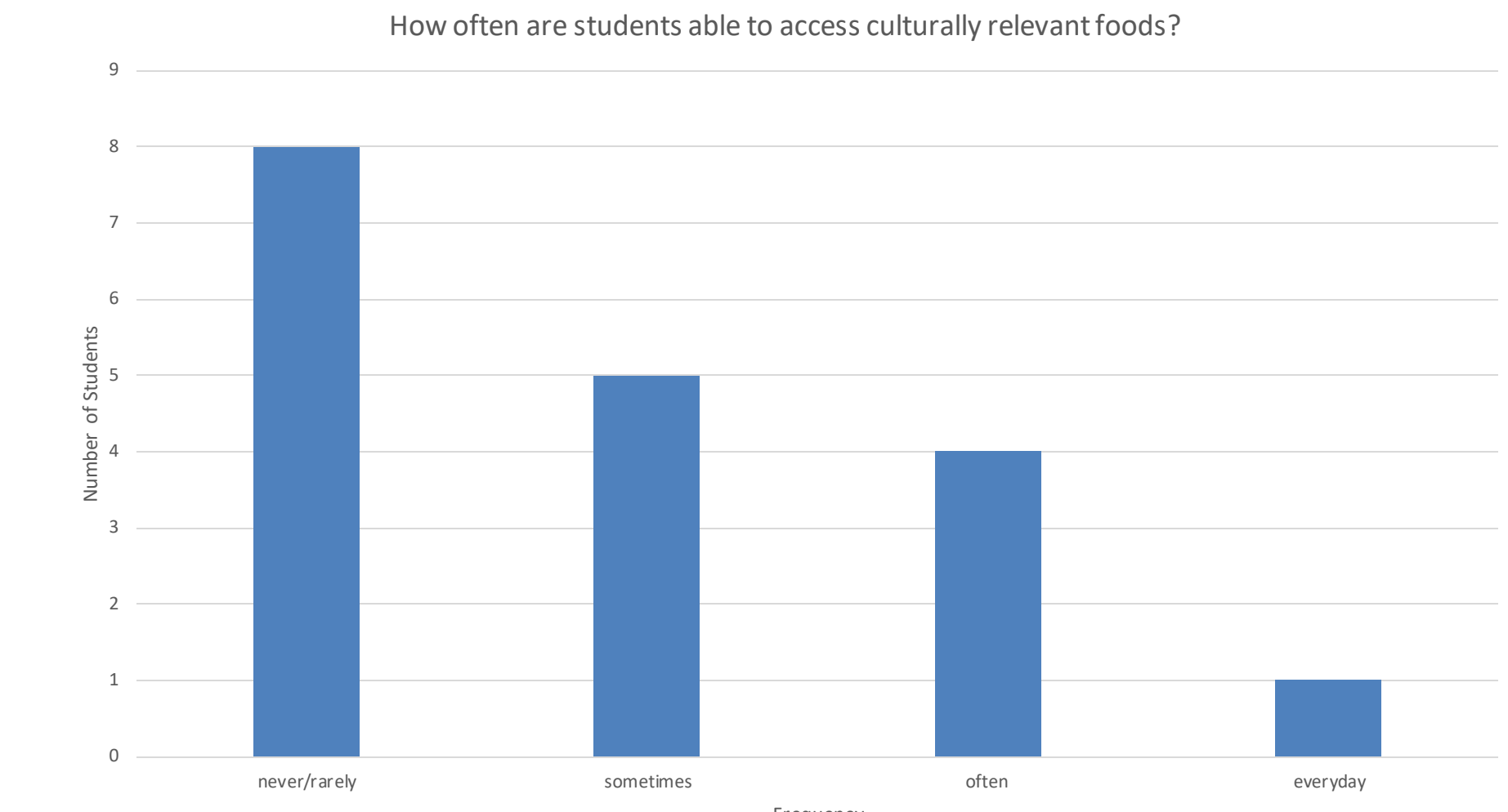


Fig IV. General student satisfaction with access to culturally relevant foods on campus. Not included are several students who responded that there are culturally relevant foods often available, but generic and inauthentic, and students who responded they brought home-cooked meals and foods from home after breaks.

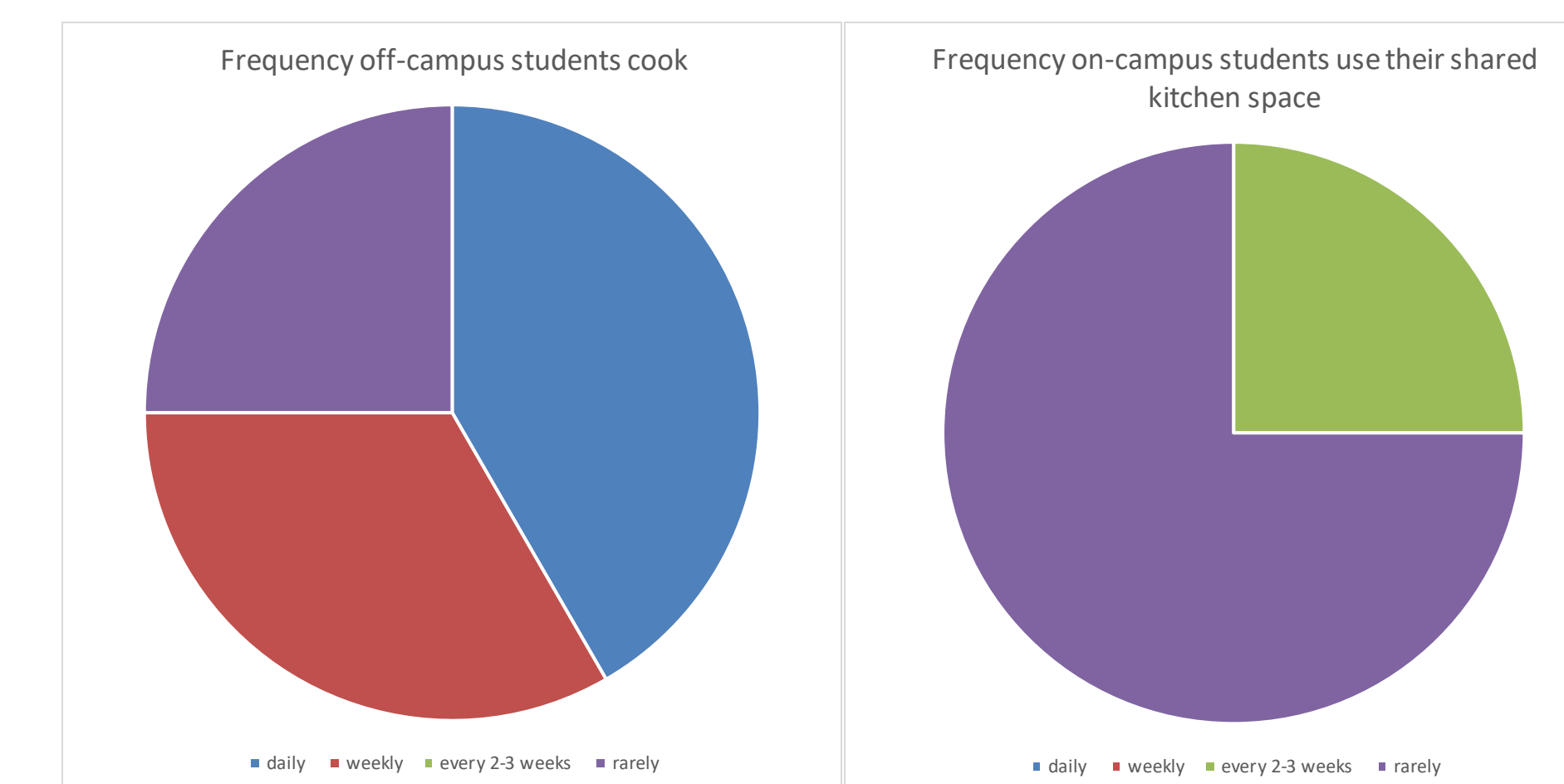


Fig V: Frequency of on/off campus student cooking. A bigger sample size and variety may show a correlation between living location/transportation differences and cultural cooking frequency.

### FURTHER RESEARCH:

1. Due to the time constraints of this course, the study was focused on the Asian-American perspective on culturally relevant food satisfaction. However, students of other ethnic minorities such as those of Hispanic and African American heritage also expressed similar dissatisfaction. Widening the scope of this study to compare accessibility between communities, may allow better accessibility and appreciation for diverse backgrounds on a largely homogenous campus.

2. Again, Asian American residents of the greater Binghamton area were not surveyed in this study. Locals are likely more familiar with the area and accessible culturally food producers that college students are unaware of, and potential substitutes if not.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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