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Eating in America

The Questionnaires - Explanation

A GLC Project Paper
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A. Short Notice in Advance

When we started to think about the project, we also thought about how to gather information about our topic. It seemed vital for us to gather as much information as possible, so we decided on reaching the people via online questionnaires. Our German and English questionnaires were first online about two years ago, when the internet was still thought of as the holy calf of communication. This is mentioned for the following reason: during the counting and evaluation process, we have noticed that some of the queries might not have been fully comprehended. Furthermore, sometimes the target groups were not reached to the extent we would have liked. However, the material that we have collected still seems to be sufficient and valuable enough to use.

B. Part 1 of Questionnaires – Questions concerning your eating habits:

Most of the answers show that Americans and Germans seem to have similar values. Yet there are some noticeable differences, as one can see in the question about warm meals. Americans seem to have their warm meal mostly at supper, while Germans have their warm meal at lunch time, which is supported by the answers to questions **IC - When do you have the warm meal?** and **ID - Do you have breakfast?**. This maybe due to several reasons, whereas the most important one is joining job and family life. Only in the evenings does the whole family have the opportunity to be together and celebrate their family lives. Another one may be the Anglo-centered culture of most of the USA: We have noticed that in Britain and Ireland supper also is a warm meal. The answer to **IDWE** seems awkward, in which most respondents claim that they only occasionally have a warm meal during the day. Germans, on the other hand, are very regular concerning their habits, they have a warm lunch in the workweek and on the weekends.

Asking for their favorite cuisine, both nationalities state that they liked their own cuisine best, e.g. Americans the American, Germans the German, whereas America as an important country for immigration also claims Italian and Mexican cuisine as popular. This is can be seen similar to Germany, which has become an important country for immigrants as well, as one can see in **IE**. The same is true for restaurants. It is important to notice, however, that fast food is not an American domain any longer.

Purchasing food should not show any differences – so we thought, since Germany and America are both countries of the western mainstream. Looking at our questionnaires, **IH** seems to prove us right, however as stated in **II** the trend in America leans towards packaged and pre-prepared food, while in Germany fresh food products are preferred. Also, consuming meat

seems to have a different status in Germany compared to America, although the latter is not unimportant, of course.

C. Part II – Questions concerning American Eating Habits and Food

In America the hamburger is considered as the product that identifies American cuisine, states the answer to the question **IIA**. Of course this view is distorted by clichés and images built up by the media. The German answer to the same question fits into the scheme insofar as the answer mostly given is fast food. Question **IIB** asked whether American food was healthy or not. Comparing the average value of both nationalities, the results are strikingly alike, only that the German respondents claim American food is a bit more unhealthy. Questioning the people why they think this, again both answer with the same clichés, such as *McDonald's and Co.* or *obesity* although American answers seem to have a touch of patriotism, as do answers like *anti-American feelings* or *lack of respect* prove.

D. Part III – General Questions

Wondering who the people are that answered our questionnaires, we find that Americans were mostly female, while in Germany mostly males filled in our questionnaires. Contemplating this fact, this result could indicate that more American women like to use the internet compared to the number of German female test persons. It could also mean that American women like to fill in questionnaires that are concerned with food, whereas the same applies to German men. As you can see, at this point one can only speculate.

Also, the answers to the rest of the questions suggest that it is mainly one group that has taken the inconvenience to fill in the form. Most of them were between 20 and 30, they live in cities, and they work in white collar jobs.

Another important aspect was provided by the answers to the question, which asked, if Germans had been in the USA, or when asking Americans, if they had been outside of their home country. Most of the persons claimed they had visited another country or had visited the USA. Therefore, Germans should have more first hand experience of American food, even though they are still influenced by the media and by clichés.