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Impact of cooking distance/proximity and food neophobia in French culinary social representations

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Abstract: The choice of a dish or a recipe is a dynamic process that among others includes cultural, social, contextual and individual factors (Corbeau & Poulain, 2002; Guibert, Minisini, & Beure, 2010; Kaufmann, 2005). We know that practices are influenced by social representations. In this regard, social representations related to food and cooking might influence the choice of a dish to cook (Lahlou, 1998; Poulain, 2002). In this context, this project aims to better understand how these culinary social representations are influenced by cooking distance/proximity (level of knowledge, practices, involvement) (Abric, 2001; Dany & Abric, 2007; Dany, Apostolidis, & harabi, 2014) and food neophobia (Pliner & Hobden, 1992).

A sample of 420 non-professional French cooks was asked to complete a free ranking association task on "Cooking a dish". Then, they had to classify each word or expression based on their attitudinal orientation: from +2 (the most positive) to -2 (the most negative). Finally, their level of cooking distance/proximity (i.e., food and cooking knowledge, cooking practices, and involvement in cooking) and their level of food neophobia were evaluated through questionnaires. Verbal data were analyzed on the level of occurrence and semantic levels by correspondence factorial analysis (CFA). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were used to compare the attitudinal orientation averages. The results showed an influence of cooking distance/proximity and food neophobia. Culinary social representations of group with a very high cooking proximity were more positive and referred to less normative words (e.g., pleasure, sharing); whereas, group with a very low cooking proximity referred to normative (e.g., eating, recipe, time, chore) and less positive words. Furthermore, more neophilic group had a more positive social culinary representation than more neophobic group.

Keywords: social representation, cooking proximity, food neophobia, food, cooking.

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