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| **Food for thought: A qualitative study exploring food skills education as a determinant of healthy eating** |
| **Background/Objectives:** Canada is continuing to witness rising obesity rates amongst the total population, including children and youth. Contributing factors to this epidemic include: a growing reliance on convenience foods; limited availability of healthy options; and reduced food literacy skills. A particular public health concern in Alberta is junior high food skills education courses are not mandatory. Therefore, children and youth are not learning valuable skills such as how to purchase and prepare food. Exposing children to food literacy opportunities has been shown to positively promote lifelong healthy eating behaviours. The purpose of this research study will be to uncover whether junior high students and staff associate learning about nutrition and food skills with lifelong healthy eating behaviours.  **Methods:** A focused ethnography will be used as it allows the researcher to explore a specific research question in a feasible time line. Data collection will rely primarily upon semi-structured interviews with a minimum of 10 grade eight and nine students, three principals, and three food skills education teachers from the St. Albert Public School Board comprising of the sample. Latent content analysis will be the selected analytical tool as it is consistently done in conjunction with focused ethnographies. Through a cyclical process, primary patterns in the data will be identified, coded, categorized, and grouped into themes. A data software program will not be used.  **Results:** This research project is in the process of submitting an ethics application through the University of Alberta and the Cooperate Activities Program. Data collection is scheduled to begin February, 2019.  **Discussion:** This research project is significant as it recognizes food skills education as being a priority for both the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta. It is also unique in that it is one of few research studies that will be targeting the youth perspective. A potential implication is this research project may recommend adaptations to the food skills education curriculum and contribute to the discussion on mandating these courses in Alberta. It may provide health promotion researchers and policymakers insight into innovative approaches in addressing the obesity epidemic.  **Keywords:** Obesity, Healthy Eating, Food Skills Education, Qualitative Research, School-based research, Focused Ethnography, Alberta, Canada |