

**Introduction:**

Obesity has been at a steady incline over the past couple of years and is projected to continue that incline in the years to come. It is well known that fast food is a major contributor to obesity; however, that can't be the only cause. Obesity occurs when energy intake is greater than energy expenditure. Therefore, it is logical to suggest that when caloric intake is increased, as a result of overeating, for a prolonged amount of time that obesity will be the result. But what causes people to eat far more than the amount they need to function? One of the culprits is mentioned early, fast food. Fast food is known as hyper-palatable food, these are processed foods which combine fat, carbohydrates, and sodium to enhance the taste without satiating hunger. Another major contributor to overeating is stress and this tends to relate more to emotional overeating. This is what I want to focus on in my research study, because it is very prevalent to my life now. College is a very stressful time for people, especially freshmen who are just starting out on their own. There is something known as the freshmen 15, which is when freshmen gain a significant amount of weight, whether it's partying, not eating nutritious food, or stress-induced overeating.

**Research Questions:**

How many college-aged students feel like stress has caused them to emotionally overeat? And what type of food do they reach for when if they are eating to cope with stress?

**Primary Research Plan:**

In order to gather data for my research, I will conduct a survey. I will create my survey on google forms and distribute access to it via snapchat. Social media is a great way to reach a large amount of people. I plan on using my snapchat because I have mostly college-aged students as friends on snapchat. When I upload the link to my survey, I will include a restriction on my story that only students currently enrolled in college classes should take the survey. I will also include that the survey's responses will be kept anonymous, this way people will be more likely to submit truthful responses. I decided to choose a survey because my research question needed a consensus and opinions from a large group of people, and I could not get that from an interview or observational study. My survey will include these 9 simple questions:

- What's your assigned sex at birth?
- How old are you?
- What academic year of college are you currently in?
- Do you feel like since starting college you have been more stressed?
- Do you feel like you have gained weight since being enrolled in college?
- Do you ever use food as a coping method for stress?
- When you feel stressed what are your go to foods to eat?
- Do you eat more than you did prior to college?
- How has your diet changed since being in college?

Once I collect all the responses to those questions, I will compile the data and create charts with the percentages of each response. That way it will be easy to compare the data and draw conclusions from it.

**What's Next:**

Moving forward with this research, I want to have ample time to collect and analyze responses. Therefore, I will have my survey created by Friday March 4th. I will upload the link to my survey that following Monday. I will collect responses for that survey over spring break.

Once the survey is cut off, I will then analyze the data and create the charts to present the compiled data before the 15th. Once I have that data I can input it into my research paper, which I will be working on starting that Monday back from break, march 14<sup>th</sup>.. Those charts will be the final piece to the paper which will be finished by March 20th, which gives me time to look over and revise it. I'm currently in the process of reading through my resources and taking notes on key points I want to include or point out in my research paper.

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