

Draw and Tell: Dietary Acculturation as Lived by Black Immigrant Children of African and Caribbean Descent Residing in Canada

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Explore immigrant children's lived experience of dietary acculturation.

Design: Draw and tell qualitative research.

Participants: A total of 167 school-aged children living in Ottawa, Canada, who had a mother born in sub-Saharan Africa or the Caribbean.

Methods: Children made 2 drawings about foods, 1 related to Canada and the other to their home country, and explained their drawings and what they meant to them. These discussions were recorded and transcribed.

Analysis: Foods were counted for each region (Canada/Africa/Caribbean). Thematic analysis was performed.

Results: Most children drew different foods for Canada and their home country. Apples were the most frequently mentioned food for Canada. Pizza, juice and sugar-sweetened beverages, fries/poutine, and hamburgers were among the 10 most frequently mentioned foods for Canada, whereas none of the top 10 foods for African and Caribbean countries were highly processed. Rice, chicken, meat, and leafy vegetables were in the top 10 foods mentioned for the 3 regions. Emerging themes were food availability and variety, mothers' lack of time and fatigue, and the school eating environment.

Conclusion and Implications: It seems that these black immigrant children experienced dietary acculturation and that changes in dietary habits have had mostly a negative impact on their diet.

Key Words: arts-based research, qualitative research methods, acculturation, draw and tell, nutrition (*J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2017; ■:1-9.)

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INTRODUCTION

Dietary changes associated with immigration have been widely studied among adults in developed countries.¹⁻⁴ This phenomenon, often named dietary acculturation or the process by which individuals adopt the eating

habits and food choices of the host country,⁵ has been linked with increased risks of developing chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases among adults.^{1,6} Yet, the impact of acculturation on the nutritional health of immigrant children or of children of immigrants

(first- and second-generation immigrants, here referred to as immigrant children) has been particularly understudied in Canada. This raises concerns given that children could be more susceptible to dietary changes and their long-term impacts compared with adults.⁷

Arts-based research is an effective way to allow adults to access and understand how children see the world.⁸ The use of arts is often preferable to a sole discussion with young children because they develop the ability to convey feelings and emotions through drawings and paintings before they are as expressive in writing or orally.⁸ Various research methods have involved drawing. The first studies that used drawing as a research method employed it solely; then writing was added, and methodological problems (discussed subsequently) prompted researchers to add a telling component.^{9,10} As their names suggest, these methods use drawing, writing, and telling, alone or

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combined, into draw and write,¹¹⁻¹³ draw and tell,¹⁴⁻¹⁶ and draw, write, and tell.^{9,10,17,18} Although these combined methods are increasingly used in research with children, the tell component is seldom used in nutrition research. Indeed, the current authors found only studies that used the draw and write method to explore the perspectives of children,^{19,20} to assess children's food intake at breakfast,²¹ or to enhance their reporting during a 24-hour dietary recall.^{22,23} Therefore, the aims of this study were to explore whether and how children experience dietary acculturation and to reflect on the experience of using the draw and tell method in nutrition research.

METHODS

Participants and Recruitment

The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study between January 2014 and April 2015 to document the influence of acculturation and social determinants of health on the nutritional health of 6- to 12-year-old immigrant children of African and Caribbean descent.²⁴ A nonprobability sampling was used because no sampling frame was available for this subpopulation.^{24,25} Mothers were included if they lived in Ottawa, Canada; were born in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, or Canada; had at least 1 child aged 6–12 years; and could have a conversation in English or French. No criteria were related to the birth country of children. When a household had >1 school-aged child, the participating child was randomly selected. The study protocol was approved by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity of the University of Ottawa. Informed written consent and assent were obtained from mothers and children, respectively.

In total, 259 mother–child dyads were enrolled in the study. For this article, children who had a mother born in sub-Saharan Africa or the Caribbean and who had complete data (2 drawings containing at least 1 food and a transcript) were included, which left 167 children for analyses.

Procedures

While a survey was administered to mothers, participating children were

invited to make 2 drawings about what they ate, where they ate, or with whom they ate. One drawing had to relate to their home country (or that of their mother if they were born in Canada), whereas the other had to relate to Canada. Children were then asked to describe and explain their drawings as well as what the drawings meant to them. Interviewers took the opportunity to probe and further explore some related themes such as home and school eating environments and food preferences. Discussions were recorded and conducted in English or French according to each child's preference. Efforts were made to ensure children were not intimidated by the fact that they were recorded. They were reassured by sentences such as:

I do not want you to be shy because of the recording. What you say is very important to me and I want to make sure that I do not forget it. I want to remember it well, and this is the reason why I am recording you.

Putting children in the role of experts can empower them and show them that their opinion is valued.¹³ In general, children enjoyed the process and were proud to be listened to. Some children were shy during the discussion and some were reluctant to draw and said they did not have talent. They were encouraged by saying that there were no wrong answers and that the artistic talent was not judged. Children were free to refuse to draw and/or discuss if they did not want to do so.

Data Analysis

Discussions with children were transcribed in the language of the interview, checked against the recording, and entered into NVivo software (version 10, QSR International Pty Ltd, Melbourne, Australia, 2012). The first author went through the transcripts and drawings to extract and count foods drawn and/or discussed; translation into English was performed at this step if needed. A bilingual graduate student validated the data extraction. Food descriptions and ingredients were included if they were given by children without being probed (eg, *I drew a pizza with pep-*

peroni and cheese); if the description was probed, the description and ingredients were not included (eg, *I drew pizza. What is on your pizza usually? Pepperoni and cheese*). If a drawing was not mentioned but was drawn and clearly recognizable, it was included. Results were divided by region (Africa, the Caribbean, or Canada), and those related to Canada were further categorized by the region of origin of the mothers. Children were stratified according to their mothers' characteristics instead of their own because of the mothers' role in food purchasing and preparation, which has an important influence on children's diet.^{26,27} Results were further split by the generational status of children ([Supplementary Data](#)) as well as by gender and age groups (aged 6–8 and 9–12 years).

Thematic analysis was performed on all transcripts.²⁸ The codebook included both deductive codes from topics in the interview guide and inductive content-driven codes.²⁸ The researchers used a process of constant comparison to consolidate the code list and resort concepts into groups until clear, consistent themes emerged.²⁹ Thus, the codes created were systematically compared to develop more complex and inclusive codes.²⁹ These steps were the subject of several discussions among the researchers, and emerging themes were discussed until a consensus was reached. Important themes were then described and interpreted, and quotations were selected to best illustrate the findings. The first 150 interviews (of 259) were coded by 2 team members (others were coded by 1 member); the coding agreement was 95%. Descriptive statistics were performed on survey data in IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (version 23.0, Armonk, NY). All names were changed to ensure confidentiality.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Participants

On average, children were aged 9.4 (SD, 2.0) years; half were girls (49.7%). Foreign-born children (n = 90; 53.9%) arrived in Canada at age 5.8 (SD, 2.9) years and lived in the country for 3.7 (SD, 2.6) years; and 72.2% of them had resided in Canada for <5 years. Two thirds of mothers were born in

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