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Volume 50, Issue 1, January 2008, Pages 167-178

Research Report

Engaging with healthy eating discourse(s): Ways of knowing about food and health in three ethnocultural groups in Canada

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2007.07.001>

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to increase our understanding of how people make sense of healthy eating discourses by exploring the “ways of knowing”TM about healthy eating among members of three different ethnocultural groups in Canada: African Nova Scotians, Punjabi British Columbians and Canadian-born European Nova Scotians and British Columbians. Data for this paper come from in-depth, individual interviews with 105 adults where they described their experiences, interpretations, and reasoning used in learning and deciding what to believe and/or reject about healthy eating. Between and within ethnocultural group differences in how people come to know and use practices about healthy eating were examined as they were represented through three broad healthy eating discourses: cultural/traditional, mainstream and complementary/ethical.

The discourses represented different ways to interpret the food–health relationship and make sense of the evidence about healthy eating in the everyday experience. Engagement with different discourses led participants to undertake different practices upon themselves in the name of healthy eating. We suggest that each of the discourses has a significant contribution to make in a dialogue about how healthy eating, as part of health and well-being, should be conceptualized by a society.



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Keywords

Healthy eating; Culture; Qualitative; Foucault; Discourse; Technologies of the self

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