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ENGL 21002 - Professor *Jennifer Buño*  
05/09/2023

### **Cover Letter**

My interview with Runkang was a valuable learning experience where I had the opportunity to implement collaborative and social aspects of the writing process and develop my skills as an inquisitive interviewer. In this essay, I aim to shed light on the "food-loving" subculture and its significant aspects. Additionally, I will describe my interaction with one of its members, providing relevant information about his background, which ultimately influences his engagement with the subculture. Throughout the writing process, I carefully considered the potential audience for this essay, envisioning it to be college students and faculty members.

During the interview, I met with Runkang and recorded insightful notes about his experiences within the subculture. Initially, it was challenging to extract specific information due to Runkang's shyness. However, as our conversation progressed, he began to trust me more, leading to more open discussions about his involvement in the subculture and his background. To incorporate his perspectives effectively into the essay, I devised a set of direct questions and focused on highlighting keywords in his responses. This method allowed me to effectively convey his views and experiences to the external audience. Initially, I asked the questions one by one and received concise responses from Runkang, which provided sufficient material for concluding. Next, I synthesized the main ideas from his answers to obtain a comprehensive overview of his viewpoints.

Throughout the essay-writing process, I found myself observing and analyzing aspects that I typically wouldn't pay close attention to, such as clothing, mannerisms, and speech patterns. I quickly learned that these details hold valuable information in the fieldwork context. Overall, this assignment provided me with an introduction to observing and asking the right

questions to gather relevant information about a subculture and its members. The most enjoyable part of the experience was engaging in conversation with Runkang and gaining insight into a culture different from my own, which proved to be both entertaining and intriguing. However, one aspect I wish to improve upon is note-taking. Although I effectively recorded Runkang's responses to my questions, I struggled with deciding which information to prioritize during our conversation.

Crafting the essay became easier with guidance and active feedback from my professor. Their constant comments on how to observe and annotate were invaluable. Additionally, the "Looking at Our Subcultures" posting activity, where I described a subculture I belong to, proved to be helpful as it allowed me to analyze aspects from an outsider's perspective.

### **Introduction**

As I prepared my notebook to take notes, we were assigned to breakout rooms during the Zoom meeting. Despite Runkang's inability to turn on his camera, we proceeded with the conversation. Runkang, a 20-year-old college student, has discovered a means of channeling the overwhelming stress of everyday life, leading him to establish the Food Lovers subculture, originating in China's Guangdong Province.

The central ritual of the food-loving subculture involves tasting different foods during their gatherings. Runkang and his friends come together to discuss and determine the designated food for each meeting. They are presented with two options: cooking the food themselves or purchasing prepared meals, with the choice depending on the group's mood and convenience. It is important to note that food-loving extends beyond the mere pursuit of sensory pleasure. It serves as a platform for creating meaningful experiences, emphasizing the

values of friendship, closeness, and breaking away from routine through the shared exploration of new culinary delights.

### **Guangdong Province**

Located in South China and being the main influence of the “food lovers” subculture, the Guangdong Province, where the informant comes from, is where the enthusiasm for food diversity came from. As a kid, Runkang was exposed to a wide variety of plates proper from his Chinese culture. I noticed the excitement on his face when giving me examples of dishes he liked back in his homeland. He talked about Char Siu, Cha Siu Bao, and Egg rolls which are just three uncountable examples of how delicious this food can be. The diverse and exquisite gastronomy of Guangdong Province ignited Runkang’s interest in seeking novelty in food.

### **Experience**

I asked Runkang about other aspects besides the tasting pleasure that makes “food loving” important for him. He remained silent for a moment to think, and then confidently answered “The experience!” The taste factor, “good, “bad “or “strange,” is a small part of the whole experience. Runkang told me that he doesn’t try food alone, but with his friends. And the ritual starts when he gets together with his group and discusses from what culture will they taste the food. So, part of the importance of Food love is the unity of this cause. Runkang values experiences and friendship, “Going out to taste food or cooking new dishes with my friends is a bonding experience that makes me feel connected to them.”

## **Novelty seeking**

Runkang mentioned many aspects that made food loving important to him, but one he often repeated was seeking novelty through food, “Some people read books, others listen to music, so they can feel or see something new, but I taste food.” To break the routine and experience a rush of different emotions Runkang tries new food from different cultures with his friends. He describes tasting a new flavor as an enlightening experience that brings a new world to his palate. But the novelty also comes from the spontaneous reactions, comments, and memories that the food-loving lifestyle gives birth to.

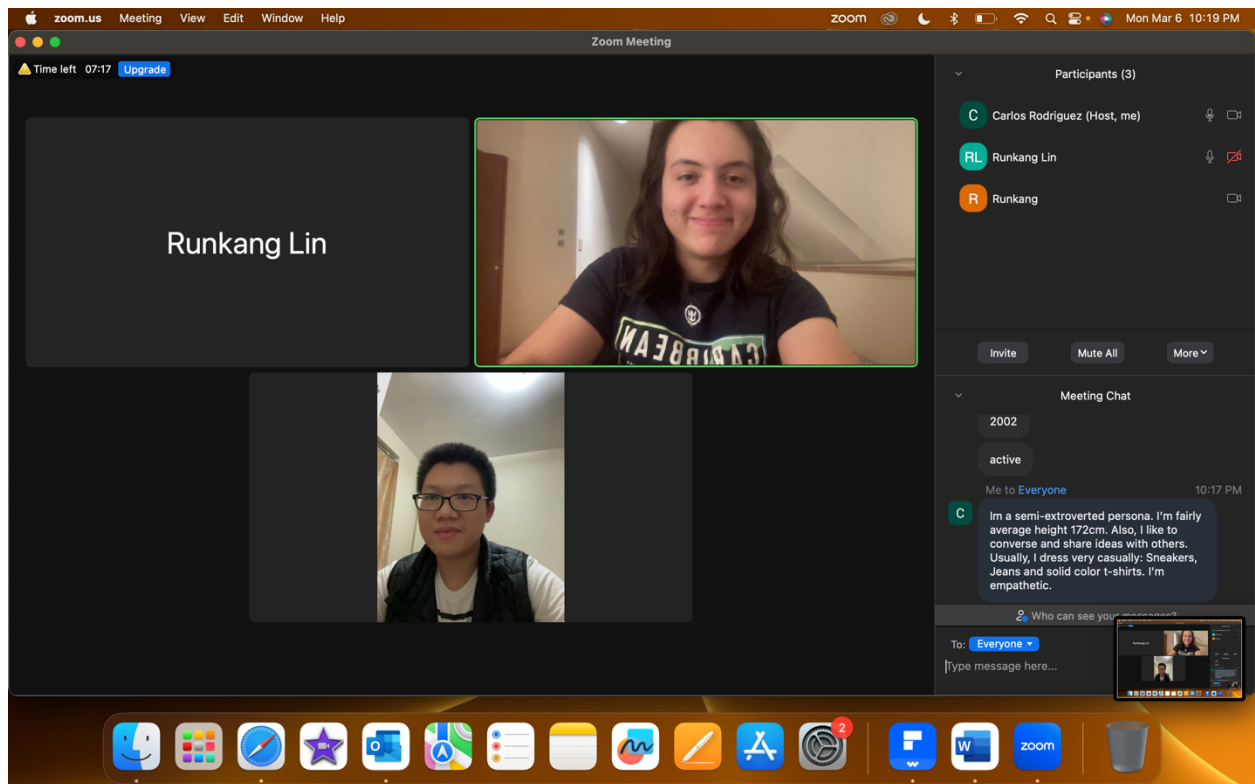
## **Food is happiness.**

Food loving is a lifestyle, and it comes with values that Runkang made clear; happiness is one of them. When the stress of life overwhelms Runkang, he tries new food. He believes that “eating itself can bring happiness to humans.” And the tasting experiences he gets with his friends bring joy and fullness; the latter being emotionally and literally.

## **Analysis**

In my conversations with Runkang, I could see the pride he has for his culture and background. Of many things, he loves the diversity he could find in Guangdong’s gastronomy. As extensively mentioned, food is an important part of Runkang's subculture. And he may associate food with his homeland, which he misses. Now, he enjoys food diversity in New York, and It’s interesting how he emphasizes the “experience” of tasting, meaning that he does not only eat to fulfill a physiological need but to embrace friendship, experiment with new things, and find new perspectives.

Despite being shy, I feel Runkang values social interaction and likes to embrace his ideas. He doesn't speak too much, but he has a clear image of who he is and what he is looking for. As we spoke in the after-class meeting, I noticed Runkang was excited to talk about his background, which made our interview very fluent and enjoyable. Overall, getting to know Runkang was a fun experience that made me understand how a simple thing such as eating can become a powerful experience if the right purposes are put into it.



### Questions:

- 1) What's the origin of seeking novelty in food? Where does that idea come from?
- 2) In your text, you described how you and your friends enjoyed new experiences by tasting food. In what ways does that tradition have shaped your perception of other gastronomic cultures?
- 3) What would you describe as "strange" food?
- 4) How does food relieve your stress from everyday life?
- 5) Can you talk about the principles and values surrounding your subculture?

### Notes:

- Runkang appeared nervous at the beginning of our conversation, perhaps due to the virtual setting.
- He expressed discomfort and seemed hesitant to turn on his camera during the Zoom meeting, which added a unique dynamic to our interaction.
- Despite the lack of visual cues, Runkang maintained a composed demeanor and his sentences were consistently concise.
- The background noise in Runkang's environment was minimal, allowing for clear communication.
- Runkang's concise responses showcased his ability to convey information effectively within a limited timeframe.
- Despite the initial nervousness, Runkang gradually became more at ease and open during our conversation.
- The absence of visual distractions allowed us to focus more on the content of our discussion.
- Runkang's concise sentences and focused answers demonstrated his thoughtfulness and ability to articulate his ideas clearly, making it easier for me to take accurate notes.