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Resumo

The main objective of this research was apprehend and interpret the senses and meanings that students of Physical Education and Nutrition assign to food and body practices, at undergraduate level at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). It is a sociological and anthropological study with a comprehensive approach where we embraced the methodological strategy of linking ethnographic observation (direct and participant) – in the period between 2012 and 2014 – and informal and in-depth interviews with some of these undergraduates. We also took some pictures of the environment we researched. This research has allowed us to understand that the senses and meanings assigned to these practices are influenced by the social roles that the students take in this context. Thus, we analyzed the social relations that are present in this commensality. We observed that the students of these courses do not abandon the rules that exist in this field, because follow these rules make them socially distinguished, being the social distinction one of the senses underlying the practice of the speech, as this can capitalize, or not, the subjects. They generally use the adequateness to the rule to speak and another stance for eating and doing (or not) exercises because they deal with these two realities in their lives all the time. The students want to follow the valued standard in the field, so they speak according the expectation of what should be done, even if their statements are dissonant from what they actually eat and how much they exercise. To assist us in analyzing this gap between what those undergraduates say and do about their practices of eating and exercising, we built a methodological and instrumental tool and we named this analytical category/conception as *décalage*. Through *décalage*, we were able to observe how students deal with the rules related to health promotion and disease prevention (both disseminated in their courses and both involving physical and dietary practices). This is a complex issue because of the contradictory nature of the human being, resulting in an implicit contradiction in their practices. We concluded that the speech and the actions are intertwined in a system of symbols constructed in a specific field, according the rules of the game built in it, which gives distinction to the agents, who follow different interests. The analytical category contributed in the organization of the symbolic exchanges, which require a specific knowledge of the field and the social relations where are (re)produced the senses and meanings of food and physical practices.

