



Polarised Ambitions: the Body or the World

Discourses on Sustainable Food Behaviour
among Swedish Young Adults

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Summary

By studying how young adults talk about food and sustainability at home, this thesis aims to explain how discourses on sustainable food behaviour are constructed, how they can be furthered and mechanisms for their culturalisation, drawing on the positions of the parental home, the school subject Home Economics (HE), and the young adults' home.

Inspired by Laclau and Mouffe's Post Structuralist Discourse Theory, ten semi-structured interviews revealed five key discourses, a *health hegemony* and the floating signifier "*support*". The *relational discourse* is the largest and suggests that sustainable food behaviour is relationally driven. The *knowledge discourse* is characterised by uncertainty about how knowledge can be applied, while the *awareness discourse* highlights insecurities about what constitutes sustainable food behaviour. The *Swedish preference discourse* admits internalised trust in Swedish produce and food recommendations, while the *economic discourse* displays established resource- and cost-awareness.

All but the economic discourse is seen in the parental home. The knowledge, awareness, and Swedish preference discourses are recognised across all studied contexts and are reinforced by the HE subject before being established in the young adult's home. The health hegemony significantly shapes all but the relational discourse, merging health with sustainability and creating generalisations that obscure understanding of both concepts and of how to practically apply sustainable food behaviour. The findings indicate that sustainable food behaviour is culturally passed down from parents and older relatives, where related role models play an important role in shaping awareness and images of the future, while teachers fill gaps left by the family home.

To further sustainable food behaviour, it is essential to build awareness of the distinction between food sustainability and health, otherwise risking misdirecting effort and hence slowing down progress towards sustainable food behaviour. The relationally driven sustainable food behaviour may thus be a natural motor for change, for example, within the HE subject, involving parents and/or kin, allowing the offspring to become both the sender of know-how and the receiver.

To achieve unified, directed, and effective development, governmental guidance and support are needed and expected and may help foster effective changes in sustainable food practices in everyday decision-making on how to fine-tune and expand sustainable food behaviours for the young Swedish adult.

Keywords: Behaviour, culturalisation, food, health hegemony, home economics, relational discourse, sustainable, young adults

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1. Introduction

Today, the world is embroiled in conflicts on multiple fronts, with political polarisation and populism reshaping norms of communication and negotiation, thereby endangering democratic accountability (Anghel & Spatafora 2026; Patkós 2025). The shift has not only diminished trust in scientists and experts but has also branded their insights as “fake” or “false” (Fahnestock 2025; Cooke 2018). This erosion of credibility has particularly affected environmental and sustainability issues, relegating them to lower political priorities in favour of national economic growth and security concerns.

Additionally, within the European Union, geopolitical instability, economic uncertainty, and social unrest, exacerbated by hybrid warfare, are currently diverting attention away from the urgent need to build a sustainable society (Anghel & Spatafora 2026). Instead, economic recovery and growth are taking precedence over environmental stewardship and sustainable living (WWF 2026). This phenomenon is also evident in Swedish political discourse, where the emphasis on sustainability has diminished (WWF 2026).

These examples are rooted in everyday language use: what is said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid. How a sustainability discourse is framed may, hence, affect how people think, feel, and act (Berio & Musholt 2023; Flusberg et al. 2024). This effect may be seen in the Swedish government’s 2023 decision to sidestep its earlier commitments and move its climate commitment deadline to 2045 (The Government Offices 2023), rather than meeting the European goal of 2030 (The Swedish Environment Protection Agency 2023). In effect, this creates a significant gap between requirements and realisation and increases the risk of substantial fines from the European Union (Wadmark & Schmieder 2026).

Accordingly, once attention is diverted from building a sustainable society, it becomes critical for the field of sustainability research to disentangle which sustainability narratives are gaining momentum in this newly established cultural context, ensuring continuous sustainable behaviour change. This is crucial for understanding how cultural narratives drive unsustainable and sustainable behaviours, particularly in the food system, where consumer awareness campaigns often fail to resonate, being superficial or guilt-driven (Sigmer Nielsen & Skov Jensen 2024).

A nuanced understanding of the culturalisation of sustainable food consumption behaviours can thus be key to fostering change, encouraging a shift towards more sustainable food behaviours for future generations in an increasingly intricate world. In this thesis, *culturalisation* refers to the complex process by which values, practices and beliefs are acquired from one group or generation to another (Montanari 2006; Urban 2001) through social learning mechanisms such as language, imitation or teaching and learning (Mesoudi & Whiten 2008).

To effectively address the roots of today’s resistance to sustainability initiatives in the consumer market, research must delve deeper into how sustainability is understood and the cultural mechanisms that shape public perceptions and behaviours within the home. For this purpose, Generation Z (**Gen Z**), a widely studied demographic poised to influence future policies on sustainable consumption and development, is a key focus. It is hence vital that this group recognise the

importance of making sustainable food choices and adopting responsible food consumption behaviours.

This chapter introduces sustainable food consumption, its relationship to behaviour and practice, young adults, and how discourse and culture can deepen understanding of sustainable food behaviours. It also outlines the study's relevance and theoretical gaps, its aim, delimitations, and overall structure.

1.1 Problem Background

This study is motivated by food consumption accounting for approximately 20–25% of Sweden's climate impact (Christensen, Eriksson & Strid 2025; Yang et al. 2022), thereby affecting biodiversity and climate and contributing to eutrophication and acidification (Garske et al. 2020), while consumption levels continue to rise (Halkier 2022; Keller & Halkier 2014), underscoring the need for action to conserve natural resources on multiple fronts, including among consumers.

Both the barriers and the opportunities to addressing the challenges of making consumption patterns more sustainable have been examined across multiple research fields (Hansen & Bo Nielsen 2023; Sahakian et al. 2022a), including sufficiency orientations that seek to explain the complexities of changing consumption patterns (Kropfeld 2023; Sandberg 2021).

Additionally, strategies for waste avoidance and circular consumption practices help reduce resource depletion and ensure materials are repurposed effectively (Hobson et al., 2021; Jaeger-Erben, Rückert-John & Schäfer, 2015). Other areas of research include voluntary simplicity (Boström 2021a; 2021b; Osikominu & Bocken 2020), sustainability transitions (Laakso et al. 2021), and sustainability practices (Munro 2023). Many studies are conducted in the fields of tourism (Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023) and health (Díaz-Pichardo, Vota & Tettamanzi, 2026), with perspectives adapted accordingly.

Moreover, a noteworthy backdrop to the research field of sustainable food consumption is provided by studies on meat reduction (Halkier & Lund 2023; Lund & Halkier 2024), meat replacement, and meat cultivation (see Chapter 2), reflecting the environmental impacts of meat production. Given the multiple research fields related to food and sustainability, it may be challenging for any actor within the food system to grasp the magnitude of the sustainability issues at hand.

Typically, sustainable food consumption involves purchasing products or services that have a significantly lower environmental impact than standard alternatives. Hence, buying “green” or “eco”-labelled produce is only one part of the bigger picture. Instead, sustainable food consumption extends beyond transactions (Svenfelt & Bradley, 2024), encompassing a range of motivations, preferences, and behaviours that lead consumers towards more sustainable choices (Koszevska, 2013; Halkier 2009).

Thus, mainstream efforts to reduce consumption often focus either on minor behavioural changes, such as maintaining and repairing, avoiding the purchase of new items (Lehner et al., 2019) and reuse (Beswick-Parsons, Evans & Jackson, 2026). However, such beyond-consumption behaviour has mostly been observed in sustainable consumption spheres and has not been emphasised in other social groups (Svenfelt, Baraka Wadha & Parekh 2024).

A holistic understanding of sustainable food consumption hence encompasses both individual actions and the intricate web of social, cultural and environmental considerations that underpin them, for example, offering all humans the opportunity to live worthy lives now and in the future (Di Giulio & Fuchs 2014). In this thesis, sustainable food consumption is understood as the use of products and services that meet essential needs, enhance quality of life, utilise minimal resources and avoid harmful materials, and consider the needs of future generations, with strategies relating to *efficiency*: selecting better alternatives, *shift*: replacing with a better choice, and *sufficiency*: consuming less (Svenfelt & Bradley 2024).

However, socially constructed culture is often overlooked in research on food and sustainability, highlighting a research gap that underscores culturalisation as a possible, underused resource in times of environmental urgency.

1.1.1 Behaviour and Practice

The sustainability behaviours and practices discussed in this study rely on norms governing food and consumption. Decisions are practical responses to social norms, shaped by past choices and group norms (Warde 2016). They are sequential, with repeated items, such as groceries, that are regularly replenished (Warde 2016). For instance, being a vegan is shaped by conventions that define socially constructed practices as appropriate, necessary, or desirable (Warde 2005). However, factors such as personal finances, age, and other influences shape decisions, so sustainable behaviour may not always be driven by a desire to be "sustainable" but may stem from other sources, such as a need for resource efficiency (Gibson et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, Alan Warde (2005) finds that most consumption is embedded in practices, with demand arising from practice rather than desire. Consumption is thus seen as integral to everyday life and as constituted by materials and tools (Warde 2005). Practices is thus defined as “blocks” (Reckwitz 2002) of “doings”, temporalities, locations, infrastructures, and physical and emotional states, including “sayings”, i.e., the discourse that gives social meaning to the practice.

Warde (2005) argues that consumption is legitimised by practice and that rewards can be material or emotional, for example, environmental responsibility demonstrated by buying eco-friendly food. To become a competent practitioner, one must demonstrate commitment, show knowledge, and consume the right products or services (Warde 2005). Thus, practice and engagement reinforce each other, yet practices often lag behind opinions et al. 2011).

In this study, the concept of sustainable food behaviour concerns how sustainable behaviours and practices—whether intended or adopted—are discussed rather than observed or logged. Linking “sayings” and “doings” through understanding, explicit rules, instructions, tasks, and so forth (Schatzki 1996; Warde 2005) creates opportunities to identify behaviours, practices, and coordinated entities known as practice bundles (Schatzki 2013).

Because practice is embedded in a cultural context alongside other practices, the way sustainability is discussed reflects how new norms undermine sustainability rather than supporting the transformation towards a sustainable society. This is vital to highlight, as reducing or removing existing practices is likely to be perceived as less forced than adopting and introducing new ones. Together with the repetitive nature of consumption, this risk normalises behaviour away from sustainability when accepted across contexts. Therefore, *normalisation* acts as a silent legitimiser

of overconsumption (Boström 2023; Sahakian 2022b)¹, making it essential within the conceptual framework of this thesis (3.3).

1.1.2 The Young Adult

Compared with previous generations, Gen Z is more environmentally conscious and more committed to sustainability, and they seek information on ethical and environmental topics via online resources and social media (Dabija et al., 2019; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). As consumers, they prioritise healthy and eco-friendly produce, while less sustainability-aware members of the generation emphasise price and practicality (Su et al., 2019; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023).

Born into a highly complex period shaped by global events, including political turmoil, terrorist attacks, a pandemic and the effects of climate change, such as heatwaves, floods and food insecurity (Leach et al. 2021), Gen Z have developed a sensitivity to self-management, collective awareness and universalism (Sakdiyakorn et al. 2021).

Today, Gen Z comprises individuals aged 14–29², and they are the focus of numerous studies on sustainable food. These studies tend to emphasise preferences and consumption patterns. Consequently, food consumption is often treated as a practical problem, with individual choice framed as either automatic or deliberative and cast in black-and-white terms, thereby neglecting the mundane aspects of everyday life.

However, beyond the home, the school subject of Home Economics (**HE**) also plays a vital role in shaping young adults into informed consumers who can make wise food decisions for themselves, their families and their communities, allowing culture to appear through “doings and learnt abilities”³ (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2011:11). This is, for instance, done by teaching and learning *the plate model*, a visual translation of the Nordic official nutritional recommendations (The Swedish Food Agency 2026).

But there appears to be a divide between research on young adults in and out-of-school contexts, with little recognition of HE’s central role in linking sustainability knowledge to food and practice in their “first own home”. Hence, a gap remains in understanding how young adults perceive sustainable consumption and how this perception translates into their sustainable food behaviours and practices as responsibility is shifted to the young adult.

¹ In contrast to Halkier and Wendler’s (2025) idea of systemic change towards less resource-intensive consumption Their normalisation is divided into three steps: social processes enabling increased frequency of less resource-intensive consumption, increased frequency of less resource-intensive consumption in different social contexts, and increased access and ease “to perform less resource-intensive consumption” (Halkier & Wendler 2025:8–9).

² Born between 1997 and 2012 (De Witte, 2022).

³ My translation.

1.2 Problem

Two main issues underpin the background to this thesis's problem of relating sustainable food behaviour to language:

First, a linguistic issue has surfaced regarding the concept of sustainable food behaviour, which is emerging alongside other concepts, including sustainable food actions, sustainable consumption practices, and sustainable meal behaviours. These concepts are distinct yet overlapping and span different scientific fields. This fluid use of concepts risks further undermining what sustainable food behaviour encompasses, leaving room for interpretation of what each issue may or may not entail. This study does not aim to define the diverse concepts, but rather to understand where we are and where we can head, drawing on prior research experience of discourse theory to untie any knots of language.

Second, sustainable food consumption is shaped by social structures that enable or hinder responsible practices. While Social Practice Theory (SPT) addresses this, it adopts a linear approach that is incompatible with the temporary “truth” of discourse theory. Instead, by studying utterances, discourse theory may reveal how cultural food narratives frame and influence sustainable food behaviours, creating opportunities to frame aspects of the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviours within a limited timeframe.

In this thesis, inspiration is thus drawn from *Post-Structuralist Discourse Theory*, as presented in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985/2008) by Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe, where analysis of both text and speech may be applied. Further, inspiration is drawn from the theoretical interpretation and systematisation made by Marianne Winter-Jørgensen and Louise Philips (2000) utilized to examine the societal phenomenon culturalisation of sustainable food behaviour, and was chosen for its focus on language, meaning, and hegemony. However, discourse theory and discourse analysis come as a “packet-solution”, where philosophic predispositions, theory, and method must be accepted or refuted in their entirety by the researcher (Winter-Jørgensen and Philips 2000).

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to explain how discourses on sustainable food behaviour at home are constructed through Swedish young adults' articulations, to explain the mechanisms by which sustainable food behaviour is culturalised, and to examine how sustainable food behaviour can develop. The aim is guided by three research questions:

1. How is sustainable food behaviour constructed?
2. How is sustainable food behaviour culturalised?
3. How can sustainable food behaviour be furthered?

1.4 Delimitations

From a *theoretical* standpoint, discourse theory relies on a rich and complex flora of terminology, which has accordingly been adapted. Hence, a limited number of discourse theoretical concepts have been used in this study, for example, excluding myth and identity. Accordingly, the open Laclauian definition of the discursive field and its intended construction have led to its replacement by Fairclough's concept of discourse order, entailing a limited number of discourses challenging each other within the same terrain (Winter-Jørgensen & Philips 2000), which is found useful within a limited study like this. Also, sustainable consumption is here restricted to choosing food that is produced, processed, distributed and used in ways that minimise environmental harm, support local economies and promote social wellbeing for both present and future generations.

On a *methodological* level, delimitations regarding age and geographical area were made, choosing only the encompassing respondents from the following cities: Gothenburg, Jönköping, Stockholm, Uppsala, and Örebro. The cities were selected based on my pre-existing contact network and natural movement patterns. From an *empirical* perspective, time is framed by the length and level of a university course, and budget is defined by personal finances, which set the scope of the study.

1.5 Outline

The first chapter, *Introduction*, frames the problem and its background, using discourse to examine young adults' sustainable food consumption behaviours and practices and how they are furthered, followed by the introduction of the research questions and delimitations. Chapter 2: *Literature Review* further frames the problem in light of recent studies, and Chapter 3: *Theory* introduces discourse theory and culture and presents concepts for analysis that bridge them within the conceptual framework relied upon. Next, Chapter 4: *Method* presents the methodology used, detailing the research approach and strategy, the role of the researcher, the literature search, the case description, operationalisation, the semi-structured interviews, the selection process, material collection, and the discourse-analytic process, before addressing quality and ethical reflections. In Chapter 5, *Results and Analysis*, the study's main findings are analysed and presented. Further, in the *Discussion* (Chapter 6), the findings and methods are discussed in relation to theories and research supported by the conceptual framework. Additionally, the research questions are answered. Finally, Chapter 7, *Conclusions*, summarises the key findings and practical implications for the future, and provides suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the outcome of the multidisciplinary literature review on sustainability, food and behaviour is presented thematically. Here, it is highlighted how sustainable eating practices can be socially constructed, what impediments may arise for consumers as responsibility is redirected from government and food-provisioning actors, the educational effects on sustainable practices, the effects of impulsiveness, engagement, and eco-labelling on sustainable consumption, and alternative dietary pathways, mainly focusing on Gen Z's preferences.

2.1 Social Construction of Sustainable Eating

Mathilda Marshall's dissertation, *Sustainability for dinner: An ethnological study of how sustainable eating is practised in everyday life* (2016), highlights how sustainability is continually renegotiated and takes on new cultural meanings. Marshall (2016) studies households striving to live sustainably and argues that sustainable food practices often arise from an overarching wish to be considered sustainable. Everyday practices are adopted as wholesome, neither ignorant nor fanatical about sustainability. Instead, they involve interconnected, personalised, and socially constructed practice bundles, created individually or collectively, sometimes initiated by the government (Marshall 2016).

Also, their positioning may build green capital and a green distinction, rooted in perceived wholesome ideals, often emerging from collective practice bundles. An imagined green practice bundle may thus build green capital, creating an image of the individual and their position towards others: a we versus a them. However, motivations for socially and ecologically conscious consumer behaviour may be a manifestation of pro-social values, in which society or others benefit from the actions taken (Pepper, Jackson & Uzzell 2009). Hence, individual practices are controlled by social structures, which negotiate actions to be even more sustainably beneficial (Marshall 2016).

Marshall's ethnological perspective focuses on the practices and perspectives of people striving to live sustainably. Thus, this group does not represent the average Swedish citizen or what may be referred to as "the normal" in a Swedish cultural context; in this setting, it may instead support practical images of how sustainable food behaviour can be practised by larger groups in the future, thereby supporting the furtherance aspect of the aim and the research questions.

2.2 Impediments in Sustainable Food Consumption

Vishal Parekh's dissertation, *Mainstreaming sustainable consumption: Practices, perspectives, and the case of food* (2025), explores structural barriers and prospects for households' transition to sustainable eating practices. The study showed recurrent consumer challenges in acting, stemming from the food system's professed complexity and a shortage of knowledge and guidance, for example, deciding between organic or locally sourced produce (Parekh 2025). Consequently, the challenges were perceived as barriers to the household transition to sustainable

eating, requiring additional time and energy to support informed decisions (Parekh 2025); Raising questions about where responsibility for consumer transition lies. Although Marshall's study adopts a different position from Parekh's, both find that the consumer is placed under a heavy and sometimes exhausting burden to consistently make well-informed, well-prepared, and focused consumption choices (Marshall 2016; Parekh 2025). Marshall's respondents mainly rely on two strategies to cope with such overwhelming feelings. First, pragmatically, they negotiate the desire to live sustainably against the demands of everyday life and society, allowing compromises. Second, they build competences by gradually expanding their practice bundles, adding or abandoning sustainable practices to handle cost or angst challenges (2016).

Returning to Parekh (2025), the study showed how public authorities should either enable sustainable choices and/or restrict unsustainable ones. Moreover, the respondents placed responsibility on food provisioning actors, such as major retailers, to expand availability and to display organic and plant-based products in stores and food venues. Furthermore, information supporting decision-making and campaigns that pinpoint the harms and benefits of unsustainable and sustainable ways of eating were seen as supportive (Parekh 2025).

The result aligned with the dominant Swedish planning and policymaking, not promoting significant changes in how citizens live their lives (Parekh 2025).. Instead, the significance of information as a basis for the public's sound sustainable choices was emphasised, while the government and food provisioning actors framed their roles as enablers or facilitators of consumer decision-making (Parekh 2025). This redirection of responsibility is harshly critiqued by Parekh (2025), who demands greater coordination among actors in public policy, business, and society, as they have significantly more power over the structural factors that limit the mainstreaming of sustainable eating practices in Sweden.

Therefore, Parekh (2025) suggests challenging dominant narratives about what sustainable eating entails through reconceptualisation and envisioning, stressing the need for transformation of structural conditions, illustrated by three practice-based approaches: key practice elements, which entail a focus on related unaddressed elements connected to other practices, such as addressing hetero-masculine norms related to meat-eating (Parekh 2025; Bogueva & Marinova 2020, 2022). Also, identifying specific integrative practices that contribute to unsustainable performance by clarifying what "fresh" food is and/or by providing experiential and informational education, for instance, through collective food gardening. Finally, *communities of practice* where formal institutions, such as schools, shape and normalise sustainable food practices in various ways (Parekh 2025).

The practice-oriented insights from Parekh's (2025) research highlight the critical position of the "abandoned" and heavily burdened Swedish consumer, suggesting practice-based strategies to challenge how sustainable food behaviour can take shape and be carried by formal institutions and food provisioning actors, thereby supporting where and how the articulated behaviours of the aim may surface and how the conceptual framework is taking form (3.3).

2.3 Sustainable Practice by Education

When approaching an educational context, it may be essential to highlight how young people's views on what and how to eat are shaped by both preference and the social groups they want to belong to (Bohm & Bengts 2023). Hence, disclaiming habits is not vital for this group (Kreuzer et al. 2019). Besides, young adults still in didactic training seem to base their sustainability focus on acquisition rather than on usage and disposal (Kreuzer et al. 2019). Consequently, their main barriers are related to the purchasing situation, highlighting price and lack of information. Yet, they recognise their personal lack of knowledge and abilities (Kreuzer et al. 2019).

Still, the school context provides opportunities to spread sustainable food practices to families and the community (Parekh 2025), as the HE subject syllabus is already built upon ecological, social, and economic perspectives of sustainability (Bohm 2023). In particular, HE seems to act as a gate-opener to the home kitchen domain, offering the pupil an entry card when invitations from the domain owner are lacking (Törnskog 2023), thereby making HE an important agent in spreading sustainable food practices within the family and society.

However, in Emmalee Gisslevik's dissertation, *Education for sustainable food consumption in home and consumer studies* (2018), a divided understanding of what sustainability perspectives may entail is displayed. Either a unified practice is advocated that builds knowledge about ethical, healthy and resource-efficient food consumption within a homemade meal practice, or contradictory and inconsistent teaching and learning situations are proposed that result in fragmented learning opportunities based on informed reasoning rather than action (Gisslevik 2018).

Although challenged, the HE subject offers young adults the opportunity to develop knowledge and practice in sustainable food consumption before they establish their own homes, thereby supporting the culturalisation aspect of the aim. However, the sustainability focus is largely acquisition-based, and studies are generally limited to classroom contexts, failing to account for the effects of HE teaching and learning after young adults have established their own homes and taken on greater personal responsibility.

2.4 Impulsiveness, Engagement and Eco-labelling

A Norwegian-Swedish study (Skallerud & Armbrecht 2026) on Swedish consumers confirms that subjective norms, attitudes and perceived behavioural control are reliable predictors of consumers' intention to purchase sustainably produced fish. The study also links the intention to buy sustainable seafood with food involvement, highlighting how personal engagement with food guides sustainable behaviours (Skallerud & Armbrecht 2026). The study shows the need to tailor marketing strategies for different consumer groups, taking into account impulsiveness, food involvement and environmental awareness (Skallerud & Armbrecht 2026).

Anna Kristina Edenbrandt and Carl-Johan Lagerkvist's 2022 study shows that people with less knowledge about how food impacts the climate buy fewer sustainability-labelled foods and more red meat. There is potential to influence groups with high climate impact through information. However, the most interested groups, like "meat avoiders" and "meat reducers," already buy less meat and

sustainable products, so information alone may only modestly reduce climate impact. Combining information with policy tools, such as eco-labelling, is needed.

In Andreas Haga's dissertation, *Psychological consequences of moral labelling in the built environment* (2018), the generalisability of the eco-labelling effect is demonstrated, extending the findings beyond the food context to other contexts and behaviours. Haga's findings thus align with the results of the Edenbrandt and Lagerkvist (2022) study, which show that people with high commitment to sustainable behaviour are also more susceptible to the eco-labelling effect, that is, the information provided through a symbol. However, low commitment to sustainable behaviour may also show an inverted or even negative effect on the desired performance (Edenbrandt & Lagerkvist 2022), thus highlighting one of the many Gordian knots in efforts to further sustainable behaviour.

In essence, sustainable food consumption is clearly linked to impulsiveness when the consumer already has a personal engagement with food. It is also these engaged groups who will be helped by more information, such as eco-labelling, to further support their sustainable food decisions. In effect, the engaged groups may serve as a contrast to highlight the "normal", thereby defining the contours of the first research question and how sustainable food behaviour is constructed.

2.5 Alternative Dietary Pathways

Gen Z is often in focus in studies on alternative diets that challenge reliance on unhealthy and unsustainable animal-derived foods within existing food production systems. Many of these studies focus on preference rather than on behaviour.

One exception is Rööös et al. (2015), who examined a typical Swedish diet, Nordic recommendations, or a low-carbohydrate diet; all showing climate impacts beyond sustainable levels. The Nordic advice—limiting livestock—had lower impacts, indicating that a shift to plant-based foods is needed (Rööös et al. 2015). Another Swedish diet study identified three clusters with less animal-based and more plant-based foods, reducing climate impact by 53%, challenging the idea that climate-friendly and healthy diets are more costly (Eustachio Colombo et al. 2023).

Consumer preferences for alternative diets, particularly regarding meat cultivation, are under study, including cell-cultured meat. A study in the United States and the United Kingdom (Szejda, Bryant & Urbanovich 2021) found that 80% were open to cultivated meat, rising to 88% among Gen Z.

In a Greek study (Melios et al. 2025), 58% expressed willingness to try cultivated meat, mainly driven by curiosity, but not necessarily a willingness to eat or pay for it. Then, in an Australian study (Bogueva & Marinova 2020), 72% of Gen Z were not ready to accept cultivated meat, primarily due to concerns about the food supply. Two years later, the same researchers found that 86% of respondents linked climate change to human activities, while 62% lacked awareness of food's role (Bogueva & Marinova 2022).

Young Indonesian adults rarely associate traditional food consumption with ecological value, but rather with economic and socio-cultural aspects, driven by a utilitarian attitude. Additionally, sustainable food and value influencers have a low effect on their sustainable food consumption (Kristia, Kovács & Erdey, 2024).

In Sweden, food sustainability involves household management with fresh supermarket food and electric storage, enabling short-term planning. However,

many lack materials and skills for long-term storage (Marshall 2023), risking difficulties in a crisis. Conversely, Çalışkan (2025) show that food crises positively influence Turkish Gen Z's views on sustainability, particularly in food-related behaviours driven by their attitudes towards economic and social sustainability.

In conclusion, there appears to be a general openness to trying alternative protein sources, particularly among younger consumers. However, there are indications that interest may be driven more by curiosity than by a willingness to buy or pay for the products. This openness may be significant when exploring how sustainable food behaviour can be furthered.

3. Theory

Building on previous research in discourse theory and analysis, the theory chapter presents discourse theory from the position that the meanings of all social phenomena are mediated by discourse and cannot be permanently fixed. The natural, or normal, is then examined through the discourse-theoretical concept of hegemony. My goal is thus to study patterns in utterance meanings that reveal the social effects of different discourses, rather than to judge or prioritise statements about the world. Therefore, this study positions itself differently from the studies within the Literature review, which often rely on Social Theory. The chapter then presents and explains why it relies on hermeneutic culture rather than other definitions, and ends with a presentation of the conceptual framework that bridges theory and concepts.

3.1 Discourse Theory

Discourse presents a contingent, or temporary, image of reality (Winter-Jørgensen & Philips 2000; Lindqvist 2004), continually relating to and being challenged by other discourses. It thereby defines the temporary “truth” within a particular aspect of the social world (Laclau 1993), referred to as a *domain* (Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2008). Hence, the ongoing struggle between competing discourses, constantly altering and reconfiguring meaning, means that the aim of discourse analysis cannot be to portray the “truth” about reality, but rather to describe how reality is constructed through the *discursive struggle*, for example, in how people perceive their sustainable food behaviour.

However, the wide and frequent use of the term *discourse* has led to a variety of ways in which it should be understood across contexts, some vague and some precise (Winter-Jørgensen & Philips 2000). A discourse may thus be defined as an attempt to fix a continuous conversation that constantly reshapes and restructures itself within and between different groups in society (Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2008).

A discourse may be seen as an *utterance* (Schiffrin 1994) constructed within a linguistic *context*. Yet focus is put on how language is used rather than its composition, neither making a complete sentence the smallest nor the largest construction of an utterance. Consequently, context enables me to identify and study the functions that utterances may have within a discourse, treating them as identifiable units (Norrby 1996), excluding other meanings.

In essence, although discourse is essential to how the world is understood, language is unstable and context-dependent in creating meaning. In effect, the same utterance may convey different meanings across contexts.

3.1.1 Discourse analysis

Approaching discourse analysis as performed in the Results and Analysis chapter, a *discourse*—or a *discursive element*—is formed from relationally defined *elements*, which are constantly changing through the process of articulation, that is, any act that modifies discursive elements through *linguistic means*, such as speaking, or *non-linguistic means*, such as smiling or nodding. To support the analysis of a social

phenomenon, the discourse analytical framework utilises different tools, seen in Figure 1 below.

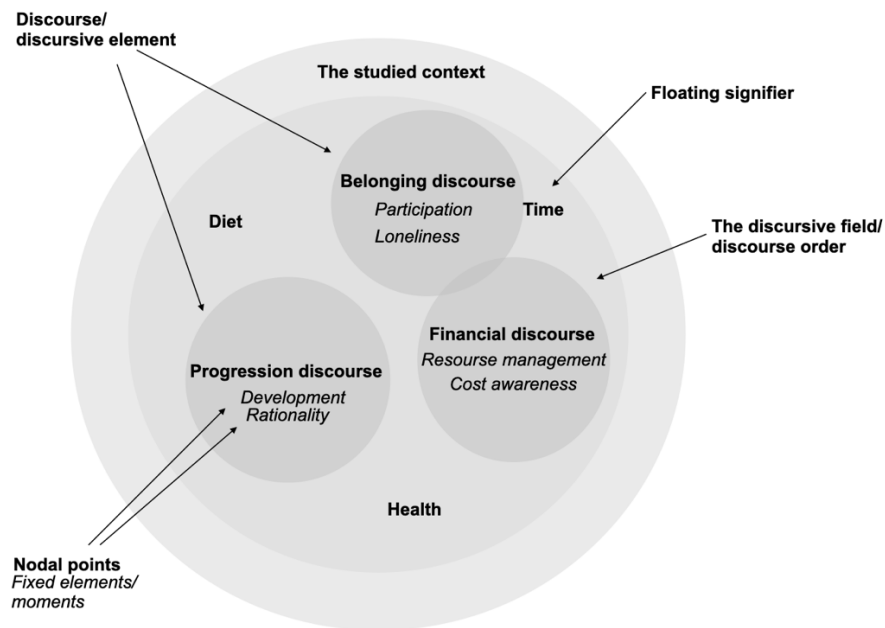


Figure 1 Illustration of the discourse analytical concepts discourse/discursive element, discursive field/discourse order, nodal points, and floating signifier forming different discourse meanings in relation to each other

In Figure 1 above, one can see how different discourse meanings have formed from two signifiers, or sound images, called *nodal points*, which anchor meaning in relation to other discursive elements, providing structure to the discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). The nodal points anchor meaning around a central, privileged signifier (Laclau 1977), unifying a given field (Žižek 1989) and assigning and acquiring meaning for other signifiers within that discourse.

By studying how other discourses relate to the same signs⁴, I may identify which nodal points are “fixed” and can be treated as *moments*. Through articulation, a discourse establishes a temporary closure of a sign, turning elements whose meaning has not yet been “fixed” into moments. Still, closure is never fully achieved (Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2008). From these moments, young adults’ sustainable food behaviours can be constructed and positioned in time, thereby addressing the aim and research questions.

However, as seen in Figure 1 above, there are signs that remain outside the discourse, even though they belong to the *discourse order*. These elements, without fixed meaning, gather within the discourse order as *floating signifiers*, capable of holding different meanings depending on the discourse in which they appear (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). The floating signifiers may hence add aspects to how the

⁴ Rejecting Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1960) position of the *sign* joining a sound image (*the signifier*) with a concept (*the signified*) deriving meaning from their difference from other signs, Laclau and Mouffe argues that the position of the signs is constantly up for negotiation as language is used (*la parole*) and thus cannot be fixed (Laclau 1993).

discourses can be understood, thereby supporting the understanding of how sustainable food behaviour may be understood and furthered. The key discourse analytical concepts, including hegemony, will be further operationalised in Table 1 in Chapter 4.

3.1.2 Hegemony

The construction of hegemony relies on ideology. For Gramsci (1971), hegemony is social consensus achieved through articulation without violence or coercion. By contrast, Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2008) see hegemonic struggle across many social domains, allowing for social relations beyond class. However, hegemonic orders can be challenged by overt or covert counter-hegemonic practices seeking new hegemony (Carroll 2006).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2008) argue that ideology and objective discourse are indistinguishable, seeking to conceal the political process and to construct what appears to be a normal or fixed social order (Laclau 1990). Therefore, the discourse analysis strives to deconstruct such “natural” structures, demonstrating that the elements could have been connected in alternative ways (Laclau 1993). The social practices structured by a hegemonic discourse may thus appear so natural that it is difficult to recognise them as the product of political hegemony. When the discourse is accepted as common sense, hegemonic practices are sedimented, and their origins are forgotten (Mouffe 2013). In effect, any hegemonic influence on the discourses identified here may drastically affect the aim and the research questions.

3.2 Hermeneutic Culture

The term *culture* is highly complex and encompasses a wide range of definitions that vary significantly across contexts, necessitating precise clarification for meaningful discourse. The *hermeneutic* definition is relied upon here, as it is perhaps the most nuanced, framing culture as a meaning-making practice. In this view, humans continuously create significance through their social interactions and cultural contexts. Here, culture and society are treated as separate yet interdependent constructs, with meaning emerging through interpretation from dynamic exchanges among individuals (Fornäs 2012a).

This understanding recognises that meaning is not static but evolves as it is shaped through ongoing conversations, experiences, and shared narratives (Lindqvist, 2010). It is from this *hermeneutic* perspective that this thesis further supports its theoretical exploration. Importantly, the hermeneutic definition of culture is grounded in and connected to three other prominent characterisations: the ontological, anthropological, and aesthetic, which coexist.

The *ontological* definition, as seen in Figure 2 below, links culture to cultivation in agriculture, contrasting human-made with nature (Fornäs 2012b). It characterises culture by organisation, homogeneity, longevity, and shared practices among communities (Lindqvist 2010). In *anthropological* culture, biological and sociocultural aspects of living organisms are in focus, exploring how practices influence behaviours and experiences, highlighting the interplay between biology and culture (Fornäs 2017). The *aesthetic* view sees culture in arts, emphasising creative and expressive activities, encompassing both “high” and “low” culture, still regarded as superior to the natural (Fornäs 2012b).

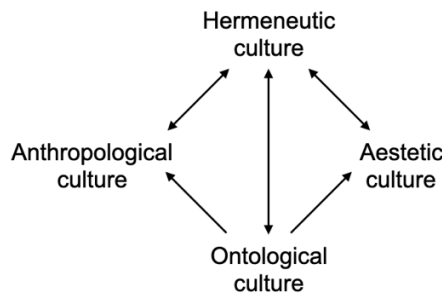


Figure 2 Four concepts of culture. Redrawn from Fornäs, (2012a:37)

In Figure 2 above, the hermeneutic culture concept links to three other culture concepts with double arrows, while a single arrow connects the ontological culture to the anthropological and aesthetic perspectives. Meaning making becomes intersubjective through human interaction and mediation between multiple subjects, objects and texts within overlapping contexts (Fornäs 2012a).

For a culture to survive over time, it must be embraced and adopted by subsequent generations. To further understand the spread of culturalisation, a two-stage process is relied upon, involving: an *awareness stage* originating from *signals* such as teaching or observation, and an *acceptance stage* when learning occurs (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 2020). Although acquiring traits may be slow and complex, acceptance is vital for integrating traditions and knowledge (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 2020; Montanari, 2006; Urban, 2001).

Culturalisation can occur through various mechanisms, including storytelling, rituals, social interactions, and media influence and should be contrasted with genetic inheritance and individual learning (Mesoudi & Whiten 2008). The most effective transmission occurs when younger generations find meaning and benefits, especially through practical, emotional, or social value, which encourages the culture's endurance (Montanari 2006; Urban 2001).

Essentially, a potential meeting between discourse theory and culture depends on how meaning is constructed and must therefore rely on hermeneutic culture to be compatible. In this context, utterances regarding meaning-making practice become of particular interest to this study, enabling aspects of awareness, positions in time, and acceptance to surface within the material.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 3 below illustrates how the variables and concepts presented in the introduction, literature review, and theory chapters are related and how they work together, relying on a unifying non-linear framework.

From a theoretical perspective, *hermeneutic culture* (3.2), *sustainable food consumption* (1.1), and *behaviour* (1.1.1) converge fully through the central concept of *sustainable food behaviour* (1.1), understood here from the perspective of *young adults* (1.1.2) and their mediation into *practice* (1.1.1) or *hegemony* (3.1.2).

Here the *practice concept* occupies a central behavioural position in bridging *hermeneutic culture* and *sustainable food consumption* within the discourse-

theoretical framework (3.1) linked by “sayings” and “doings”, supporting the furthering of sustainable food behaviour.

Instead, *hegemony* may be seen as its “counterpart”, slowing progress through *normalisation* (1.1.1) and making the need for continuous progression invisible. The pragmatic behaviour supporting food sustainability hence includes both individual actions and the social, cultural and environmental attention that underpins them.

Although a sustainable food consumption practice may come with bundles of efficiency, shift and/or sufficiency (1.1), these behaviours are not, in this Swedish context, considered fully culturally established and are therefore positioned in the “realm” between behaviour and sustainable food consumption.

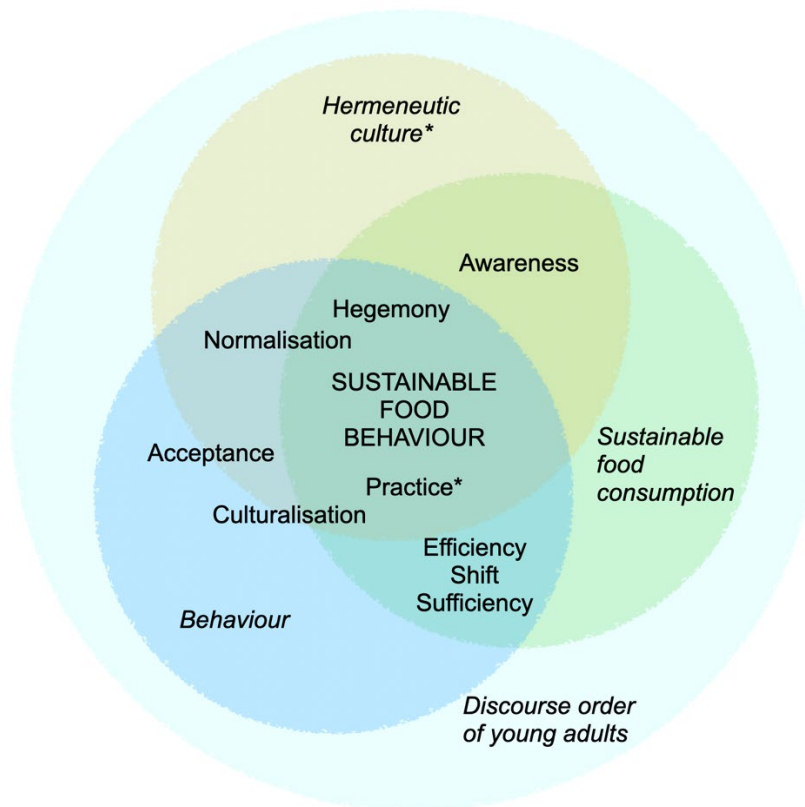


Figure 3 Image of the conceptual framework, in which the discourse order of young adults sets the platform for emerging discourses that unite aspects of hermeneutic culture, sustainable food consumption, and/or behaviour by positioning the concepts and variables presented in the introduction, literature review and theory chapters. The asterisks mark the unique points connecting discourse theory with behaviour and hermeneutic culture

In Figure 3 above, the concept of *awareness* (3.2) is positioned at the intersection of hermeneutic culture and sustainable food consumption; depending on the subject and the cultural context, it does not naturally result in action. However, in the contrasting position between hermeneutic culture and behaviour, action is central to the realisation of the concepts positioned there: *acceptance* (3.2), and *culturalisation* (1). In all, this model serves as the conceptual framework for the study and is relied upon in the discussion.

4. Method

Hermeneutically positioned and building on the choices and motivations made in previous chapters, this chapter presents and discusses all methodological choices, their relevance to the aim and research questions, and their consequences for the research process. To ensure transparency, the chosen research approach and strategy are detailed, including the researcher's role, the literature search strategy, the case description, the operationalisation, the semi-structured interviews, the selection of respondents, the collection of material, and the analysis, as well as an account of how quality and ethical considerations were addressed.

In relation to the studies constructing the literature review, this study, with its focus on capturing short narrative articulations, aligns better with some of those studies, which also rely on the interview format to collect material.

4.1 Research Approach and Strategy

This thesis project adopts an abductive approach, comprising a literature review and a case study, to bridge the identified problem and related research gaps. A singular focus on a relatively unexplored and complex phenomenon, such as the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviours, suggests a flexible approach that allows me to reconsider decisions made during the research process and to refine the framework, thereby ensuring good research quality.

This may be supported by the abductive approach, which begins with empirical findings rather than theory (Conaty 2021; Lukka & Modell 2010). Hence, the objective is not to test the theory, but to allow the theory to facilitate understanding of the phenomenon through the case (Thomas 2010), moving back and forth among theory, empirics, and material, enabling me to build a better understanding of the phenomenon (Yin 2014; Dubois & Gadde 2002). This movement supports the continuous and reflective dialogue between researcher, text, material, and theory (Conaty 2021; Haig 2005; Thomas 2010), thus admitting the novel and unforeseen to emerge.

Choosing a case study seems appropriate, as it involves conducting an empirical investigation within its natural context (Robson 2002). However, defining precise boundaries between a phenomenon and its context may be challenging, as some phenomena occur only in specific contexts. Nevertheless, the case study may be well suited to exploring the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviours, as it can take a number of variables into account (Saunders et al. 2009) and is useful for answering open questions (Yin 2013). Guided by the aim, the material for this case study must capture articulations, making interviews seem relevant for material collection.

4.2 The Role of the Researcher

Since reality cannot be reached outside the discourses, the discourses become central for analysis, and so is the role of the researcher. Accepting the social-constructive assumption where knowledge is *one* among other possible representations of the world, the positioning of the researcher in relation to the area

of study hence becomes crucial in regard to what may be seen and what conclusions are drawn (Winter-Jørgensen and Philips 2000).

In discourse-theoretical studies, the researcher is often portrayed as taking the position of a stranger or being estranged from the material (Winter-Jørgensen and Philips 2000). Yet this positioning still brings my cultural backpack into the role of a “co-constructor” of the material. Consequently, it may be challenging—or even impossible—for the researcher not to bring personal values to the analysis, especially if the researcher is “close” to the discourses under study.

Inspired by Foucaultian studies and by how articulation is central to the aim and the research questions, inspiration is drawn from how the philosopher Jonna Bornemark (2021) utilises the Aristotelian concept of *thaumazein*, or *wonder*, arising when confronted with the unknown in natural or social phenomena. Utilising *thaumazein* as a scaffolding technique to support the theoretical lens and to distance myself from my cultural background.

When in contact with the respondents, wonder brings genuine interest in the experiences shared, suspending any reactions in favour of curiosity about what may otherwise seem faulty, unconventional, strange or abnormal. For instance, as I step into the transcriptions of the spoken word, wonder brings emotional experience to the analysis of meaning-making utterances, supporting the analytical interpretation and putting normalised discourses into focus. As the writing of this thesis mainly relies on being seated at a computer screen, wonder may also be sustained by the planned manual and multisensory data analysis.

4.3 Literature Search Strategy

To support the construction of a relevant framework for this study, a literature search strategy was first initiated on 19th January 2026 by identifying relevant records from the databases Web of Science, Scopus, and SwePub, to cover and collect relevant material related to the studied area, the aim and the research questions. As shown in Appendix 1, the search for suitable research papers began with five search term combinations, yielding $n=251$. To exclude records, automation tools were utilised, mainly covering those containing only metatext, resulting in $n=167$.

Thereafter, the selection process was further refined by reading titles and relevant abstracts and manually rejecting irrelevant articles, as many were related to culture as cultivation. Additionally, studies in a foreign language were rejected. Copies found across multiple databases were also removed. The remaining 104 articles were selected for full reading, during which 61 focused on culture as cultivation, nine were book chapters, seven were literature reviews, four were not relevant, and three focused on culture as aesthetics. Ultimately, the remaining 20 articles covered Gen Z's sustainability practices, culinary topics, and motivations for sustainability, thereby supporting the identification of trends and gaps within the field under study.

4.4 Case Description

The case study format supports an explanation of a current phenomenon by deepening understanding of the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviours among Swedish young adult consumers. In essence, how sustainable food behaviours are understood and translated into practice, and who or what supports the establishment and/or furthering of such practices.

Within the limited timeframe of a university course, studying how meaning is constructed from young adults' narratives about their sustainable food behaviours at home offers an opportunity to better understand these behaviours and practices, as well as how they may be transmitted to future generations. This understanding can be key to fostering further change and encouraging a shift towards more sustainable food behaviours in an increasingly intricate world.

Swedish meal culture is characterised by a lack of a strong culinary heritage, shaped by a focus on progress, innovation, and multiculturalism, and by a legacy of historical poverty and late industrialisation (Jönsson 2020). Hence, meal culture encompasses not only food but also customs, social interactions, and rituals (Tellström 2024). For instance, traditional home-cooked dishes known as *husmanskost* reflect time-consuming culinary craftsmanship, enabled by post-World War II government policies. These standardised kitchen practices introduced modern appliances, thereby transforming how Swedes prepare and relate to food (Jönsson 2020).

Places for cultural “schooling” in sustainable food behaviours exist in the home—both inherited and self-created—and in societal institutions such as the Swedish School. The aim of Swedish school syllabi, such as Lgr22, is to nurture younger generations into functional citizens, compensating for gaps in home learning (Lgr11; Lgr 22). Despite HE’s importance in equipping students with essential life skills, it is currently the school subject with the fewest instructional hours, totalling 118 hours across all educational levels (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2022). Examining how schooled and socially constructed knowledge and practice contribute to the implementation of sustainable food behaviours in adult life can be approached by framing the case from three positions in time: the family home, the HE subject, and the young adult’s home.

In the chapters that follow, operationalisation, semi-structured interviews, the respondent selection process, material collection, the discourse analytical process, and quality and ethical considerations will be discussed, further expanding the description of the case.

4.5 Operationalisation

Operationalising Laclauian discourse analysis involves translating abstract theoretical concepts into concrete analytical questions (Table 1) and coding procedures that link concepts to the aim, research questions (Appendix 2), analytical questions, coding strategy and interpretation (Table 1; 4.2). This will be done in a few steps, beginning with the operationalisation of Laclauian concepts into analytical questions and evidence, as seen in Table 1 below. There, the meaning of each concept guides me in specifying what to look for in the material and which analytical questions must be raised during analysis to support this effort.

Table 1 Operationalisation of Laclauian concepts to analytical questions and evidence

Theoretical concept	What it means	What to look for	Discourse analytical questions	Evidence/ Coding strategy
Articulation	Practice of linking meanings	How concepts become connected	Which articulations are recurrently connected? In what context?	Recurring storylines, associations, metaphors and/or concepts. Exclusion/ silence.
Discourse	A contingent image of reality	“Fixed” meaning, stability.	How does floating ideas become fixed?	“Fixed” nodal points
Moment	Fixed meaning within discourse	Stable definitions and repeated associations	Which articulations are stable?	Recurring and stable associations
Nodal Point	Signifier organising discourse (structure and binding)	Frequently recurring central concepts	Around which words do meanings cluster? How are the signs defined in relation to the other signs within each discourse? What meaning is established when elements are put into fixed positions? What meaning making is excluded? What discourse/s is an articulation building upon? What discourse/s does it reproduce?	Central signifiers (structure and binding)
Floating signifier	Competing meanings	Same concept used differently by different actors	Which meanings compete? What concepts are defined differently by different actors?	Conflicting definitions
Hegemony	Dominant articulation	Meaning presented as natural or common sense	Which articulation becomes normalised? Which meanings are treated as obvious? Which meanings disappear?	Stabilised meanings, the “normal”

Moreover, Table 1 above also includes how the evidence determining each concept is constructed, hence supporting consistency during the analytical process. The discourse analytical procedure will be further elaborated under *A Discourse Analytical Process* (4.9) below, showing how the analytical questions are applied in practice.

Next, the link between the concepts in Table 1 and the aim, research questions, and interview questions is shown in Appendix 2, Table A, where the research questions are derived from the aim, aligning with the targeted Laclauian concepts in Table 1. Then, the interpretation focuses on how the elements of evidence in Table 1 are articulated into relatively stable discourses and the role of the

researcher, as presented in 4.2. An excerpt from the coding framework is therefore found in Appendix 2, Table B, showing how text excerpts were coded into concepts.

4.6 Semistructured Interviews

Placed in its real-world context, the in-depth inquiry into a distinct and complex phenomenon, the case, examines the interaction between the case and its content (Yin 2005). Here, this is done by studying how people talk about the case and by collecting material from interviews.

Aligned with the open question case format, semi-structured interviews are a broad category that allows flexibility and creates opportunities for articulation, providing me with structure and freedom while gathering meaningful data from a limited number of respondents, aiming for a natural conversation in which free, in-depth answers can be given (Bryman et al. 2025; Mueller 2019).

Still, many of the open questions in the semi-structured interview guide in Appendix 3 are inspired by the narrative interview format (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000), encouraging the respondent to speak freely through prompts such as “Tell me about” and “Tell me more”. On a surface level, this approach seems to relate to the concept of laddering—creating opportunities to delve deep into the studied phenomenon (Sørensen & Askegaard 2007). However, laddering imposes a limiting position, thus conflicting with discourse theory and the hermeneutic level of culture applied in this thesis.

Instead, parallels with episodic narrative interviews may be drawn, in which a fusion of aspects of semi-structured interviews, narrative inquiries, and episodic interviews is utilised to better understand the studied phenomenon through individual stories of experience (Mueller 2019). A common denominator between episodic narrative interviews and the approach chosen for this thesis is the focus on eliciting *small*, authentic participant-driven personal experience narratives. In effect, contrasting with many narrative methods that generate event-focused *big* life stories (Patterson 2013). Additionally, the position on meaning making is shared, depending “upon not only what is explicit [...] but also what is implicit—what is assumed” (Fairclough 2003:11). Despite several common positions, the protocol-driven documentation and linear analytical format still are incompatible with discourse analysis.

Instead, the semi-structured interview format supports what Steinar Kvale (1996) refers to as on-the-spot-verification, securing how an utterance—or a question—should be understood during the actual interview. The semi-structured interview format may thus serve as a scaffolding technique for the innocent interviewer, aiming for a narrative format, while still being challenged by respondents' varying levels of verbosity.

In all, the interview guide was organically constructed linking research questions and discourse theory, as seen in Appendix 2. The questions were read, sorted, and reconstructed, reflecting on their effectiveness and how they stood on their own and in relation to the other questions. During this iterative process, the structure and the questions were scrutinised, and different versions of similar questions were compared, discarding the less effective.

Indeed, an iterative approach refers to a systematic, repetitive, and recursive process integral to qualitative data collection and analysis, emphasising the

importance of flexibility and adaptability in the research design. The iterative feedback loop allows me to refine their research design in real time, ensuring that the data collected align with the study's objectives and theoretical frameworks (Barnett 2016). This dynamic process is argued to enrich the findings and deepen the understanding of the research context. However, the iterative nature may lead to issues, including researcher bias, as the continual adjustments could result in a lack of focus or inconsistency in the research process. (Barnett 2016). Despite the critique, many researchers value the iterative approach for fostering innovation and depth in qualitative research.

In line with the abductive approach, the iterative process has been used as an inspirational tool when constructing research and interview questions and while writing the thesis, resulting in two pilot interviews to test the effectiveness of the questions, establish validity, and assess the technical equipment and appliances across different contexts, finetuning the overall interviewing experience. Also, the introduction of reference points such as “the parental home” and/or “HE” in the interview guide creates a temporal and spatial space between a “*then*” and a “*now*” to capture the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviour among young adults.

Finally, the iterative process has led to utilizing the section where initial background information section within the interview guide is used as a “warm-up” based on previous interview experiences to help the respondent relax and, consequently, to support the interview's outcome, aligning with Kvale's (2007) thoughts on how to learn and further develop the tacit knowledge of interviewing.

4.7 Selection Process

When examining the sustainable food behaviour of young adults today, Gen Z is often used as a synonym for young adults. However, the youngest members of Gen Z are underage and, from an ethical standpoint, will automatically be excluded from the selection process. Also, mapping the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviour, unfolding over time, directs the focus on the older members of the generation who have had the opportunity to establish their own habits and ideals outside the parental home. In effect, this resulted in choosing a target population in accordance with Statistics Sweden (2026) statistics on Swedish young adults, aged 20 to 29, who have had the chance to leave upper secondary school and either have, share, or have had control over their homes' food sustainability practices.

Initially, the intention was to utilise convenience sampling, snowballing respondents from an existing contact network as a starting point for identifying and furthering respondents beyond my personal contacts (Bryman et al. 2025; Geddes, Parker & Scott 2018). Although there is limited advice from other researchers on this sampling method, the idea of respondents providing information and/or serving as gateways to other or additional respondents was tempting.

Reflecting on the drawbacks of such a vertical and strong-tie sampling chain (Geddes et al. 2018), premature termination or circularity may occur when additional respondents are suggested within a limited group. One way to reduce this risk would be to avoid relying solely on a single snowball path. Interestingly, a similar critique and solution are found in Geddes et al. (2018), where sampling is proposed based on horizontal weak-tie networking, casting a wider, shallower sampling net. The argument is that weak ties can serve as horizontal pathways to

new networks. Still, the most challenging bottleneck is respondents' reluctance to pass on recommendations (Geddes et al. 2018).

Further reflecting on aspects of my control of the sampling method, a similar effect may instead be gained from a classic convenience sampling method, selecting participants from the target population based on accessibility (Golzar, Noor & Tajik 2022), but spreading the sampling net horizontally and to weak-tie contacts supported by a wide geographical focus.

From a geographical perspective, I utilised contacts to intentionally broaden the choices of potential respondents beyond me, guided by the weak-tie concept, for example, related to long-lost childhood interactions. Still, it is likely that this non-random selection process will mainly capture a Swedish-born middle class, as sampling biases and systematic errors may follow from self-selection and non-coverage (Golzar, Noor & Tajik 2022), for example, missing out representatives of minority groups and those from immigration. Still, self-selection cannot be disregarded, as the potential interview subject decides whether to participate or not (Hirschauer et al. 2020). Consequently, the research findings cannot be generalised beyond the sample in this study.

Using the selected criteria, 30 individuals were identified and listed using nicknames in a randomiser app⁵. The order in which the potential respondents were to be contacted was determined by spinning the wheel before each contact was made. Initially, three persons were selected for contact and then singular selections, and new contacts were made when one of the previous contacts either had been interviewed or had declined being part of the study.

The potential respondent was contacted via Messenger, asked to participate, and if accepted, a time for the interview was booked, either in person or online, utilising the same or a similar platform. Then the app was again used, choosing a pseudonym for the respondent as the interview was about to begin. The process is documented in Appendix 4.

Although Messenger is open to all its users, the need to create specific identity-revealing groups or lists, challenging the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), becomes secondary, as the target group is limited, “known”, and thus easy to document only using nicknames and pseudonyms. Also, app-related activities not related to my personal digital devices and cloud should fall under the app company's GDPR regime, whereas the student researcher falls under their university GDPR regime.

Nevertheless, GDPR is easily breached, making continuous awareness crucial. Therefore, the Consent and Information form in Appendix 5 plays an important role in securing GDPR. Hence, any layer of extra protection may thus be beneficial, for example, that all contacts during the process of the thesis project are hidden among my other contacts, making it challenging to tell respondents from non-respondents. More aspects of how to protect respondents at their promised level of anonymity are further elaborated under chapter 4.10.2: ethical considerations.

⁵ <https://wheelofnames.com/>

4.8 Material Collection

The material collection process began with two pilot interviews, in line with the iterative process that enabled and fine-tuned the interview guide, the interview situation, the interviewer's performance, and the transcription process. As the pilot interviews went well, they were included in the material. Next, the interview and transcription processes were initiated and stopped when saturation in the material was perceived.

Since meaning-making is more important than the words uttered in this context, it was essential that the respondents were comfortable during the interviews. In essence, the transcriptions were made in accordance with what was uttered, whether in English or Swedish, and no translations were made until after the analysis phase to avoid affecting the meaning. Therefore, translations were performed only when Swedish quotes were entered into the results section.

Moreover, when distance, time, or budget were an issue, the interviews were conducted via Zoom or similar platforms. Platforms such as Zoom have been found to be flexible for both interviewers and respondents, enabling the collection of qualitative, interview-based data (Archibald et al. 2019). Otherwise, an in-person meeting was scheduled. The interviews were recorded using the app Röstmemon, which has proven useful for transcription. The decision not to use reliable free AI tools such as Whisper was partly due to equipment limitations, and prior transcription experience had found the multisensory procedure effective, supporting my familiarity with the material.

Furthermore, the term transcription refers to the transformation from one communicative act to another and includes the interpretation of the detached conversation between me and the respondent (Kvale 1996). Still, it may be relevant to note that hermeneutic interpretation differs depending on whether a written text or the transcription of spoken language is analysed (Kvale 1996). Therefore, a simplified transcription model that supports readability is considered relevant, as spoken meaning-making is central to the study rather than linguistic analysis (Norrby 2014).

The transcriptions were performed as soon as possible following the interviews, excluding *discourse particles*,⁶ but including essential non-linguistic articulations, such as pauses and sighs indicating a meaning-making shift (Kvale 2007). Time markers were also utilised to support the quotation process in the results chapter. Finally, non-linguistic articulations and words excluded or implied were noted within square brackets. All interviews were performed and transcribed during a 4-week period from 9th March to 3rd April 2026 in private and quiet rooms, and transcription was offered for the respondents' acceptance (Appendix 4).

⁶ Despite the term, discourse particles have nothing to do with discourse theory nor discourse analysis, but are a linguistic term used to describe utterances regulating conversation without adding information, such as "öhm", "hm", "well", "like", "you know" and so forth (Norrby 2014).

4.9 A Discourse Analytical Process

To clarify the discourse analytical process, I have divided it into four phases. During the *first phase*, the focus was on identifying all meaning-making utterances. Accordingly, the final transcriptions of each interview were printed, cut into meaning-making utterances, and repeatedly read, spoken aloud, recut, and sorted according to perceived meaning. This manual labour supported the revealing of the social consequences of different discourses of reality.

Then, during the *second phase*, attention was put on re-reading and re-sorting the material, as meaning-making was challenged by vocal articulation. As the focus of the analysis is to capture how discourses are constituted by studying how articulations reproduce questions and/or reshape discourses (Winter-Jørgensen & Philips 2000), the *third phase* was initiated by me by asking the analytical questions found in Table 1 (p. 26) about the material.

To identify the *nodal points* of the discourses, the analytical questions from Table 1 guided the search for analytical evidence. They were: “Which signs hold a privileged position?” and “How are they defined in relation to the other signs within each discourse?” (Winter-Jørgensen & Philips 2000). Then came the questions: “What meaning is established when elements are put into fixed positions and what meaning-making is excluded?”, “What discourse/es is an articulation building upon?”, “What discourses does it reproduce?”

This process was repeated until all discourses emerged, with their nodal points anchoring meaning in relation to the other identified discursive elements. Effectively, the nodal points of each discourse had to be tested against the other discourses through articulation before the discourse could be established. Hence, the question “How do floating ideas become fixed?” was answered.

Then the *fourth phase* was introduced, first allowing each discourse to be challenged by a potential hegemonic position that carries the “natural” and “normal” (Laclau 1990) by asking “Which articulation becomes normalised?”, “Which meanings are treated as obvious?” and “Which meanings disappear?”. Then mapping the discursive struggle between the discourses by studying the fluctuating meaning-making of the *floating signifiers*, by asking “What concepts are defined differently by different actors?” and “Which meanings compete?”, articulating their content against the other discourses as they hold different meanings depending on the discourses in which they appear (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). The result is now prepared for presentation.

4.10 Quality Control

Ensuring high standards of research integrity and credibility is an important part of the research process, not least when it comes to case studies, which are often criticised for their validity and reliability (Correa et al. 2025; Quintão, Andrade & Almeida 2020). Table 2 below addresses how this thesis has applied relevant techniques that may support validity and reliability in case studies:

Table 2 Overview of techniques for establishing validity and reliability in case studies based on Correa et al. 2025; Riege 2003) modified by the author

Case study design	Relevant technique	Applied in case study
Content validity	Ensure face validity	An iterative process for constructing interview questions over time, improving the interview script, avoiding ambiguity
	Carry out a pilot test	2 pilot interviews refining how questions were understood and what was measured
	Research previous works	The iterative process and previous studies guided choices made
	Use the independence and neutrality of the researcher to create an informal interview situation	Utilising the "background" of the interview guide to set an informal interview situation
Construct validity	Perform triangulation	Methodological triangulation by literature review and semi-structured interviews
	Establish chain of evidence in material collection	Interviews transcribed and literature review is documented
	Have key informants review the draft	Key informant reviewed the draft
	Elaborate conceptual framework from literature and experience of researchers	Conceptual framework elaborated from these factors and an understanding of theories
	The interviewer has previous experience in surveys	BSc thesis
	Compare transcripts with recordings	Transcripts were compared with the recordings after transcription
External validity	Use theory in single case study	Discourse theory and analysis, culture and sustainable consumption behaviour
	Select more than one group of participants	Wide net sampling
	Define scope and boundaries in research design	Chapter 1 Chapter 3
	Compare evidence with literature in the analysis	Analysis built on theoretical framework
Internal validity	Purposely select the sample	Wide net sampling within geographical and age range
	Use illustrations and diagrams in material analysis to support explanation	Tables and figures support the analysis
	Ensure that concepts and findings are systematically related	The same frameworks are applied to all material. Operationalisation Table 1 and Appendix 2.
	Record interviews	Recorded in app: Röstmemon
Reliability	Give a full account of theories and ideas	Chapter 3
	Carry out an iterative process between material, concepts and "coding"	Iterative process applied within abductive approach, Table 1 and Appendix 2.
	Assure congruence between research issues and features of study design	Conceptual framework, Chapter 3, Appendix 2 and 4.
	Transcribe	Manually
	Independent coding	Discourse analysis.
	Recode or combine categories	Example in Appendix 2
	Detailed description of data collection and analysis processes	Material collection and analysis are described in 4.1.8 and 4.1.9
	Open ended questions in interview script	How? What? Where? Who?
	Clearly state the position of the researcher	Discussed under 4.1.2
	Peer review	Method course, proposal, half-time peer opposition; opposition for the seminar draft

In Table 2 above, different situations are addressed including: (i) content validity, or the extent to which a research tool accurately measures the theoretical concept it is intended to measure (Correa et al. 2025); (ii) construct validity, enabling the me to evaluate the concepts under study; (iii) external validity, reflecting the capacity of the results to represent the studied phenomenon; (iv) internal validity, ensuring the adequacy of inferences drawn from the obtained material; and (v) reliability, related to the possibility of replicating the study by another researcher (Quintão et al. 2020).

4.10.1 Research Article Quality Assessment Strategy

In this section, the results of the research article quality assessment are presented in accordance with Appendix 6, highlighting systematic weaknesses in the selected texts within the literature review. All articles are peer-reviewed and were published between 2009 and 2026, as indicated by the databases Scopus, SwePub, and Web of Science, which provided the articles. To assess the quality of the articles, they have been graded on a scale from A to D, with A denoting the highest quality, B a high quality, C an intermediate level, and D a limited quality.

To achieve an *A* level, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, or multiple methods, together with a full set of analytical and/or reflective descriptions of methods, data analysis, and ethics, is required, demonstrating that the researcher has considered the ethical consequences for their respondents.

To achieve a *B*, either quantitative or qualitative methods are used, or multiple methods are employed, together with a full set of descriptions of methods, data analysis and ethics. At this level, grey x's indicate an existing but weak performance, meaning the topic is mentioned but not elaborated on.

Furthermore, to attain a *C*, an article must rely on either qualitative or quantitative methods and provide a strong method and analysis. Yet, articles at the *D* level present only a strong, transparent, and/or reflective discussion of one of the parameters, methods, data analysis or ethics.

The distribution of quality across the 20 articles was as follows: 3 received an A, 9 a B, 7 a C, and 1 a D, yielding a median grade of B. Overall, the main quality issue was a significantly underdeveloped or missing ethics section. At the C level, this limitation was accompanied by a weak or limited description of the data analysis. In contrast, ethical reflection was well established in every second article that received an A or a B. All but one of were written in the 2020s. It may thus be tempting to conclude that ethical reflection is more common in recent research, yet this pattern is not evident here: many articles from this period also lacked reflection.

4.10.2 Ethical Considerations

To protect respondents' identities in line with the promised level of anonymity (Swedish Research Council 2017), an information and consent form is used, following the Swedish Ethical Review Authority's (2026) recommendations on information, informed consent, confidentiality, and data use; see Appendix 5. Hence, respondents are informed of how data will be used and stored, how true identities will be kept separate from the data and the thesis document, and how they will be deleted after the project is completed and approved. The consent form was

shared, read, and signed by respondents before each interview. Alternatively, it was e-mailed, but will not appear in any transcription.

Additionally, all potentially identifying information, such as names, places, and gender, is hidden using place markers. In quotes, these are bolded. Also, the gender-fluent names assigned to respondents were selected before respondents were identified, and the first interview was paired with the first name drawn on the Wheel of names just before the interview began. Besides, when referring to respondents, the gender-neutral pronouns “they/them” are used to further obscure identities. Finally, all digitally interviewed respondents were asked whether they were alone in the room, whereas in-person interviews were conducted in a private room.

5. Results and Analysis

This chapter introduces the respondents before addressing the discourses present in the material and the aspects of hegemony evident beyond the single floating signifier. Thereafter, it presents where the young adults' discourses surface within the studied contexts: the parental home, HE, and the young adults' home. Finally, each of the five discourses, followed by the hegemony and the floating signifier, is detailed and exemplified, based on the outcome of the discourse analysis.

5.1 Introducing the Respondents

Over a four-week period, ten respondents were interviewed: two in person and eight digitally, and eight in Swedish and two in English. The interviewing and booking procedure is documented in Appendix 4, which shows that fourteen potential interview subjects were contacted, of whom one refused participation, another was booked but not reached, and two were never reached.

Among the ten respondents, six identified as male, three as female, and one as non-binary. Their ages ranged from 20 to 29 years, with a median age of $\bar{x}=25$. The respondents were from nine different cities within the chosen geographical area, and three had one parent from another European country, representing two other European countries. Two of the respondents had completed upper secondary schooling, five had or would presently receive a bachelor's degree, and the final three had or would now have a master's degree in science or arts.

In total, the respondents represented educational and professional fields at various levels, including engineering, economics and management, humanities, food and nutrition, pedagogy, and craftsmanship. Three of the respondents worked full-time, three were full-time students, two were students with part-time jobs, and two were unemployed. As shown in Figure 4 below, four respondents were living alone and thus had full responsibility for their household budgets.

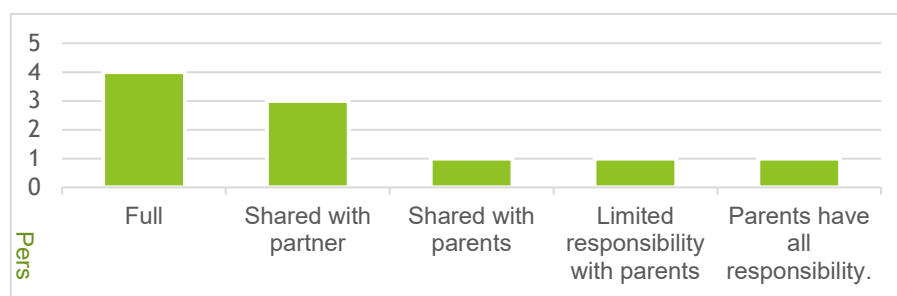


Figure 4 Level of responsibility for their budget among the ten respondents

Then three respondents shared budget responsibility with a partner, one with parents, and another had shared yet limited responsibility with their parents. The final respondent had no responsibility, recently returning to the family home after living alone, as can be seen in Figure 4 above.

5.2 Identified Discourses, Hegemony and Signifier

Five distinct discourses have surfaced from how young adults talk about sustainable food behaviour: a *relational*, a *knowledge*, an *awareness*, a *Swedish preference* and an *economic discourse*. The discourses, presented in order of size, are all found in the young adults' home, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Overview of young adults' discourses within different contexts

	Relational	Knowledge	Awareness	Swedish preference	Economic
Parental Home	x	x	x	x	-
HE	-	x	x	x	x
Young Adults' Home	x	x	x	x	x

Three of the discourses in Table 3 above: the knowledge, the awareness and the Swedish preference discourse are recognised within all of the studied contexts: the parental home, HE and the young adult's home. Then, the largest discourse—the relational—and the economic discourse are found in two of the contexts. All but the economic discourse, is thus founded within the parental home. The knowledge, awareness and Swedish preference discourses are then reinforced by the HE subject before being established within the young adult's home. The exceptions are the economic and relational discourses, where the economic discourse is founded within the HE subject, and the relational discourse does not depend on the HE subject to bring the discourses to the young adult's home.

Each discourse will be further presented below under separate rubrics, where the discourses' nodal points are first presented before each nodal point is put into focus, illustrated with quotes. Then the unfixed element *support* is presented together with the identified *health hegemony*.

5.2.1 The Relational Discourse

The relational discourse encompasses the nodal points “community”, “role model”, and “non-partaking”, covering societal aspects of inclusion and exclusion on both societal and individual levels. In the relational discourse, “community” is the largest moment represented by different aspects of togetherness, including being part of a community via social media and the position of being—or becoming—a member of society at national, regional, and local levels.

Community

The drive to become a part of a society may be illustrated by Robin who moved to Sweden some years ago, growing up in another European country with an inborn father and a Swedish mother: “Let me think,” Robin reflects, “[w]ell, first of all, we all recycle in this house, as everyone does here in **City 3**. Something sustainable in **European country 1** is not super sustainable, I think. Yeah, but here we recycle” (01:38–02:05). Robin is thus expressing an aim to be what others already are: the norm and are accordingly accepting and adopting the sustainable food behaviour

normalized within the new context. However, their response is also suggesting that within the **European country 1** context, Robin may return to previous habits.

In turn, Gabby highlights relational characteristics from their region, sharing how “there are strong ties between landowners and farmers to the local community, making it [...] possible to buy game, ecological and locally produced and processed produce, for instance, at markets or at a “Reko-ring” (Gabby 2026-04-06). Opportunities to consume local produce are accordingly supported by established, recurring gatherings, enabling Gabby and other consumers to buy from stalls or collect online-purchased food items from local producers committed to the “Reko-ring” concept.

The regularity of the gatherings, in relation to the two concepts, is thus the foundation of the communal experience, effectively supporting the consumer’s weak-tie connection to the occasions. Nevertheless, Gabby expands their reasoning while zooming in on relational facets in their neighbourhood:

I stand firm with the circular, trying to make it as circular as I can in relation to my resources, the time I have and the part of society that I exist within, because I have to take neighbours and so forth into consideration. But I would like to take it further than what I am doing today (Gabby 18:36–19:09).

Gabby’s considerate approach shows how neighbours may have direct or indirect effects on each other’s sustainable food project at home, for example, by deciding where a bin or an open compost may be positioned in their gardens. Gabby is hence implying a joint and continuous fine-tuning between the parties on matters that may affect the other.

Role-model

Moving towards strong tie connections generally represented by friends, family and partners, of which many also are acting “role models”: “Yes, my partner works at a recycling station, so [laughter] we are super thorough with how we are sorting” (Charlie 15:03–15:13). Charlie’s role model is thus providing guidance and practical knowledge to an otherwise inspirational setting, which is also seen in the following examples:

[M]y brother has started growing some plants in his house, and it looks pretty cool. And he’s growing food, I guess, it’s like spices or something. But yeah, I would like to do that at some point. I just need to learn how to do it and the process and everything (Robin 05:12–05:37).

I know someone, my aunt, who lives with her husband in **European country 2**. He is an engineer, and he has rather clever ideas on how to automatically water the vegetables. For example, utilising rainwater (Frankie 32:59–33:14).

Yes, but it is where my love of composting comes from, my father. He was really into it (Gabby, 13:03–13:10).

In essence, the moment “role model” challenges Robin, Frankie and Gabby’s way of thinking, creating interest in the observed activity, as expressed by Gabby: “I

gained more insight about sustainability from someone [...] very knowledgeable, and I think I had not really grasped how bad it is. It was what made me rethink [and act]" (07:01–07:33) opening up Gabby's mindset making them take action. The role model hence nudge the respondent making them see what they can do themselves:

I remember one time when a friend was over, and I threw away the eggshells only to be asked, "Do you not compost?" How do you do that [I thought]. Because we only had one bin then, and when it was full, you took it [out]. Then it started to change (Alex 14:13–14:34).

I have insisted that they should eat like this and my mum is very openminded. So, she sees mince that is 50/50 meat and peas and she is like perfect! [...] I make patties or a bolognaise and my dad doesn't notice a thing (Alex 10:13–10:27).

[D]ad is really bad in eating vegetables. You know, typical old men. So, you take the vegetables, always putting them in front of him. Like a real nudge: Here, take your vegetables! (Alex 16:57–17:20).

Consequently, as seen in the quotes above, a role model can affect what and when a sustainable food behaviour may be adopted. Still, the prospect of furthering a sustainable food behaviour may also be blocked, as in the case with Alex and their two grandmothers:

[M]eat farmer on dad's side and dairy farmer on mum's side. It is from both sides, they are working class family, so typically it's: 'We'll have meat otherwise it is not a meal' (Alex 25:57–26:20).

My aunt has a dairy farm. My grandmother on my mother's side is like doing everything from milk and is only cooking "husmanskost", so right now I feel I can't be, as I don't know how long I have my grandmothers [...]. It is really about supporting members of the family and Swedish agriculture. So, if I had been born in another family, without agricultural ties, I would have been vegan (Alex, 24:53–25:40).

Alex is clearly torn between their personal ideals and family ties, for now, allowing family to come first. Still, they find opportunity to challenge family and friends. "Avocados and bones shall not go in there, as the machines [at the recycling station] cannot handle it, and then I am really on to people: 'Where do you throw your avocado pits?' 'Is it food waste?' 'No, you [curseword!]'". In effect, Alex steps up taking on a role model position when lecturing those they encounter.

Among the respondents with a partner a dual positioning towards the partner's preferences is noted: "**They** are a vegetarian. I think due to climate and ethical reasons [...] **they** are more concerned that it is the right sort of meat" (Eli 02:12–02:21) and "right **they** are not a vegetarian, but **they** could probably say they are a flexitarian. At home we eat vegetarian, but if we are out and **they** want to eat meat **they** will" (Charlie 02:36–02:58). In effect, Eli and Charlie are showcasing the strength of the relational bond when it comes to what is eaten at home.

Non-partaking

In contrast to the “community”, the nodal point “non-partaking” represents an exclusion from the community where the position either is chosen or given to the subject. Frankie illustrates such a given position from a childhood perspective:

But I would say that I wasn’t really aware, or there may not have been specifically expressed advice when it comes to food until I was twelve, I say, but maybe that was because one was more active in discussions during supper. Because I ate, talked a bit about my day and then I went to my room, to my stuff (15:01–15:32).

Frankie’s reflection on their initial unawareness as a child is significant for this element, as without reflection, the subject may risk becoming a passive recipient of what they may consider to be relevant information or see themselves as a “victim” of circumstances. The latter is demonstrated by Quinn, who is the only one of the respondents not eating regularly at home:

These days, one normally gets food where [one works] and when you get it, [it] is some kind of meat [...]. But when you are on the road, then it is fast food chains, and yes, that is not good at all when it comes from a sustainability perspective (Quinn 05:03–05:46).

Well, the first step for me then would be to change jobs, and I wouldn’t say that I have anyone who thinks or feels that [they] would help me anyway (Quinn 16:57–17:18).

The common denominator between the position of Frankie as a child and Quinn is thus the expectancy of help or guidance.

5.2.2 The Knowledge Discourse

The knowledge discourse is distributed between the nodal points “knowledge gained” and “need of knowledge”, with theoretical knowledge on food sustainability deeply embedded in the HE subject’s focus on food and health. Hence, insecurities about what food sustainability entails and how it can be practised are emerging.

Knowledge gained

Knowledge gained is deeply rooted in the school subject HE established during Secondary School. However, the experience of the school subject focuses on health and resources rather than sustainable food behaviour. For instance, Charlie states: “there you talked about sustainability when it came to health matters, and not so much when it comes to the environment and climate” (13:35–13:44), a point that aligns with Gabby’s: “so, there was a lot of focus on the resources. I am sure there was a significant health focus, a lot of [negative effects of] fat and sugar” (15:59–16:10).

In effect, the HE subject, as perceived by Charlie and Gabby, to some extent seem to align with biology classes in **European country 1** where: “we discussed sustainability and how to keep a healthy diet, the typical thing you learn in biology and how to have sustainability at home, so you could recycle and ‘don’t overuse water’ and such practices, but not something practical that you could use in your daily life; it was more theoretical knowledge than applied” (Leslie 12:48–13:48).

Thus far, the knowledge discourse has a clear health focus, although exceptions are found. In 2018, Quinn notices how food and sustainability are brought together in the school context “when I started Upper Secondary School, [...] there was a lot of talk about food waste and what we ate, so we would not eat as much meat and so forth” (12:32–12:41).

Then, Robin has some experience from their international baccalaureate program (IB): “[I]n the IB here in **City 3**, I had this course [...] Environmental Systems and Societies, and it was pretty much a sustainability course, so we touch on topics such as [...] food and food production [...], strategies. Taking care of the sea [...] Greenhouse gases” (10:42–11:33). Upon reflection, Quinn and Robin have been confronted with their schools’ sustainability aspirations either by adopted menus or courses with a specific focus on sustainability.

As a professional sound and light technician Quinn has worked during several sustainability talks, being a passive recipient of the presented sustainability messages and they reflect: “One has heard quite a lot about sustainability, but it feels like it has faded somewhat” (07:03–07:18).

Still, others have furthered their knowledge related to food and sustainability by trial and error and taking courses on different levels. For instance, Gabby (03:27) has taken a course in contingency cultivation, while Alex (07:36) has forwarded their knowledge in food from several positions on an academic level, becoming a chef, having a degree in nutritional science and is now studying food inspection.

Need of knowledge

Then, the nodal point “need of knowledge” captures two central positions within the discourse as expressed by Robin:

Sometimes we buy from these stores that look very sustainable and healthy. They are a bit expensive, but sometimes we buy [...] cereals and [...] like fruits and vegetables [...] and spices, I don’t know. So, a typical meal, I don’t know, sustainable, but it would be like, again, vegetables and a meat or chicken, yeah, I don’t know, something like that. We are not very sustainable [laughter]. (Robin 09:11–09:57)

First, Robin illustrates a deep insecurity about what food sustainability entails and how it may be implemented in practice, partially also seen with Eli: “should the tomatoes be in the fridge or on the table? [...] one does what one thinks is best, but if that is the best way to preserve them, that is not my strongest point” (Eli 24:42–24:51) and with Jade: “I probably will have to read up on this a bit to make wise decisions” (29:58–30:12). The insecurity here shown with Eli and Jade is noticeable and widely spread within the discourse. Moreover, with their question: “I don’t know if being healthy is related to being sustainable, to ourselves?” Robin (06:52–07:03) highlights how most respondents treat sustainability and health interchangeably.

5.2.3 The Awareness Discourse

The awareness discourse spans a continuous progression between the nodal points “egotistical” and “selfless”, with an egotistical focus centred on the self, thereby becoming a pacifier of action beyond the self. By contrast, the different selfless positions are gradually emerging from context to context, meaning that the same individual may take on both egotistical and selfless positions depending on context.

The Egotistical

The egotistical extreme is centring the concept of food sustainability from the position of the self, as illustrated by the following examples. First, Quinn speaks as if they are annoyed, “[t]o say it was forced is to exaggerate, but I have always sorted my garbage, and I still do to this day” (13:41–13:52). Quinn is thus implying that they see this as a chore and a burden, but that they take on their responsibility and that it is “good enough”. Second, and in contrast, Charlie has a positive attitude: “For me it’s easy being a vegetarian [laughter] because I don’t like meat, so it’s easy” (06:03–06:22).

Although different in attitude, both utterances are “I”-centred. This is also seen in Leslie’s utterance: “I can feel myself being sustainable with my own body, but being sustainable towards the outside world...” (03:10–03:21), yet Leslie’s comment may also illustrate how difficult it may be to see beyond oneself. Quinn, Charlie and Leslie are hence showing how their chosen “I” perspective may limit their awareness, directing focus on effects that directly impact them.

The selfless

A significant part of the awareness discourse pictures awareness progression as the respondents reposition themselves within the egotistical and the selfless frame. This is, for example, captured when respondents speak about “the soon-to-expire boxes”, often placed by the fruit and vegetable stalls in their grocery stores. For instance, Gabby mentions how they “haven’t bought any yet, but I have noticed them and is pretty tempted to grab one, one day [...] it would feel right” (6:33–6:44). Effectively, illustrating how their focus of attention has expanded and now includes the consideration of accepting and buying products that soon may become waste.

In contrast, Alex is already buying from these stalls also seeing the necessity for their need to be prepared and stored correctly. “Regarding vegetables, I usually look at ‘red tagged’ wares, because they don’t spoil in the same way as other wares. If I prepare or store them in the right way they can last for a long time” (15:30–15:54).

Moreover, Alex exemplifies a sense of satisfaction that often is found in relation to red labelled products from “the soon to expire stalls”. “Once I found a cheese, that was 40% ordinary cheese and 60% plant based, and it was all right, and red labelled, and you truly feel like a nutritionist when you’re shopping and [think] how much wholegrain is in this [product]” (Alex 20:23–20:38). Alex’s involved expression, as seen among all respondents in this discourse, suggests how buying from the soon-to-expire stalls—may be driven by emotional engagement captured in empathic speech patterns—increasing volume, tempo and engagement—rather than by financial considerations.

Also, Charlie acts upon their knowledge: “I try to avoid soy [products] since it’s problematic, as a lot of rainforests have been cut down to farm soy. So, I try to eat

more chickpeas, beans and legumes” (02:10–02:30). Instead, Charlie is replacing a challenging produce with other more sustainable options.

Still, even the most determined respondent may feel undermined at times: “I am torn, as I would like to eat vegan [...] but then how much is imported, and how much is produced in Sweden? I have relatives that are farmers, so it feels a bit mean towards them [...] in the end we don’t have to exclude it [meat] just reduce [it]. You don’t have to eat cheese or drink milk every day (Alex, 24:00–24:37).

Alex is torn between altruistic intentions, where the intention to eat vegan is challenged by a lack of knowledge regarding transport, country of origin, and family interests, indicating the complexity of moving further towards the position of the selfless.

Equally seen with Blake when they zoom out from the self: “I think the climate question is important to bring up, like sustainability aspects, which are important if we are supposed to get anywhere with a sustainable society” (05:36–06:48).

Still, Charlie is furthering the concept of selflessness the most. “I think sustainability [is] being aware regarding one’s choices and how they affect the entirety, like the bigger picture, like the entire world” (01:14–01:32); hence, Charlie is showing how they can see themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

5.2.4 The Swedish Preference Discourse

During the interviews, a clear preference for and pride in Swedish food sourcing were evident, also implying that health is an aspect of Swedishness and positioning the nodal points between “nationally produced” and “the plate model.”

Nationally produced

All respondents who grew up in Sweden expressed a particularly strong inclination towards products made in Sweden. “It was something we did discuss that you should eat Swedish produce” (Frankie 21:43–22:01) as a notion of supporting national agriculture. Moreover, Blake expresses a national pride regarding Swedish produce found in Swedish grocery stores:

It is the amount of Swedish produce that we have marked as Swedish, and we are pretty proud of that in our grocery stores. We are very proud of our Swedish produce, including locally sourced wares. There is both supply and marketing of Swedish food. I think that is really neat (Blake, 04:51–05:22).

Plus, I often think when you compare a Swedish tomato that has grown and can be purchased in a store for a reasonable amount in August, compared to a Spanish tomato bought in January, there is a significant difference in quality regarding flavour (Blake, 06:19–06:27).

Effectively, Blake’s description, inferred by intonation, captures how pride and a sense of quality may come with offering and obtaining Swedish foods. A similar enthusiasm is seen with Alex, articulating the “soon-to-expire” sentiment concisely by emphasising, “[n]ow, when I go shopping, there is, [price reduction] [on] food that is imported. But then it’s like. I don’t want this. I want Swedish stuff, because I know our animal welfare program is good, so I usually focus on Swedish wares.

Even if products were produced in other EU countries, I still prefer Swedish produce” (04:04–04:24).

Alex's preference for domestic goods is in part originating from concerns about animal welfare practices in Swedish agriculture. Yet, it is also connected to a wish to do the right thing, unveiled in Alex's engaged articulation, also seen among the other respondents in this discourse. Buying Swedish products may thus be driven by an emotional engagement.

Aspects of sustainability are also surfacing in the material, for example, by preferring a local farm shop known for its commitment to seasonal produce and its strict policy against imports (Charlie 09:30), reflecting a thought pattern also seen with Gabby's desire to return to a previous habit of utilising the local “Reko-ring” (2026-04-06). Hence, highlighting the value of freshness and locality in food sourcing, reinforcing the collective emphasis on supporting local economies and sustainable practices for example limiting transports.

Still, doubts may arise: “[W]e are eating classic Swedish 'husmanskost'. But then the question is whether it is sustainable? The concept is so difficult and open” (Jade 12:58–13:15). Jade thus accentuates an insecurity in their perception of the sustainability concept linked to Swedish food.

The plate model

The other nodal point capturing the “plate model” often surface when giving examples, whether stated or applied in practice:

There was a lot of focus on the plate model. If you were on the thinner side or worked out a lot, you should focus more on carbohydrates; If you were a bit chubbier, you should focus on vegetables and make that [...] a larger part of your meal (Frankie, 29:43–30:06).

I think we have some sort of frame of reference, but when you were younger, it was more that you should eat a balanced diet. It was more that you should eat vegetables, carbohydrates, and meat or [any other] protein (Eli, 17:30–17:53).

All illustrate the respondents' understanding of the Swedish plate model and how it has been internalised—by the HE subject—as a natural part of their reasoning, reflecting a clear focus on health.

5.2.5 The Economic Discourse

The economic discourse is characterised by its nodal points, “resource management” and “replacement strategies”, showing how resource management is transmitted from the parental home and how limited resources and cost awareness motivate respondents to adopt replacement strategies.

Resource management

Resource management, in its entirety, refers to being encouraged to finish the meal served; for example, Gabby reflects on the lessons taught by their family. “You eat what is on your plate. You use everything you have [to make meals]” (09:19–09:22). This emphasis on minimising waste clearly influenced their views on consumption and Eli shares a similar sentiment. “[T]he important thing was that

you should eat everything on your plate. That was the most important [thing]. What was on the plate? That's not important. Eating was" (11:37–11:58). Also, Leslie recalls a family tradition that reinforces this idea of resourcefulness: "We always had a day a week where we would have leftover night, and we would eat everything that was left" (10:18–10:27). This practice not only highlights the importance of reducing food waste but also the value of making the most of what is available.

Replacement strategies

In their quest for sustainable living, some respondents have actively sought alternatives to high-cost produce, thereby prompting replacement strategies. For instance, Alex has made dietary adjustments due to budget constraints, particularly regarding eggs, which they find too expensive. They explain, "I rarely buy eggs because I find them too expensive [...]. Then I make sure to eat peas and maybe some oats [with it] to get a complete protein profile" (08:52–09:14). This shift highlights a practical approach to achieving nutritional needs without exceeding financial limits.

Jade expresses a strong desire for a more sustainable diet, while acknowledging the cost barriers. When reflecting on what changes could be made under different circumstances, Jade states, "More ecological food in general, and today it is expensive. It's an issue of the [high] cost. Maybe it's easier to replace. There are a lot of dishes that are vegetarian that don't need to cost [more], and [I think] the community would feel a lot better if they had eaten more vegetarian meals" (Jade 30:38–31:02). This perspective recognises that sustainable eating doesn't have to be expensive when creative alternatives are embraced.

Also, Frankie reinforces the idea of maximising value for money. They highlight a practical strategy for cost-effective eating by suggesting: "You could always give up candy and such products and buy an apple. It's cheaper. You get more bulk" (10:56–11:03). This emphasis on choosing nutritious, filling and affordable options underscores the resourceful mindset the young adults are adopting.

5.3 The Health Hegemony

In the studied area of sustainable food behaviour among young adults, *a health hegemony* has emerged and separated itself by its different behaviour from the discourses constructing and positioning themselves from their nodal points and their relation to other discourses within the discourse order.

The health hegemony shows a significant impact on the knowledge, awareness and Swedish preference discourses and a lesser impact on the economic and relational discourses, blending aspects of health with each discourse without shifting in meaning, as a floating signifier would. It imposes dominance, or even interpretative precedence, over fully or partially affected discourses. The effect manifests as either generalised, associated, aligning, shifting, or contrasting positions between the concepts: health and sustainable food behaviour.

The health hegemony may perhaps be best illustrated by positions where it merges with other discourse content, as when Frankie says, "you should eat Swedish produce" (21:54–22:01), inferring that Swedish food is not only of high quality but also the healthy choice. In effect, this illustrates how sustainable food behaviour is intertwined with the health discourse.

However, the hegemony that is challenging sustainable food behaviour is also making sustainability slide away from the affected discourse, making matters of sustainability out of focus while matters of health instead are attended to. This is evident for Quinn while reflecting on everyday sustainability challenges: “But when you are on the road, then it is fast food chains, and yes, that is not good at all when it comes from a sustainability perspective” (05:29–05:46). In spite of the ambiguous antecedent, Quinn’s reasoning on sustainability instantly slides to the hegemony equating sustainability to health.

Health effectively becomes intimately connected to how sustainable food behaviour is understood, and the discourse focus therefore risks being redirected from issues ultimately related to the overarching national and global. Nevertheless, the relational discourse is to a large extent able to push away the health hegemony, securing a major zone of “unaffected” discourse and may thus be key in how to address hegemonic challenges for sustainable food behaviour.

5.4 The Floating Signifier: Support

The identification of the singular floating signifier “support” within the discourse order, shifting in meaning across the different discourses may thus be seen as a natural consequence of the hegemonic influence that affects and confuses the understanding of sustainable food behaviour.

Nevertheless, “support” finds its unique function within each of the discourses. Hence, in the knowledge discourse, “support” refers to *translational guidance bridging theoretical knowledge to practical application*. This position may be illustrated by Charlie: “I usually joke about how I definitely would turn vegan if someone cooked all my meals and handled the planning” (20:07–20:17), which underlines how transitional challenges need to be conquered. Then, under the awareness discourse, “support” refers to *how personal reflection furthers sustainable food behaviour*, here exemplified by Gabby (2026-04-06):

Who is supposed to be home and manage all these energy windows to use energy effectively? What does it cost from a sustainability perspective, to have a lot of machines on stand-by starting at odd hours? That is never talked about. Sure, we could get apps and AI tools [...], but what does the use cost from a sustainability [...] perspective?

Gabby’s position shows how personal reflection may support how their sustainable food behaviour may develop.

Yet, in the economic discourse, *alternative costs are central*, surfacing as an appeal to the government for assistance. Charlie highlights how information and accessibility may be supportive: “where I lived before, they only had disposables and food waste and then you needed a car to get rid of the waste” (16:03–16:21) also suggesting raising taxes “on non-ecological products and use the money to subsidise ecological products” (Charlie, 21:19–21:26). In effect Charlie sees a need for a broadened responsibility taking through governance or commercial initiatives. Within the Swedish preference discourse, support translates into *providing information that facilitates local sustainable decision-making*. For instance, Jade indicates how “it might be an uncertainty [not knowing] where large corporations like [milk producers] buys [their] milk [...]. I do not know where the milk comes

from. You might have to assume that it is relatively local but [how do I know] [...] It might have made finding food produce locally easier” (31:56–32:36). In effect, bridging insecurities with clear information regarding origin may even further support decision-making between the Swedish and the locally produced.

Finally, the relational discourse refers to *a need of help in implementing desired sustainable behaviours*, perhaps clearest illustrated by Quinn: “I wouldn’t say I have any friend nearby that I think [will help] me with this (17:32–17:48)”. Effectively Quinn is expressing a desire to be told and shown what to do and how to do it.

6. Discussion

With the conceptual framework in mind, the discussion will now focus on the results before addressing the research questions. The method's challenges will then be examined.

6.1 Results Discussion

From the position of how language is used, this study shows how cultural narratives drive sustainable—and unsustainable—food behaviours, from five discourses through which Swedish young adults construct, culturalise, and further sustainable food behaviours at home. As shown in Figure 5 below, the discourses are the large relational discourse, followed by the equal-sized knowledge and awareness discourses, and the smaller Swedish preference and economic discourses.

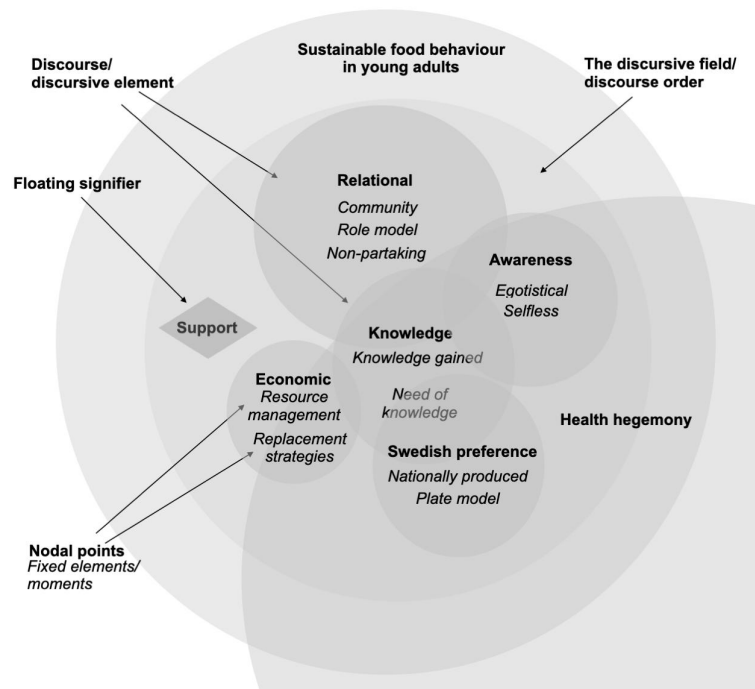


Figure 5 The identified discourses, hegemony and floating signifier

The floating signifier of *support* shifts in relation to the discursive elements it encounters as it moves in and out of the health hegemony. Although the health hegemony involves all discourses in some way, Figure 5 above highlights its dominance over the knowledge, awareness, and Swedish preference discourses, and its partial dominance over the economic discourse, whereas the relational discourse seems to withstand the hegemonic challenge better than the others.

Using the conceptual framework and its interconnected parts, the results will now be discussed, drawing on the framework's concepts of sustainable food consumption, behaviour, and hermeneutic culture, and relating them to young adults, their discourses, and prior research.

Overall, the result aligns with Marshall's (2016) findings that individual sustainable food *practices* are shaped by social structures that negotiate actions towards greater sustainability. This established, slowly evolving movement towards more sustainable behaviours is evident across the economic discourse, where mainly family related social structures construct and establish behaviour related to resource management and replacement strategies together with Swedish preference.

Although these behaviours are culturally established and have been reinforced over at least two generations, the natural drive towards the expansion of practice bundles observed among Marshall's "involved" respondents is *not normalised* here. Instead, the "*How?*" of resource management and replacement strategies is limited and/or general, and does *not* demonstrate the commitment and consumption patterns associated with Warde's (2005) competent practitioner.

This suggests that *culturalisation* may have originated through passive observation and/or been conveyed without established *acceptance*, and is therefore *not* organically reinforced by either practice or engagement (in contrast to Southerton et al. 2011). Accordingly, established awareness here acts as a bottleneck to the progression of sustainable food behaviour, highlighting the significant practical aspect of "practice" in culturalisation.

This aligns with two other studies, the first indicating that the kitchen domain today tends to be closed to those without an invitation from the domain owner (Törnskog 2023), and the second identifying a lack of skills and materials for long-term storage (Marshall 2023). Being excluded from a culturalisation context hence carries consequences, some of which may not become apparent until later in life. Although this needs further study, these findings may still indicate why, where and how limitations in know-how and problem-solving related to sustainable food behaviour surface for the young adult, enabling further studies and/or strategic measures to be taken.

Although *acceptance* was presumed within the studied group in the Marshall study, in this context it becomes clear that acceptance not only has an integrating function for traditions and knowledge (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman 2020a; Montanari 2006; Urban 2001) but also indicates how it may activate the social structures that control and drive the progression of individual sustainable practices.

This becomes clearer when the relational discourse is brought into the discussion, with both "community" and "role model" supporting the argument by providing social structures within the discourse order of sustainable food behaviour among young adults. Under the relational discourse, acceptance is not an active part of either the discourse or the relevant nodal points, resulting in conditional social structures that advance sustainable practices *only when* acceptance is met, *and* relations are *not* challenged or hindered.

The same argument applies to discourses on knowledge and awareness, neither of which naturally translates knowledge or awareness into action or practice. The question thus arises: what spark will naturally ignite acceptance and action, and how often?

The overarching veil of inaction among the majority of respondents is troubling, given that aspects of efficiency: selecting better alternatives and shifting to better choices, and sufficiency: consuming less (Svenfelt & Bradley 2024) are already being pursued across different discourses. *Efficiency* is advanced by resource management (economic discourse) and by the nationally produced (Swedish

preference), while the *shift* is forwarded by the replacement strategy (economic discourse) and supported by the role model (relational discourse). Aspects of *sufficiency* can also be forwarded by the role model (relational discourse) and found within the economic discourse, under knowledge gained (knowledge) and the selfless (awareness) nodal point.

Instead, what is missing is the ignition that triggers the shift from *awareness* to *acceptance*, addressing both inaction and the challenges of translating knowledge into practice or know-how. These factors underpin the respondents' expressed call for governance guidance and align with Parekh's (2025) recurrent consumer challenges perceived as barriers to transitioning to sustainable eating.

As shown in this study, the HE subject offers unique opportunities to promote sustainable food practices among pupils and their families, for instance as the subject syllabus incorporates ecological, social, and economic perspectives on sustainability (Bohm 2023). Although the school subject is constrained by limited time and resources, it may still be key to governing sustainable food behaviour, serving as both an ignition and a scaffold to support the missing shift from awareness to acceptance.

What seems key is to provide already sustainability-aware young adults (Dabija et al., 2019; Djafarova & Foots, 2022) with more specific practices and to establish a mindset of furtherance, separating matters of hegemonic health from sustainable food behaviour, even though both may very well go hand in hand.

The singularity of the floating signifier support should thus be reflected upon, as it may indicate its basic function, preventing other floating signifiers, such as time, from surfacing until "handled". In this context, it may also be important to highlight how inaction may be normalised and, if not addressed, may legitimise the unsustainable (Boström 2023; Sahakian 2022b).

To address the hegemonic influence, I therefore suggest separating governmental arguments for adopting certain practices for the benefit of the individual, the community, and the country, thereby positioning the individual in relation to different levels of society. Going beyond effects at a European level may initially, as indicated in this study, be too abstract for the young adult, but should be added as progression can be seen.

Supplementing Parekh's (2025) findings on how information accompanying consumer decision-making is perceived as supportive by consumers, the how-to guidance expected within this study also shows potential openings to bridge action between the awareness and knowledge discourses, replacing inaction with selected practice bundles, thus creating opportunities to strengthen such insecurities regarding how sustainable food behaviour can be practised, which was evident within this study.

In all, I argue that *sustainable food behaviour* cannot be treated as a constant but rather as an ever-changing collection of "sayings and doings" that reflect where we are, shaped by the practices we apply and the language we use. However, we are still challenged by present and emerging hegemonies that tend to redirect focus away from advancing our practices and from what has to be done. It hence establishes a false sense of being or doing "good enough" in relation to other people, groups or nations. To address the lack of ignition seen in this study, offering simple and concrete support hence becomes key in governance to turn existing awareness into acceptance, striving towards a sustainable future for humanity.

6.1.1 How is Sustainable Food Behaviour Constructed?

The understanding of sustainable food behaviour among young adults in Sweden appears polarised in this study, with individuals either “aware” or “unaware” of how to approach the concept. This polarisation is complicated by the moral conflicts that sustainable food behaviour may entail, for example, by not buying Swedish food from the soon-to-expire stalls or being torn between doing what is right and family loyalties.

Moreover, both the aware and unaware adhere to the health hegemony, yet only a few aware are able to separate aspects of health from aspects of sustainability, whereas the majority of the respondents cannot. Instead, health hegemony is generalised, shaping how sustainable food behaviour is understood. This creates uncertainty about what sustainable food behaviour may entail and how to approach it. Hence, the floating signifier support indicates that most theoretical knowledge, mainly established in school, does not translate into practical application in the young adult’s home, except for recycling, which is taught *and practised* within the HE subject. For the unaware, the effect is normally inaction.

However, acceptance of recycling does not make everyone universally aware, and most respondents do not further or expand their existing practice bundles. Still, the findings here align with Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (2020), which show that acceptance is central to furthering sustainable food behaviour. However, there are exceptions related to resource management, indicating the effectiveness of the culturalisation of sustainable behaviours on a broad front, as with the sustainable food behaviour: eat-what-you-plate, and the indirect effects of buying Swedish.

The smaller, aware group positions itself as being on a journey in which knowledge and ability will be further developed over time, in relation to how, where and with whom they live, and the resources they have: “trying to make it as circular as I can in relation to my resources, the time I have and the part of society that I exist within, [...] But I would like to take it further than what I am doing today” (Gabby, 18:36–19:09). Gabby is effectively accepting a continuous renegotiation of what cultural meaning sustainability has for them and when. Instead, they, and the other respondents, rely on small, established practice bundles; the most—and often only—recognised among all the respondents is collectively created: recycling.

Yet, the “aware” in this study demonstrates how they are gradually expanding their practice bundles by adding or developing practices such as composting, reusing glassware, introducing alternative foods to further reduce meat consumption, and forwarding learned knowledge to others.

It is interesting to note that the societal-imposed practices affect how most young adults in this study chose to present their understanding of sustainable food behaviour. The respondents favour being part of a *we* rather than a *them*, essentially suggesting that they are still part of a socialisation process (Bohm & Bengs 2023; Kreuzer et al. 2019) and/or that their practices are controlled by social structures (Marshall 2016).

This is reflected in the uncertainties in how sustainable food behaviour is talked about and handled, and how what is known: the health hegemony, is generalised to the unknown or unfamiliar: “But when you are on the road, then it is fast food chains, and yes, that is not good at all when it comes from a sustainability perspective” (Quinn 05:03–05:46). The blurred line between the health hegemony and sustainable food behaviour, seen with Quinn, thus raises questions about its

origin. However, there are established exceptions, in particular the culturally embedded Swedish sustainable food behaviour: eat-what-you-plate, which highlights a resource perspective on sustainable food behaviour.

Also, in light of the future of sustainable food behaviour, it may be interesting to highlight how vegetarian and/or vegan choices are overshadowing meat within this study, where the norm seems to be that meat is not forbidden, yet is not eaten on an everyday basis and is mainly consumed away from home. Here, vegetarian and vegan choices are mostly relationally driven by the positioning of a partner and/or family member, effectively suggesting that moral drives may be aligned with that party.

Still, conflicting moral responsibilities towards family members and partners may surface: “[I]f I had been born in another family, without agricultural ties, I would have been vegan” (Alex 25:13–25:40). In effect, Alex’s path towards a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle is challenged and, for now, put on hold.

Moreover, there is a notable gap between respondents’ aspirations for sustainable practices and their capacity to implement them in their daily lives. This creates a difficult dilemma, as they juggle limited resources while seeking alternatives to costly items that align with their sustainability goals. Consequently, this suggests that a lack of support may drive the mainly acquisition-based focus observed in the studied group.

Finally, as the theoretical knowledge presented in school does not automatically translate into practical application in the young adult’s home, the re-directional effect of the health hegemony focus becomes a transferral of attention, not only in health but also in perspective, zooming in from a global perspective to, at best, a societal level, but more often to the physical body of the individual: “I can feel myself being sustainable with my own body” (Leslie 03:10–03:15). Consequently, in this study, the health hegemony misdirects attention from how a sustainable society relates to a sustainable world, instead highlighting the individual, effectively risking making sustainability a matter of personal wellbeing and thus unbound from responsibility for anyone but the self.

6.1.2 How is Sustainable Food Behaviour Culturalised?

Sustainable food behaviour is mainly transmitted from previous generations such as parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles, with the role model playing an important part in creating attention and images of the future for the subject. Also, the unrelated position of the HE teacher may play a significant role in compensating for any loss from the family home. A potential resource is the reversal of culturalisation of the offspring to the parent, thereby transmitting awareness and acceptance of what is learnt in HE. Therefore, suggesting how HE may be an effective operative tool in culturally transferring sustainable food behaviour.

The foundation for how sustainable food behaviour has been and can be culturally transmitted, as seen in this study, is that the subject first becomes aware of and then accepts the sustainable food behaviour at hand. However, moving from awareness to acceptance requires some sort of aha-experience that initiates the shift in position.

Although it may be tempting to focus solely on groups of acceptance, this study suggests that creating opportunities for awareness may be central to laying the

groundwork for future cultural transference. Hence, placing the role model at the centre of efforts to build future opportunities for cultural transmission may be key.

The role model, as identified here, is commonly found among the young adults related or unrelated contacts, not too close nor too far away from the subject. In this study, the related role model often is an aunt or an uncle who provides the subject with unconditioned visions of the future and hands-on examples of what and how they are achievable. Consequently, they provide narratives and physical evidence to the subject that they may hold on to for many years. The unrelated role model is often a teacher, filling a similar function as the related role model.

Also, unrelated role models on social media are serving as inspiration for the subject. Yet, the vivid, detailed images respondents paint of related role models and their abilities are *not* reflected in any social media role model narratives in this study, suggesting weaker input, signalling a distinct difference between the two positions, which may be worth following up on in another study.

However, unrelated adults, as characterised by teachers, may represent a dual, transitional status that safeguards and bridges the awareness and acceptance positions. This aligns with the compensational assignment within the Swedish School system (Lgr11; Lgr 22), ensuring that the transference of knowledge and behaviour missing from the parental home is instead addressed by the school.

Yet it is important to highlight that establishing a single sustainable behaviour, such as recycling, will not guarantee increased attention to other related sustainable behaviours. However, such an approach has to be supported, building opportunities for furthering practical application and a what sustainable food behaviour entails.

Otherwise, the transfer of culture, from parent to offspring, is perhaps the strongest of all paths seen in this study, relying on strong-tie connections, among other things, on the offspring's dependency on the parent's caregiving and fostering responsibilities. Still, it is not immune to challenges, as seen with respondents Quinn and Alex, who either refuse or renegotiate the offers at hand.

Then, to some extent, the partner's position may replace the parent's in strength, yet it will be positioned on a horizontal level, in the young adult's home. As seen in this study, the couples show openness towards their partners' sustainable food life choices of rejecting meat. Still, that partner is open to their significant other occasionally eating meat, with the compromise being to eat vegetarian at home but to have the freedom to indulge in meat outside the home. Therefore, meat is not forbidden, yet it is not the norm, and thus does not address hetero-masculine norms related to regularly eating meat.

So, when the subject in this study accepts the sustainable food behaviour, they are ready to approach, learn, apply, and fine-tune it. Thus, they are receptive to cultural transmission, and through this process, sustainable food behaviours such as recycling and eat-what-you-plate have been established through practice.

However, aspirations may not be fully realised until the subject enters a point in life when they are able, as seen with Gabby at 29, who now owns a house with a garden and has the time and finances to realise their composting dream. This implies that visions of the future may be long-lived, yet they also risk never being fully realised without support. The major potential thus lies in repositioning the majority of aware young adults into the position of being accepting.

6.1.3 How can Sustainable Food Behaviour be Furthered?

Central to building and furthering sustainable food behaviour for the future, this study sees a need to build upon hegemonic awareness, securing a clear definition and understanding of what sustainable food behaviour is and how it relates to the health hegemony. Then, as sustainable food behaviour is relationally driven, further exploring how to utilise relations and culturalisation as a natural motor within any large-scale efforts may be rewarding. For example, to further and fine-tune household recycling by limiting perceived insecurities through “how-to” support.

In effect, this raises questions about what will happen if sustainable food behaviour is left unguided, without national guidance or direction, relying solely on the young adults’ natural awareness and acceptance process as the basis for how and at what rate their practice bundles will expand.

There are clear indications that young adults who do not know how to further their sustainable food behaviour expect and need support to bridge the awareness and acceptance phases, translating knowledge to practical action. Also, the strength of the relational discourse in transmitting sustainable food behaviours, together with its inbuilt resistance towards the health hegemony, speaks for its central position in creating a platform for furthering sustainable food behaviours.

Still, furthering sustainable food behaviour must build upon an awareness of the health hegemony—also challenged by the multifaceted use of the sustainability concept (Hobson 2013; Lorek & Fuchs 2013). Hence, it is necessary to secure a clear definition and understanding of what sustainable food behaviour may be and how it may relate to the health hegemony.

If not addressed, as seen in this study, the effect may not only affect understanding of the concept itself but also risk misdirecting which behaviours may be relevant and which sustainability goals may come into focus. For instance, the food-bag service concept is perceived here as sustainable. Although this may be the case, the sustainability outcome is highly dependent on how far the food bag and its contents have to travel in small refrigerated delivery vehicles. Yet this is not reflected upon in the young adults’ responses, and one must therefore ask whether the food-bag service concept exemplifies how generalisations linking food sustainability and health may surface.

However, the material and analysis indicate that respondents’ sustainability focus is mainly acquisition-based, and together with the limitations in critical reflection noted here within the unaware group, an unreflected confidence is also evident in relation to sustainability profiling of commercial offers like the food-bag. However, budget constraints and a lack of information challenge respondents’ purchasing decisions, and they are aware of their limited abilities and knowledge.

To achieve unified change on a broad front, it may not be too bold to call for top-down leadership, with government and the food-provisioning actors acting through a simplified, common “language” that supports subjects in their everyday decision-making and in what and how to fine-tune and expand their practice bundles of sustainable food behaviours. The need for such support is evident in how support emerged as a single floating signifier across the identified discourses.

Consequently, sustainable food behaviour needs to be defined and simplified into concrete actions, for instance, through accessible and universal pictograms that most members of society can apply. Moreover, behaviours may be grouped into standardised, simplified, accessible, and doable practice bundles that support the

path towards the world's overarching climate goals, illuminating how sustainable food behaviours are a moving target and therefore can never be "good enough".

One suggestion, returning to the HE subject, may be to involve parents and/or kin, allowing the offspring to both receive and send such know-how. Building on already established sustainable food behaviour, such as recycling, awareness and acceptance through information, nudging, and challenges may rely on the inbuilt effects of how sustainable food behaviour is relationally driven and culturalised.

6.2 Methods Discussion

A critic may argue that the discourse analytical process utilised here may only provide what the researcher expects—unintentionally or not—driven by the pattern-seeking objective of the model. That is, if a researcher is looking for discourses and floating signifiers, they will eventually find them. It could be argued that this argument would be universally accurate for most, if not all, research, as the human brain is constructed to seek patterns to process and understand the world.

For instance, in the desert, two blurred black dots may appear floating above the ground from a distance; the human brain will actively seek an explanation for what may not be understood, filling in what cannot be observed. The approaching pair of ostriches may take a second to recognise in a new context. The second time, the pattern is established and recognised. When two black dots are floating above the ground in New York on a hot summer's day, there is always a risk of generalisation, although I claim that the context will prevent any automated conclusion.

Still, a research alternative may be suggested by bringing observed behaviour and respondents' diary notes together. Although both methods may study social phenomena, their perspectives will be from different positions, utilising different lenses. In effect, the outcome of each study will be different, consequently addressing unique aims.

Hence, discourse analysis is not about being able to generalise norms or values (Lindkvist 2010) but rather to open up what is articulated by reaching beneath the surface level of the utterances, enabling an understanding of the material to surface that normally cannot be reached from the utterance itself. In all, relying on discourse analysis may support opportunities for building reliability and validity, as the discourse analytical process supports each utterance in making itself visible, introduced and "tried" across different contexts, finding its right position within a specific discourse, signifier or hegemony.

Subsequently, this study relies on discourse theory and discourse analysis to capture aspects that may otherwise go beyond what is seen, i.e. within thematic analysis. However, discourse theory and discourse analysis rely heavily on a challenging catalogue of concepts that may be bold in themselves and thus need to be downsized at this level to be accessible.

Also, combining discourse theory and culture may be problematic, as culture is considered stable from an ontological standpoint (Fornäs 2012a), which clashes with the contingency of discourse theory. However, within a hermeneutic culture concept—still connected to other culture concepts—human interaction and mediation make meaning-making intersubjective (Fornäs 2012a) yet it will still need to rely on some form of fixation to be able to be returned to, be recognised (awareness) and culturally transmitted (accepted) and learnt (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman 2020).

Reflecting on my position as a single researcher conducting the interviews, interpreting what is said, and understanding and analysing the results through my understanding of the world, society and language, alongside the theories relied upon, I can see how my performance may be seen as oozing subjectivity.

Still, countermeasures have been taken, first by being aware and continually pausing to reflect on actions taken from the position of “being alone” in this process, thereby aligning with the abductive approach (Conaty 2021) and the iterative feedback loop followed (Barnett et. al. 2016), hence allowing curiosity to guide the process. However, an unavoidable aspect of abductive research is that, although previous experience aided access, execution, and analysis of the case, and bias mitigation strategies were employed, the risk of residual bias remains.

Also, by applying *thaumazein* (Bornemark 2021) during analysis, distancing myself from my cultural rucksack, supported by guidance and questions raised by my supervisor, examiner, and peers, the limitations of my personal perspectives and countermeasures have been clarified.

Still, the researcher may pose the greatest risk in this study, particularly when collecting material through interviews. Upon reflection, I would claim that the risk of leading respondents increases midway through the project, as the interviewer becomes more accustomed to the interview setting. The interviewer begins to relax, risks letting go of the guidelines, becomes too comfortable, and, as a result, becomes eager to reach the desired results, unintentionally nudging the respondent in that direction. Having had this experience in previous work, which led to excluding parts of the material, I am now slightly too careful, holding back on follow-up questions. Still, reflecting on this, support for building tacit knowledge of interviewing (Kvale 2007) helped me momentarily get back on track to on-the-spot verification (Kvale 1996), thereby avoiding unintended behaviour in the interviews that followed.

Regarding the respondents, it may be relevant to reflect on the perceived positivity towards governance within the studied group, which challenges the image of “the rebellious youth” found in other studies. Although the response may be related to the specific group, most of the respondents have been affected by the relatively open isolation regulations related to the COVID-19 pandemic during their school and university years. They rely on Swedish governance, which is closely and generally positively connected to a single person: the state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell. In a world embroiled in conflicts and financial insecurity, it may thus be logical for the young adult to continue trusting governance, at least until proven otherwise.

Additionally, one may argue that rebelliousness may subside as parental control diminishes, leaving the parental home and building one’s life on personal income and decision-making. Returning to the parental home, losing influence, as Robin did, may risk becoming a breeding ground for rebelliousness.

Although limited by time and budget constraints, this study may have benefited from including written texts in the analysed material, particularly institutional texts such as syllabi, eating recommendations, and job advertisements from the Swedish Food Agency, to enable further generalisation of the established patterns. Yet the results may still be significant for understanding how young adults today may be effectively approached regarding sustainable food behaviour, as part of socially accepted group behaviour (Bohm & Bengs, 2023).

7. Conclusions

Returning to the aim and research questions of this case study, the following conclusions highlight a few social effects that can explain how sustainable food behaviour can become clear, culturalised and furthered among young adults in Sweden. When studying how young adults talk about sustainable food behaviour at home, seven key points have been identified:

- Sustainable food behaviour is relationally driven, particularly by related and unrelated role models (relational discourse)
- Notable uncertainties about what sustainable food behaviour is found (awareness discourse)
- Major uncertainties on how knowledge can be applied are seen, i.e., what to do (knowledge discourse)
- There is an acknowledged trust in Swedish produce and national food recommendations among the respondents (Swedish preference discourse)
- The respondents display an established resource- and cost awareness applied in practice (economic discourse)
- The health and sustainable food behaviour concepts are treated interchangeably (health hegemony)
- Government support is needed and expected by the respondents (floating signifier)

This thesis shows how a nuanced understanding of the culturalisation phenomenon may support efforts to foster change towards more sustainable food behaviours, based on how such behaviour is largely relationally driven. Consequently, sustainable food behaviour may be accessible for cultural transmission across multiple positions between related and unrelated generations, where the related role model plays an important part in building the receiver's awareness and potential acceptance towards the behaviour or practice. Also, the dual culturalisation opportunity from the unrelated HE teachers is noteworthy, opening up for governance through dual culturalisation via the pupil.

However, government support may be critical for furthering sustainable food behaviours, as the young adults are significantly constrained by major insecurities about what sustainable food behaviour is and how to translate their theoretical knowledge into practice, as reflected in the awareness and knowledge discourses. Hence, awareness and knowledge do not ensure action. In effect, if these insecurities are not addressed, they will act as bottlenecks for both organic and planned progression.

7.1 The Significance of Hegemonic Understanding

Sustainable food behaviour is significantly challenged by the health hegemony. This leads to food sustainability and health being used interchangeably, with health taking precedence and thereby shaping how sustainable food behaviour is understood, what is noticed, which behaviours are prioritised, and the effects these behaviours have on food sustainability.

Understanding the concepts of health and food sustainability, and their relationship, is thus crucial for determining which effects will be achievable. If concepts remain unclear and interchangeable, efforts risk being misdirected and ineffective, potentially slowing down progress towards more sustainable food behaviours. Accordingly, it is the perceived sustainable food behaviours that risk being furthered.

Additionally, this indicates that the health hegemony tends to redirect focus from universal sustainability goals and gains back to the individual's physical health. Nevertheless, the relational discourse has thus far kept the health hegemony in place, opening up opportunities to identify positions for the culturalisation of sound, sustainable food behaviour for the future.

Returning to the quote that inspired the title of this study, "I can feel myself being sustainable with my own body, but being sustainable towards the outside world..." (Leslie 03:10–03:21), it largely captures the essence of what has been learnt from this study. It illustrates the challenge of grasping the abstract concept of sustainable consumption for any young consumer, and it does so under hegemonic influence, redirecting attention from the world towards the self.

To achieve unified, directed, and effective change that advances behaviour on a broad front, the results of this study indicate that the government is not only needed but also expected to actively drive change towards acceptance by lessening insecurities around information and pragmatic application. Hence, the government is expected to take on a pragmatic, guiding, and forward-looking role rather than a controlling one, and the HE subject, with its dual culturalisation opportunity, may thus be a natural starting point.

Although the results may not generalise beyond this study, they still suggest how young adults may be approached to support and further their transitions towards more sustainable food behaviours. Empowering them as beyond-consumption consumers. Rooted in an empathetic understanding of behaviour change beyond simply being "good enough," and based on existing skills recognised within Swedish cultural and economic discourses, governance through practical advice on actions can effectively promote sustainable food practices. This approach involves refining and broadening sustainable food behaviours among young Swedish adults, gradually shifting their focus from awareness to acceptance.

7.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Finally, forwarding a few suggestions for future study may help further a unified understanding of what sustainable food behaviour entails in a Swedish context. For instance, it would be interesting to further the understanding of how the relational discourse may support the culturalisation of sustainable food behaviours, i.e., by studying how it supports sustainable food behaviours beyond acquisition. Ultimately, a study with a specific focus on the dual culturalisation opportunity found in this study within the HE subject, where the pupil acts as both receiver and sender of culture, would be of particular interest.

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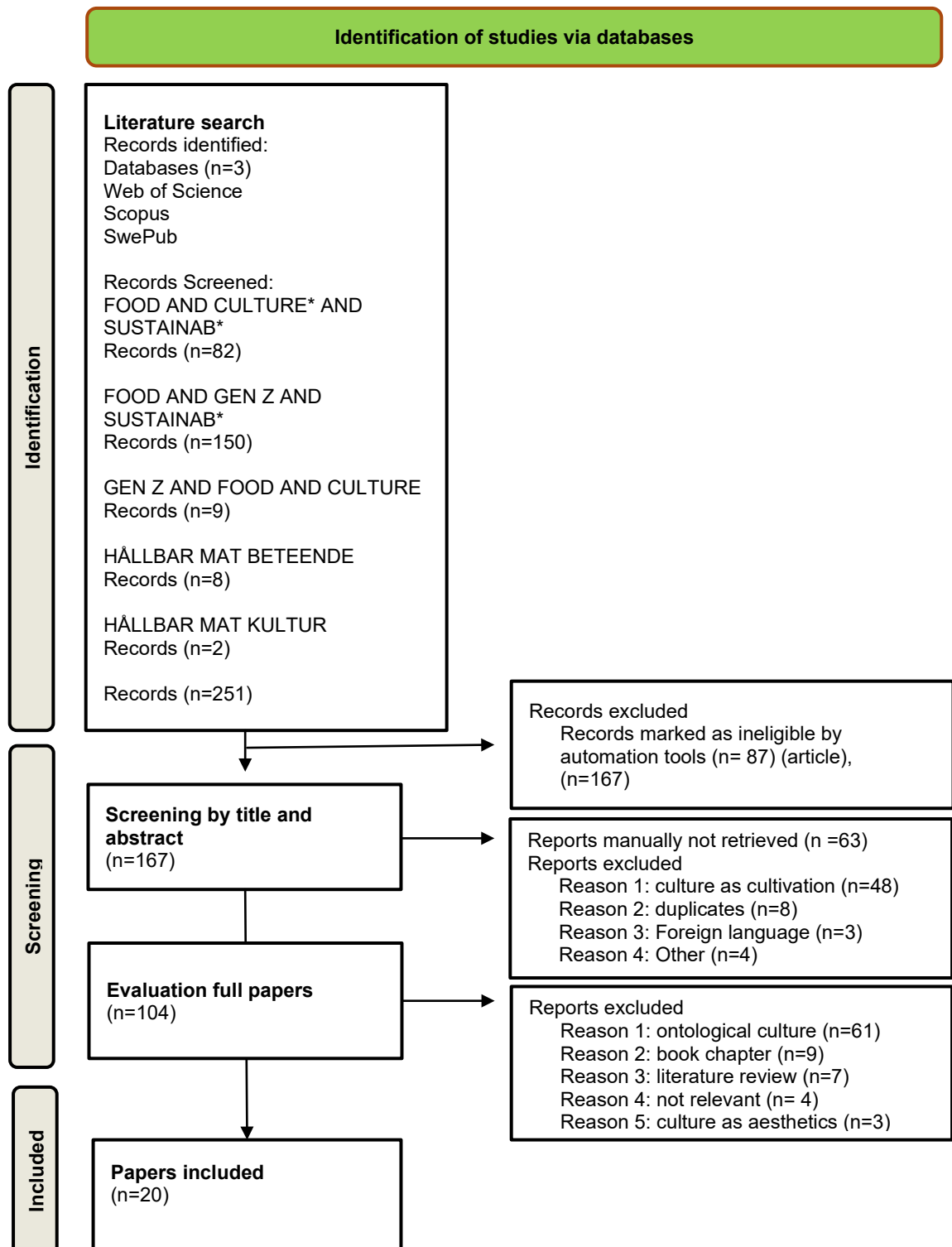
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Popular Science Summary

This study investigated how young adults in Sweden discuss food and sustainability in their own homes. Ten interviews were conducted, revealing five discussion topics: relational, knowledge, awareness, Swedish preference, and economics. The relational discussion notes that much of the young adults' sustainable behaviour stems from the people closest to them, such as parents and other role models, including partners and teachers. The awareness discussion highlights the insecurity that many feel regarding what food sustainability means, and the knowledge discussion features the uncertainty that many respondents feel when faced with food-based sustainability issues, and what to do about it. The Swedish preference discussion emphasises how important it is for young adults to eat and to support locally produced food, and the economic discussion shows how the young adults carefully manage their budget and resources with clear ties back to the school subject Home Economics (HE). The idea of being healthy follows all these discussions, and it creates confusion among the respondents, as "being sustainable" and "being healthy" often mean the same thing to them. To create a truly sustainable future, it is essential to emphasise how support is needed and expected from the government. By highlighting the importance of how our relationships may support fostering green behaviours, we can work towards integrating sustainable doings into both policies and everyday life.

Appendix 1 PRISMA Flow Diagram

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews. Source: Page MJ, et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Appendix 2 Operationalisation

Appendix 3 contains Tables A and B. Table A below shows how the Laclauian concepts link the aim and research questions and, through an open-ended question format (What? How? How?), are translated into interview questions that capture the concepts and aspects of sustainable food behaviour and cultural transmission (the parental home, HE and the young adult's home). The table is followed by Table B below.

Table A. Linking Laclauian concepts to aim, research questions and interview questions

Aim	RQ 1,2,3	Analytical concepts	Interview questions
This study aims to explain how discourses on sustainable food behaviour at home are constructed through Swedish young adults' articulations, to explain the mechanisms by which sustainable food behaviour is culturalised, and to examine how sustainable food behaviour can develop.	1. How is sustainable food behaviour constructed?	Articulation Discourse: -Moment -Nodal point Floating signifier Hegemony	<i>What is a sustainable food behaviour to you?</i> <i>Tell me about some sustainable food behaviours you have adopted?</i> <i>How would a sustainable meal look like in your household?</i> <i>What makes the meal sustainable?</i> <i>What aspects of sustainability do you find easy to maintain?</i> <i>What aspects are more challenging?</i> <i>Describe a typical yet sustainable meal in your childhood home?</i> <i>What did you eat?</i> <i>Where did the food come from?</i> <i>How were leftovers treated?</i> <i>Describe a sustainable meal in your home today.</i> <i>Similarities with the parental home</i> <i>Differences with the parental home</i> <i>Do you have any sustainability criteria for planning, purchasing, and waste disposal?</i> <i>If you do, can you please tell me about it?</i> <i>If you were to change your current diet, what would you change and why?</i>
	2. How is sustainable food behaviour culturalised?		<i>Where do you think your image of what a sustainable food behaviour comes from?</i> <i>How was sustainability in relation to food and the meal discussed in your childhood home?</i> <i>Could you describe a typical yet sustainable meal in your childhood home?</i> <i>What did you eat?</i> <i>Where did the food come from?</i> <i>How were leftovers treated?</i> <i>Describe a sustainable meal in your home today.</i> <i>Similarities with the parental home</i> <i>Differences with the parental home</i> <i>How was sustainability related to food spoken about in school?</i>

3. How can sustainable food behaviour be furthered?

How would a sustainable meal look like in your household?
What makes the meal sustainable?
What aspects of sustainability do you find easy to maintain?
What aspects are more challenging?
If you were to change your current diet, what would you change and why?
What sustainable food choices would you have made if the circumstances had been different? [Why/what would you need/what had you done then]
What help would you need to make your sustainable food choices possible, and from whom?

In Table B below, an excerpt of the coding framework is shared to illustrate how the analysis was performed, allowing context and thaumazin to guide the process.

Table B. Excerpt from the coding framework illustrating the analysis of Laclauian concepts

Text excerpt	Moment	Nodal point	Floating signifier	Discourse	Hegemony
“you should eat everything on your plate”	Means	Resource management	-	Economic	-
“use everything you have”	Means	Resource management	-	Economic	-
“I rarely buy eggs”	Resourcesfulness	Replacement strategy	-	Economic	-
“then you needed a car to get rid of the waste”	Helpfulness	-	Support	Economic	-
“Swedish healthy food”	Wholesome	Nationally produced	-	Swedish Preference	Health

Appendix 3 Interview Practice and Guide

Here the interview guide is presented starting with the interview procedure, followed by the background questions, collecting information about the respondents, and ending with the interview guide.

Interview practice	
Introduction	Thank respondent for participation Account for the procedure today
Information and Consent Form	Ask the respondent to read the document/or read together Any questions or something unclear? Repeat each paragraph in a simplified manner including aim and how data will be processed, presented and saved.
Information about sound check	Sign the document/or send confirmation e-mail Show position of microphone Tell how the recording works Ask again if it is alright to perform recording Perform sound check
Start recording and interview	
Stop recording	Inform respondent and thank them for their participation.
Finishing routine	Inform respondent on what will happen now: - Offer of reading transcription accepted or rejected/revised - Link to published thesis

Background questions

Hur gammal är du? /*How old are you?*

Vilken könsidentitet identifierar du dig med? /

What gender identity do you identify with?

Var bor du?/*Where do you live?*

Vilken utbildning har du?/*What is your educational background?*

Vad arbetar du med?/Vad studerar du?/

What do you do for a living?/What is your field of study?

Lever du ensam eller med andra, i så fall vilka? Relation? Delar ni budget? Hur/

Do you live alone or with others? Who? Relation? Do you share a budget? How?

Interview Guide

Vad innebär ett hållbart beteende i förhållande till mat för dig? Beskriv.

What is a sustainable food behaviour to you? Describe.

Berätta om några hållbara beteenden kopplade till mat som du använder dig av?

Tell me about some sustainable food behaviours you have adopted?

Hur skulle en hållbar måltid kunna se ut hemma hos dig? Berätta.

How would a sustainable meal look like in your household? Please describe.

Varifrån tror du att din bild av ett hållbart matbeteende kommer ifrån? Berätta?

Något mer?

Where do you think your image of what a sustainable food behaviour comes from? Tell me more? Anything else?

Hur talades det om hållbarhet i relation till mat respektive måltid i ditt barndomshem?

How was sustainability in relation to food and the meal discussed in your childhood home?

Beskriv en vanlig men hållbar måltid i ditt barndomshem?

Describe a typical yet sustainable meal in your childhood home?

Hur skulle en hållbar måltid se ut för dig i ditt hem idag? Beskriv!

Describe a sustainable meal in your home today.

Hur talades det om hållbarhet i relation till mat under din skolgång?

How was sustainability related to food spoken about in school?

Har du hållbarhetskriterier för planering och inköp och avfallshantering av mat? I så fall, hur ser de ut? Berätta.

Do you have any sustainability criteria for planning, purchasing, and waste disposal? If you do, please tell me about it?

Om du skulle ändra din kost, såsom den ser ut idag, vad skulle du ändra på då och varför?

If you were to change your current diet, what would you change and why?

Vilka hållbara val hade du gjort om förutsättningarna varit annorlunda?

[varför/Vad hade du behövt/vad hade du då gjort]

What sustainable food choices would you have made if the circumstances had been different? [Why/what would you need/what had you done then]

Vilken hjälp hade du behövt för att göra det möjligt och från vem?

What help would you need to make your sustainable food choices possible, and from whom?

Om vi nu återvänder till den första frågan: Vad innebär ett hållbart beteende i förhållande till livsmedel för dig? Vill du lägga till någonting?

If we return to the first question: What is a sustainable food behaviour to you?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix 4 Selection and Interview System

The table shows the process for selection, booked and performed interviews and transcriptions.

No	1 st contact	2 nd contact	Established contact	Inter- view booked	Interview Performed 2026	Pseudonym	Transcription finished	Respondent approval offer	Approval transcription
1	4/3	-	4/3	4/3	9/3	Alex	11/3	12/3	12/3
2	4/3	-	4/3	4/3	10/3	Jade	29/3	29/3	29/3
3	5/3	-	5/3	5/3	11/3	Blake	13/3	13/3	13/3
4	10/3	18/3	19/3	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	10/3	-	10/3	10/3	16/3	Leslie	18/3	18/3	18/3
6	10/3	-	12/3	12/3	17/3	Charlie	20/3	20/3	20/3
7	10/3	-	10/3	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	13/3	-	14/3	14/3	18/3	Quinn	23/3	23/3	23/3
9	13/3	-	13/3	14/3	25/3	Robin	27/3	27/3	27/3
10	18/3	-	18/3	18/3	23/3	Eli	25/3	25/3	25/3
11	18/3	-	18/3	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	20/3	-	29/3	29/3	3/4	Frankie	7/4	7/4	7/4
13	22/3	-	22/3	25/3	-	-	-	-	-
14	31/3	-	1/4	1/4	1/4	Gabby	3/4	4/4	6/4

Appendix 5 Information and Consent Form

The information and consent form used within the study.

Department of Molecular Sciences
Christine B. Törnskog

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

09 March 2026

Participation in an independent project at SLU- consent and information about the processing of personal data

When you consent to take part in the independent project In Search of Sustainable Food Behaviour in Young Adults, you consent to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) processing your personal data. Consenting to this is optional. However, if you do not consent, you cannot take part in the project. This form aims to give you all the information you need to decide whether you consent to participating in the project and to SLU processing your personal data.

Consent is the legal basis for processing your personal data. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and you do not have to justify this. However, withdrawing your consent will not affect the processing that has already taken place. SLU is responsible for processing your personal data. SLU's data protection officer can be contacted at dataskydd@slu.se. Your contact person for the project is the student Christine B. Törnskog at ceog0006@stud.se. You can also contact the supervisor, Cecilia Mark-Herbert, at Cecilia.mark-herbert@slu.se. I will collect the following personal data: age, gender identity, city, educational background, profession, household budget (full or shared), and sustainable food behaviour. The interview will be digitally recorded, and your identity will be protected using fictitious, gender-fluent names. Any other possibly identifying details, such as location, will be hidden using place markers. All data will be protected on a password-locked computer. The recording and transcription will be made available with protected identity to both the supervisor and the examiner upon request. All answers will be handled to prevent unauthorised access. The purpose of processing your personal data is to allow the SLU student(s) to carry out their independent project, In Search of Sustainable Food Behaviour in Young Adults, with good scientific quality. Your personal data will not be transferred to other organisations or companies.

Your personal data will be stored until the independent project has been assessed and the grade registered in the SLU student registry. After that, the data will be disposed of. Data you submit may be used for further research, in which case it will be stored at SLU in accordance with research practice. The data will be handled to prevent unauthorised access.

More information on how SLU processes personal data, and about your rights, is available at www.slu.se/personal-data. You have the right, under certain circumstances, to have your personal data erased, corrected or limited. You also

have the right to access the personal data being processed, and you have the right to object to the processing of your data.

If you have any comments, contact the data protection officer at dataskydd@slu.se. If you want to make a complaint, contact the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection at imy@imy.se. Read more about the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection at <http://www.imy.se>.

☐ I hereby consent to take part in this independent project and to SLU processing my personal data in the manner explained in this text, including any sensitive data I may submit.

Signature

Date

Name in block letters

Appendix 6 Quality Assessment

Quality assessment form for articles within the literature study.

Analytical and/or reflective description of:						
Article	Quantitative method	Qualitative method	Methods	Data analysis	Ethics	Grade
Analysing Gen Z’s perspective on anticipated food crises and food behaviour (2025)	x		x	x	-	C
An examination of the values that motivate socially conscious and frugal consumer behaviours (2009)	x		x	x	-	C
Australian Generation Z and the Nexus between Climate Change and Alternative Proteins (2022)	x		x	x	x	B
Balance, self-efficacy and collective individualism: Young people’s ideal eater types (2023)		x	x	x	x	B
Consumer perceptions and attitudes towards climate information on food (2022)	x		x	x	x	B
Cultured Meat and Australia’s Generation Z (2020)	x	x	x	x	-	D
Cultural sustainability: a hidden curriculum... (2023)		xx	x	x	x	B
Developing a novel optimisation approach for keeping a heterogeneous diet... (2024)	x		x	x	x	B
Education for Sustainable Food Consumption in Home and Consumer Studies (2018) Doctoral thesis		xx	x	x	x	A
Evaluating the sustainability of diets... (2015)	x		x	x	-	C
Hållbarhet till middag (2016) Doctoral thesis		xx	x	x	x	A
Intention to buy sustainably produced fish (2026)	x		x	x	-	C

Generation Z's appetite for traditional food: unveiling the interplay of sustainability values... (2024)	x		x	x	-	C
Låt den rätte komma in: Diskurser om måltidskultur... (2023) Bachelor thesis		x	x	x	x	B
Mainstreaming Sustainable Consumption (2025) Doctoral thesis		xx	x	x	x	A
Prepared for a crisis and the unexpected: managing everyday eventualities through food storage practices (2023)		xx	x	x	x	B
Potential cultured meat consumers in Greece: attitudes... (2025)	x		x	x	x	B
Psychological consequences of moral labelling in the built environment (2018) Doctoral thesis	x		x	x	-	C
Shedding light on realized sustainable consumption behavior and perceived barriers of young adults for creating stimulating teaching-learning situations (2019)	x		x	x	-	C
US and UK Consumer Adoption of Cultivated Meat... (2021)	x		x	x	x	B

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