Home Economics and Craft Studies Research Reports 39

Kristiina Janhonen

Adolescents' Participation and Agency in Food Education

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Reviewed by
Professor Roger Säljö, University of Gothenburg
Docent Marianne Pipping-Ekström, University of Gothenburg

Custos
Professor Päivi Palojoki, University of Helsinki

Supervised by
Professor Päivi Palojoki, University of Helsinki
Professor Johanna Mäkelä, University of Helsinki

Official opponent
Professor Lotte Holm, University of Copenhagen

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Abstract

This dissertation examines food education from the perspectives of adolescents' participation and agency. The study builds on a social constructivist understanding of learning and draws methodological inspiration from childhood sociology. The empirical part of the study is based on two data-sets: Nordic survey data (N=1539) collected in 2006−2007 and data from a qualitative case study (2012−2013), which focused on 9th grade students in one Finnish school (14−17 years).

The dissertation is compiled from four original publications. Articles I and II examine Nordic adolescents' school lunch patterns and their considerations of meal choices in the family context. Articles III and IV examine adolescents' school lunch practices as an educational resource and the challenges of school-based participatory research with young people. The results drawn from the comparative Nordic data-set function as a broader background, against which the results from the qualitative case study are discussed in this summary. The study is based on an interdisciplinary and multimethod research design, and has combined qualitative and quantitative data in an interpretive integration (i.e., a combination of qualitative and quantitative results at the stage of theoretical interpretation).

The overall aim of the dissertation is to explore how adolescents' views on their food practices could be more thoroughly used as an educational resource and how their participation and agency could be better supported in food education. This dissertation concludes that future work on adolescents' participation and agency in food education would benefit from enhancing intergenerational dialogue and from approaching food-related learning as dynamic processes that reach beyond formal schooling.

Key words: adolescents, food education, participation, agency

Helsingin yliopisto, Käyttäytymistieteellinen tiedekunta
Opettajankoulutuslaitos
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Kristiina Janhonen

Osallisuutta ja toimijuutta tukeva ruokakasvatus

Tiivistelmä

Väitöskirja kuuluu kasvatustieteen alaan ja tarkastelee ruokakasvatusta nuorten osallisuuden ja toimijuuden näkökulmista. Tutkimus nojaa sosiokonstruktivistiseen oppimiskäsitykseen ja ammentaa metodologisia vaikutteita lapsuuden sosiologian alueelta. Väitöskirjan empiirinen osuus pohjautuu kahteen aineistokokonaisuuteen: Vuosina 2006−2007 toteutettuun pohjoismaiseen kyselytutkimusaineistoon (N=1539) sekä laadulliseen tapaustutkimusaineistoon (2012−2013), joka rajautui yhden suomalaiskoulun yhdeksäsluokkalaisiin oppilaisiin (14−17 vuotta).

Väitöskirja koostuu neljästä osajulkaisusta. Artikkelit I ja II käsittelevät pohjoismaisten nuorten kouluruokatottumuksia sekä nuorten näkemyksiä ateriavalinnoistaan perhekontekstissa. Artikkelit III ja IV käsittelevät nuorten kouluruokakäytäntöjä kasvatuksellisena voimavarana sekä koulukontekstissa toteutettavan, nuoria osallistavan tutkimuksen haasteita. Väitöskirjan tiivistelmäosassa pohjoismaiseen aineistoon pohjautuvat tutkimustulokset toimivat taustana, jota vasten laadullisen tapaustutkimuksen tuloksia peilataan. Tutkimus pohjautuu monitieteiseen ja monimenetelmäiseen tutkimusasetelmaan ja yhdistää määrällisiä ja laadullisia aineistoja tulkinnallisen integraation kautta (ts. määrälliset ja laadulliset tutkimustulokset on yhdistetty teoreettisen tulkinnan vaiheessa).

Väitöskirjan kokonaisuus tarkastelee tapoja, joiden avulla nuorten näkemyksiä heidän ruokakäytännöistään voitaisiin hyödyntää aiempaa monipuolisemmin kasvatuksellisena resurssina ja joiden avulla nuorten osallisuutta ja toimijutta voitaisiin paremmin tukea osana ruokakasvatusta. Nuorten osallisuuden ja toimijuuden huomioivan ruokakasvatuksen kehittämiseksi ehdotetaan tutkimuksellisia lähestymistapoja, jotka vahvistavat sukupolvien välistä dialogia ja jotka lähestyvät ruokaan liittyvää oppimista formaalin koulun ulkopuolelle ulottuvina, dynaamisina prosesseina.

Avainsanat: nuoret, ruokakasvatus, osallisuus, toimijuus

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Helsinki, Monday 14 December 2015
Kristiina Janhonen

List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Kainulainen, K., Benn, J., Fjellström, C., & Palojoki, P. (2012). Nordic adolescents' school lunch patterns and their suggestions for making healthy choices at school easier. *Appetite*, *59*, 53−62, doi:10.1016/j.appet.2012.03.012

II Janhonen, K., Benn, J., Fjellström, C., Mäkelä, J. & Palojoki, P. (2013). Company and meal choices considered by Nordic adolescents. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *37*, 587−595, doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12026

III Janhonen, K., Mäkelä, J. & Palojoki, P. (2016). Adolescents' school lunch practices as an educational resource. *Health education*, *116*, in print.

IV Janhonen, K. (2015). Practicing reflexivity: examining school-based participatory research with adolescents. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, submitted.

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Contents

Preface

This dissertation examines adolescents' perspectives and experiences in relation to food and eating. The discussion centres on school and home contexts, which are among the most important settings for supporting adolescents' food-related learning (e.g., Anving & Sellerberg, 2010; Jackson, 2009; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Rawlings, 2009; Tulviste, Mizara, De Geer & Tryggvason, 2002). Food education in this study refers especially to education in these two locations. From a historical perspective, nutrition and health education have focused on promoting so-called 'healthy' and 'nutritionally balanced' choices (Janhonen, Mäkelä, & Palojoki, 2015, 2016). To complement these perspectives, this dissertation aims to highlight the importance of also understanding social and cultural aspects in relation to food and eating, as well as promoting adolescents' participation and agency as part of the learning process.

The overarching research question for this dissertation is as follows: How could adolescents' participation and agency be better supported in food education? Within the field of education as a whole, this question relates to the growing emphasis on learners' perspectives and views in developing both approaches to teaching and the contents and environments for learning (e.g., Arnold & Clarke, 2014; Backman *et al*., 2012; Burke, 2007; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). In this dissertation, agency is examined as a concept interrelated with wider societal structures and cultural practices, such as school lunch systems and ideals of family meals. In addition, the relationship between structure and agency is understood as reciprocal; thus, adolescents' perspectives and practices are considered crucial for building fruitful conditions for learning and promoting change. Participation is approached primarily through the notions of adolescents' engagement and researcher-researched interaction; however, deliberations of adult-adolescent encounters in terms of teacher-student interactions are also presented. Concurrently, the dissertation is based on the premise that adolescents' genuine agency and participation in food education requires a critical examination of what the 'adolescent perspective' in education actually stands for. It is suggested that—instead of focusing merely on differences between adults and adolescents or on the developmental capacities of young people—building intergenerational dialogue and examining learning as a dynamic and wide-ranging process would be beneficial.

The four chapters of this summary outline the study approach (Chapter 1), describe the theoretical commitments and methodological backgrounds of the research process (Chapter 2), present the core conclusions of the empirical part of the dissertation (Chapter 3), and discuss the broader implications of the presented original publications (Chapter 4). These original publications are referenced in the text according to their Roman numerals (Articles I, II, III, IV).

1 Conceptual framework

The following three sub-sections explicate the perspective of this dissertation in reference to its core themes: food, learning and adolescents. In addition to justifying the study's conceptual choices, these sections aim to illustrate how influences from sociological food studies, childhood and youth studies and participatory research have helped to define and delineate the research approach. The conceptual itemization further aims to provide a definition of the key element of this study: namely, a focus on adolescents' perspectives.

1.1 Social and cultural perspectives on food

To date, sociological and anthropological food research has demonstrated the significance of food to both social relationships and cultural practices (e.g., Caplan, 1998; Douglas & Nicod, 1974; Fischler, 1988; Lévi-Strauss, 1970; Lupton, 1994; Murcott, 1982; Mäkelä, 2009). According to this perspective, food habits and meanings are not merely biological or economical by origin; instead, they also draw significant influence from cultural and social contexts that relate to food. Similarly, the notion of 'eating well' and the concept of 'a proper meal' can be seen as cultural and historical constructs; their definitions and meanings differ across cultures and over time (Bildtgård, 2010; Fjellström, 2004; Mäkelä, 2002). While meals in schools and homes can be considered cornerstones of the commensality and transmission of food-related customs and values (Holm, 2001; Mäkelä, 2009), adolescents' objectives and their relationships with their surroundings also reciprocally influence what they choose to eat in these settings (e.g., Eldridge & Murcott, 2000; Ruckenstein, 2012).

Beyond its content (i.e., what is eaten), food is also important as a signifier of social groups, often functioning as a mediator of social interaction (Holm et al., 2012). Studies show that social rules and norms play an important role in determining the collective timing and complexity of meals (e.g., Kahma, Mäkelä, Niva, & Bøker Lund, 2014) and that they can have a marked effect on the amount consumed (Higgs, 2015; Kristensen, Holm, Raben, Astrup, 2002). Furthermore, adopting group-specific norms can give people a sense of self-worth and belonging and protect them from the embarrassment and disapproval of others (Higgs, 2015). These social relationships play a special role for young people (e.g., Backman *et al.*, 2012; Korkiamäki, 2011; Neely, Walton, & Stephens, 2014), functioning either as contexts for building self-confidence and independence or as sources of negative influence (Palmqvist & Santavirta, 2006). The desire to belong has been shown to override even personal preferences among young people (Neely *et al.*, 2014).

The significance of social contexts and peer relations for adolescents underlines the importance of examining their food practices beyond nutritional intake (Atik & Ertekin, 2013; Hoikkala & Paju, 2013; Neely *et al*., 2014). In this study, food practices are defined as including all activities involving food, ranging from food preparation and food provision to the sharing of meals (Punch, McIntosh, & Emond, 2011; Watson, 2013). In addition, though adolescents' food practices are seen as being influenced by the spaces they inhabit, it has also been acknowledged that young people influence the structures and practices that surround them (Rawlings, 2009). In order to gain a deeper understanding of why and how specific practices take place, food choices should be examined as part of wider social, cultural and societal contexts (*Ibid*.). In addition, adolescents' experiences and understandings of the social conditions of their food practices should be seen as important factors in planning food policies and food educational approaches in the school setting. Finally, in order to understand how adolescents themselves justify their food practices, it is necessary to go beyond actual food choices, as well as conventional categorizations of healthy eating discourse.

1.2 Food-related learning and interpretive reproduction

Over the past two decades, the so-called traditional definitions of teaching and learning have been increasingly challenged by approaches conceiving of learning as multi-layered, dynamic and taking place beyond the boundaries of the formal school (e.g., Kumpulainen & Mikkola, 2014). Overall, there has been a shift from defining learning as the acquisition of individual knowledge (e.g., behaviourism or cognitive theory) to studying learning as collective processes (e.g., sociocultural learning theories) (Corsaro, 2005; Hager, 2012; Illeris, 2008; Repo-Kaarento, Levander & Nevgi, 2009; Rogoff, 2003). Simultaneously, students have begun to be seen increasingly as subjects, rather than objects, of educational research and practice, and studies advocating for adolescent-centredness have become more prominent (Drotner, 2013; Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2008).

The described progressions have not only influenced the use of terminology in educational literature, but have also encouraged a wider turn in educational theory and a more central role of the concept of learning (Biesta, 2015; Daniels, Lauder & Porter, 2009). Daniels *et al*. (2009) further note a sociocultural turn in educational theory, stating that an emphasis on social and cultural aspects of learning, in one way or another, is currently a dominant trend in education. As a result, the term 'sociocultural' may no longer reveal a researcher's position (*Ibid*.); instead, a full understanding now requires a more explicit itemization of what 'social' and 'cultural' mean in the context of educational research design. It is argued here that the former includes not only a critical examination of the significance of social and cultural aspects of specific contexts as influential factors for learning, but also deliberations of the broader structural conditions for activities in these contexts

and, finally, an awareness of their historical origins. It is in this respect that educational researchers can benefit from the work of sociologists and their theorisations of how people learn to be and act in specific ways in specific cultures and societies (Dyke, 2015). Thus, the common ground between education and sociology can be said to essentially concern the tension between structure and agency and the interrelationship between practices and broader social, political and cultural factors (Dyke & Bryant, 2012; see also Dyke, 2015; Valentine 2009). From this perspective, learning can be defined as reflexive participation in the changing practices of everyday life and as a mediating concept between structure and agency. Furthermore, learning can be seen as the fundamental process through which structural reproduction and social change are mediated (*Ibid.*).

Although the relationship between structure and agency can be described as a fundamental question in sociology (e.g., Dyke & Bryant, 2012), it is important to note that the term 'learning' has not traditionally been used in sociological theorisations. Instead, much literature can be found on the related concept of socialization, which typically refers to the process through which children (and, in some cases, adults) internalize and conform to the values, beliefs and norms of behaviours found in the surrounding society (James *et al.*, 1998; Jarvis *et al.*, 2008). Dyke (2015) specifies that it is this parallel thread of learning as transmission that can be found in both traditional social and educational theories. However, just as the described progressions in definitions of learning, approaches emphasizing the dynamic and interrelated nature of structure and agency have also emerged. One such example is the interpretive approach to childhood socialization, which, according to Corsaro's (2005) definition, places special emphasis on the practical activities of children in their own peer cultures. Within this framework—and in contrast to individualistic or future-oriented connotations of traditional theories of socialization—adolescents are seen as creatively participating in society and actively contributing to cultural (re)production and change (*Ibid.*). As stated by Corsaro (2005), in focusing on the anticipatory outcomes of childhood and emphasizing children's active role in their development and eventual participation in the adult world, the traditional theories of socialization fail to comprehensively consider the complexity of social structures and children's collective activities. Corsaro's notion of interpretive reproduction (*Ibid.*) offers a framework for examining adolescents' peer relations and the meanings that they attach to food in the context of formal schooling.

To conclude, despite being structurally positioned as having the task of learning and receiving their surrounding cultural heritage, adolescents in this study are examined as active agents in the processes of interpreting and (re)constructing their surrounding worlds (de Castro, 2012; Corsaro, 2005). School and other formal educational contexts are understood to play central roles in adolescents' lives; however, it is acknowledged that learning also takes place beyond these formal settings and that it is intertwined with everyday practices, choices and routines.

Concurrently, learning is defined as involving both informal and formal aspects (Wortham & Jackson, 2007) and as taking place also beyond classrooms (Arnseth & Silseth, 2013; Weaver-Hightower & Robert, 2011). In addition to the described notion of interpretive reproduction, the concept of informal school has proved a useful aid for the present study, since it has facilitated the examination of adolescents' perspectives in the school setting. The concept of informal school, as applied in this study, draws from the field of childhood studies (Valentine, 2000) and the work of Finnish school ethnographers (Gordon *et al*., 1999; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000; Paju, 2011). By definition, the formal school includes the curriculum and other official documents, such as textbooks. It also comprises teaching methods and all activities and interactions linked with formal teaching. The informal school, on the other hand, includes everyday cultures at school and the informal discussions and interactions among students or students and teachers. These informal dimensions are understood in this study as having potential implications for adolescents' food choices, as well as for learning that takes place inside classrooms. Despite the ever-presence of food and eating in the school community, their roles have been surprisingly little studied by educational researchers (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). The present study aims to fill this gap.

1.3 From research *on* to research *with* adolescents

Adolescence is typically perceived as phase of life that is a part of, but separate from, childhood (Raby, 2007). However, there are significant historical variations in the ways in which young people as a group have been defined within education and learning (e.g., Jarvis *et al*., 2008), and there is still considerable debate across disciplines about whether or not young people should be seen as an age group separate from others (Brooks, 2012; Heath, Brooks, Cleaver & Ireland, 2009; Morrow, 2013; Pekkarinen & Vehkalahti, 2012; Satka, Alanen, Harrikari & Pekkarinen, 2011). Some researchers (e.g., Best, 2007) have stated that the category of adolescence is, in itself, a legacy or remnant of developmental approaches to youth. Accordingly, Chisholm (2013) states that life stages within the life course can also be seen as social constructions; thus, youth can no longer be understood only or primarily as a phase of life, but as a culturally differentiated and socially conditioned representation. In addition, Chisholm (*Ibid*.) extends the notion of social construction to the idea of young people as learning subjects or as pedagogical objects, as well as to the core educational concepts of curricula, pedagogy and assessment, which similarly cannot be seen as natural or inevitable categories, but as socially and culturally negotiated definitions. Importantly, young people can also be seen as contributors to our understanding of the learner in education (Porter, 2009).

The above debates can be further illustrated through the variety of concepts that refer to young participants in academic literature. The terms 'young people'

and 'youth' are typically used within youth studies, sometimes with an accentuated detachment from the terms 'adolescents' and 'adolescence', which are habitually used in developmental psychology (Fraser, 2004; Heath *et al*., 2009). The terms 'students' and 'pupils' are most commonly used within education, but with no less contestation. For example, Finnish policy documents use the term 'pupils' (*oppilas*) to refer to learners at the secondary school level and the term 'students' (*opiskelija*) when discussing the high school level.[1] Some researchers have advocated for the use of the term 'students' instead of that of 'pupils' to emphasise the active role of the learners and to move away from the somewhat passive connotations of the term 'pupils' (e.g., Lehtonen, 2003). However, as the critique of McCluskey (2014) demonstrates, more than mere modification of terminology is needed in order to affect change in how young people are approached in schools and elsewhere.

The ways in which adolescents are conceptualized affect the ways that we approach research with them (Raby, 2007). Similarly, the ways that young people are described, analysed and theorized affects the level of policy documents and school communities (Cockburn, 2005). In recent years, re-definitions of young people as active knowers and subjects have enabled new roles for them in research (Seale, Nind, & Parsons, 2014). This has resulted in a growing number of studies emphasizing the contributions and participation of young people. The Nordic countries have been pioneers in this respect, given their long history of engaging young people in researching and developing matters that affect them (Wills, Appleton, Magnusson, & Brooks, 2008). Overall, a shift from research *on* to research *with* or *for* children and young people can be witnessed (Corsaro, 2005; Bucknall, 2014; O'Kane, 2008). Particularly from the late 1990s onwards, such perspectives have gained increasing interest within the educational research (Skivens & Strandbu, 2006; Todd, 2012; Wills *et al*., 2008). However, despite the growing number of educational studies that emphasize the interrelationship between the researchers and the researched (Wang, 2012) and acknowledge children as active participants in their educational experiences (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013), these themes are still frequently treated as inherently subordinate to adult-defined and pre-fixed aims (Daniel & Gustafsson, 2011; Lee, 2001; Percy-Smith & Weil, 2003).

Today, research approaches that acknowledge young respondents' perspectives are increasingly categorised under the umbrella terms 'participatory research' or 'participative approach'. These terms typically refer to the acknowledgement of research as a co-constituted account and critical examination of the tensions that arise among social positions during fieldwork (Finlay,

[1] Oppilas- ja opiskelijahuoltolaki [*Law for pupil and student services*] 1287/2013, http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2013/20131287

2002; Pinter & Zan-dian, 2015). The term 'inclusive research' is also sometimes used (although not commonly within education) to refer to participatory, emancipatory or community/peer-led research (Seale *et al*., 2014). According to the definition proposed by Seale *et al*. (*Ibid.*), inclusive research denotes an approach that takes those who are typically research objects (e.g., learners or teachers) and positions them as active agents in the research conduct. Such research also aims to emphasise participants' views and experiences. Furthermore, as current research exemplifies (e.g., Christensen & James, 2000; Seale *et al*., 2014; Hunleth, 2011; Pinter & Zandian, 2015; Raby, 2007), participatory research should not be understood as the mere technical application of specific methods; rather, it is an open-minded approach including philosophical and methodological deliberations of adolescents as research subjects. Accordingly, attention should be paid to youth cultures and power relations, as well as reflections of researchers' roles and interpretations in the research process (Berger, 2015; Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014; Spencer & Doull, 2015; Kumsa *et al*., 2015).

Studies emphasizing the roles of young participants in framing research, collecting data and interpreting results also commonly use the concepts of children as co-researchers (e.g., Hillén, 2013), students as researchers (e.g., Thomson & Gunter, 2007), student voice (e.g., Cook-Sather, 2006) and/or student voice work (e.g. Robinson & Taylor, 2007). In this dissertation, however, the concepts of adolescent-centred and participatory research will be used, instead, in an effort to emphasise that research with young people is never free of power imbalances and is seldom initiated by adolescents themselves (Mannion, 2007; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Spyrou, 2011). These conceptual choices are also meant to highlight the importance of defining participation as more than merely listening to what adolescents have to say (Fielding, 2007; Lodge, 2005). Following Fraser's (2005) work, this research defines an adolescent-centred approach as research that strives for the context-specific negotiation of aims, that uses terms that make sense to the young people concerned, and that is open to the new perspectives that emerge during the research process. The term 'adolescents' is used in this summary for the sake of consistency (see Articles I, II, III and IV), and to help the reader position the results in relation to the participants of this study (9th grade students, 14 to 17 years old). When the terms 'youth', 'young people', 'children' or 'childhood' are used, the influences drawn from youth and childhood studies will be explicated. Based on the above discussion, the term 'student' is preferred to that of 'pupil'. However, it is underlined that, in addition to the terminological shift from 'pupils' to 'students', reconceptualisations on the levels of theory, methodology and the application of methods are suggested as a way to genuinely and successfully promote adolescents' participation and agency in food education.

2 Research design

This chapter describes the overall aims of the empirical part of the dissertation and explains the theoretical presumptions on which the data collection and results are founded. By bringing together a range of theoretical arguments from the fields of education and sociology, this section seeks to illustrate how adolescent-centred conceptualizations of childhood sociology can enrich definitions of both participatory research with young people and food educational development. Accordingly, the interdisciplinary approach of this study involves the integration of both concepts and methods (McCulloch, 2012), as well as epistemological questions (Alanen, 2012; Rizvi, 2012).

2.1 Food education and adolescent-centredness

In the last decade, food education has gained increasing attention within theoretical discussions, policy documents and practical, school-level initiatives (Janhonen *et al*., 2015; Janhonen *et al*., 2016). In Finland, food education will be more broadly acknowledged than ever before in the National Curriculum taking effect in 2016 (POPS, 2014). These developments call for both new practical models for action and critical considerations of the foundations of food education (e.g., values and objectives). The growing interest in the perspectives of learners within education further stresses the need to develop related conceptualizations in research on adolescents and food.

The core aim of this dissertation is to bring forth adolescents' perspectives on food and eating as parts of their everyday life. This implies a focus on adolescents' experiences, views and explanations throughout the research process. As described in Chapter 1, in this study, adolescents are seen as active agents who, through their food practices, address and affect their surrounding circumstances. The results provide insights for future and in-work teachers regarding the social contexts of adolescents' food choices and the power-laden nature of adult-adolescent interactions in relation to food. A deeper understanding of these viewpoints can help in designing food educational approaches that not only affect eating in schools, but also go beyond the boundaries of the specific contexts of formal schooling (Burgess & Morrison, 1998).

2.2 Integrating educational theory and childhood sociology

The present study builds on a social constructivist understanding of learning and draws methodological inspiration from the new social studies of childhood (e.g., Christensen & James, 2000; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Social constructivism (or socioconstructivism or socio-constructivism) is used here as an overarching

concept referring to the collective and culture-bound nature of learning (Nevgi & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2009). Accordingly, knowledge construction is seen as, by essence, a social phenomenon, inseparable from the surrounding societal, cultural and historical realities (*Ibid*.). The methodological influences of childhood sociology have guided the ways in which adolescents have been approached and defined as research subjects. These influences have sparked aspiration to avoid taking meanings for granted (Burr, 2015; James *et al*., 1998; Lock & Strong, 2010), as well as an emphasis on critical reflexivity (Höijer, 2013, referring to Gergen, 2009; Narayan, Rodriques, Araujo, Shaqlaih, & Moss, 2013).

The overall aim of integrating influences from childhood sociology with educational theory in this study was to build a basis for a dynamic and wide-ranging definition of food-related learning, as called for in the previous chapter. However, since it cannot be said that there is only one social constructivist theory of learning, but, instead, several and sometimes even competing interpretations of its basic tenets, the discussion below aims to illustrate what social constructivism has meant for the present study and how this definition relates to neighbouring approaches. Furthermore, it provides an itemization of the differences and similarities of social constructi*vism* and social constructio*nism*, since the latter is the philosophical perspective on which the new social studies of childhood are commonly said to be based (e.g., Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014, referring to Lee, 1998, 2001). In addition to highlighting the challenges of integrating these perspectives into a coherent research design, this discussion seeks to demonstrate that, as stated by Quennerstedt and Quennersted (2014), a 'child-oriented' methodology stemming from childhood sociology can offer a great deal to education.

The new social studies of childhood emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as critiques of the developmental view on children and childhood (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014). The approach emphasises children as active agents and persons in their own right and states that children and young people should be valued and understood for what they are, rather than solely in relation to adult concerns (e.g., in relation to their development into adulthood or the problems they cause) (Clark, Flevitt, Hammersley, & Robb, 2014). The new social studies of childhood is often referred to as a paradigm shift and a reaction to the absence of children in sociological research, which has received criticism (e.g., Ryan, 2008). Notably, the key argument of this framework is not that children have not been of interest to researchers until now, but that many previous research approaches have been couched in developmental theories, resulting in quite a narrow approach to children and childhood. The claimed contribution of childhood sociology to this discussion is a new terminology and a more open perspective to the ways in which children experience their own lives (e.g., Holloway & Valentine, 2000).

The emphasis on young people as social agents and active meaning-makers has also gained interest within critical youth studies (e.g., Spencer & Doull, 2015).

However, some researchers (e.g., Debies-Carl, 2013) have noted that much youth research to date involves theoretical assumptions of the interpretation of subcultures that have resulted in young people not being taken seriously and upholding pre-determined expectations. These assumptions include the trend of grouping all youth phenomena into one narrow conceptual scope, an emphasis on the consumption of goods, and a lack of ability to see subcultures as spaces for rational behaviour and the production of social change (*Ibid.*). Some youth researchers (e.g., Best, 2007) state that the emergence of the new social studies of childhood has had a marked effect on the fields of childhood and youth studies alike in terms enabling a shift from a dominance of adult-centric approaches to an emphasis on children, youth and social interaction. Others refer to cross-fertilisation (Raby, 2007) or shared interests (Rich, 2012) between these two neighbouring research areas, while still others argue for the distinctiveness of youth studies as a research area (e.g., Heath *et al*. 2009). Essentially, by stepping back from the focus on the differences between adults and children (or adolescents and children), the new social studies of childhood approach enables thinking about intergenerational relations as human encounters, rather than encounters between an adult researcher (or teacher) and an adolescent research subject (or student). As argued in this dissertation, here lie the benefits of this approach from the perspective of developing participatory approaches within food education.

The social constructionist philosophical base of the new social studies of childhood has been described as drawing from the classic works of Berger and Luckmann (1966), of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) (see Burr, 2015). Furthermore, the emergence of such interpretive perspectives as symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology has been said to have paved the way for the conceptualisations of children and childhood within the sociology of childhood (O'Kane, 2008). In philosophical terms, constructi*vist* and constructio*nist* theories can, broadly speaking, be said to share the fundamental notions of relativism and transactional subjectivism; that is, truth is always relative to the individual (and/or to a particular time and culture), and the researcher and the object under study are interlinked such that research results are created in and through the investigation process (see Holstein & Gubrium, 2007; Narayan *et al*., 2013).

In social constructionist literature, social constructi*vism* is habitually defined as being inspired by the work of Lev Vygotsky (e.g., Wortham, 2007). In these texts, both the constructionist and constructivist perspectives are seen as emphasising the importance of the social and understanding human knowledge and rationality as (by)products of social interaction (i.e., such that social relationships precede the individual) (Best, 2008; Gergen, 2001; Wortham, 2007). Even though both approaches define learning as a relational process in which the relationship between the teacher and the learner is crucial, they have, nonetheless, been claimed to differ in their understandings of the specific role of the teacher and in how the processes of knowledge construction takes place (Wortham, 2007). Burr

(2015) specifies this difference as the degree to which the learner is seen as having control over the knowledge construction process, as well as the degree to which these constructions are the product of social or interactional social forces.

In educational literature, the work of Vygotsky (1978) can be found within numerous frameworks, with its usage varying from one author to another (e.g., cognitive theory, constructivist learning theory) (e.g., Irby, Brown, Lara-Alecio, & Jackson, 2013; Jarvis *et al*., 2008). In addition to promoting differences in interpretations, this variation illustrates that Vygotsky's (*Ibid.*) thinking has been influential for a number of educational theories and current schools of thought. Some researchers (e.g., Packer & Goicoecha, 2000) draw a specific distinction between the sociocultural and constructivist (without the pre-fix 'social') theories of learning, tracing the first of these traditions to Vygotsky (*Ibid.*) and his followers and the latter to Piaget (1972) and other cognitive theoreticians. The sociocultural approach is sometimes also referred to as sociocultural constructivism, which can be seen as an opposing philosophical stance to cognitive constructivism (Nevgi & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2009). On the other hand, the sociocultural and socioconstructivist theories have also been defined as overlapping in many ways, and socioconstructivist perspectives have been described as derivates of sociocultural premises (*Ibid.*). In the Handbook of Educational Theories, Narayan *et al*. (2013) define social construction*ism* as one type of constructi*vism*, adding to the already somewhat confusing relationships among the described theories of learning. Interestingly, the authors themselves (*Ibid*.) state that constructivism has been critiqued in general for its incoherent and fragmented literature, which has also resulted in misunderstandings of the basic tenets of the theory.

As illustrated in the work by Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt (2014) and Uprichard (2008), one of the core reasons that many educational researchers have resisted the integration of childhood sociology and educational theory is the emphasis of childhood sociology on children as competent actors in the here and now (children as 'being'), compared to a focus on their development towards adulthood or maturity (children as 'becomings'). The focus on children as 'being' might, at the outset, seem fundamentally incompatible with educational theories, which traditionally focus on change and on assisting or supporting learners in their process of becoming more skilled and knowledgeable individuals. To exemplify in educational terms, the well-known social constructivist[2]—and, originally, Vygotskian—notion of the zone of proximal development positions the adult as the more knowledgeable (or expert) person, responsible for assisting students (or novices) in completing those tasks that they cannot complete alone (Narayan, *et al*., 2013; Paciotti, 2013).

[2]The term 'social constructi*vist*' is used here as it is referred to by the cited authors; however, as discussed, it would be possible to use other identifications.

In contrast, the theoretical perspective of childhood sociology calls for the acknowledgement of children's experiences in the here-and-now, taking distance from the premise of seeing students as incomplete beings who require adult assistance to become competent and knowledgeable actors. The critique of childhood sociology, thus, falls most heavily on an ontology that denies children's active agency (Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2013). This, according to childhood sociologists, has, in many studies, resulted in a more closed, developmentalist stance on young people's learning, as well as a view that children or young people are not capable of drawing on their own biographical and experiential perspectives (*Ibid.*). A similar critique has been posed among participatory researchers (e.g., Ieverse, 2012; Percy-Smith, 2012) and in studies on informal learning (e.g., Hager & Halliday, 2009) against the theory of situated cognition by Lave and Wenger (1991). According to Percy-Smith (2012) and Ieverse (2012), the notion of the child as 'a legitimate peripheral participant' in the social worlds of adults, as referred to by this theory, might not be sufficient when describing situations that require more than the mere instrumental application of skills. Consequently, the authors (*Ibid.*) emphasise the need for more dynamic ideas of learning, in which all participants reflexively learn from one another in a process of co-inquiry-based learning.

It is important to note that there are also educational studies pursuing this above demanded dynamic approach to learning. For example, Arnseth and Silseth (2013) propose a wider interpretation of the theory of Lave and Wenger (1991), including not only the idea of the learner as a novice or a legitimate peripheral participant, but also other potential characterizations of the person and his participation in practices. Similarly, Kumpulainen and Lipponen (2010), who describe their research as being positioned within the socio-cultural tradition and drawing influences from Lave and Wenger (1991), define teaching and learning practices as sets of collective, reciprocal, supportive and cumulative activities, in which the emphasis is placed on varying forms of authority and identity and on promoting negotiation and dialogue as forms of the social construction of knowledge. The authors (*Ibid.*) call this approach a process of dialogic inquiry, in which classroom members openly and experientially build knowledge as a collective process. Both Arnseth and Silseth's (2013) and Kumpulainen and Lipponen's (2010) definitions of learning are in line with the premise of the present study. However, because of the described critiques, as well as the multiple definitions for social construction, it is important to also examine the standpoint of this study through ontological and epistemological questions.

Drawing from Edley's (2001) definition, this dissertation draws on ontological realism and epistemological relativism, which, in relation to social constructivist theories, means defining meanings and practices as socially and culturally constructed (Narayan *et al*., 2013). In addition, and in line with the basic tenets of (social) constructivist definitions of learning, the present study emphasizes the

importance of providing learning environments that incorporate learners' everyday experiences, the significance of social negotiation as part of learning, and the notion of supporting multiple perspectives and modes of representation (*Ibid.*). In philosophical terms, it is important to note that relativist knowledge claims can be seen as compatible with the general theses of realism (i.e., that reality exists independent of our beliefs and that it is possible to acquire knowledge about it) (see Liebrucks, 2001; Narayan *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, Edley (2001) differentiates between ontological and epistemological forms of social constructionism, arguing that, while the epistemological view acknowledges the existence of a tangible world outside language, many of the meanings inscribed in objects and practices are constructed through social relations among people and develop in relation to their surrounding worlds. These notions are important, since social constructionist research leaning on relativist (i.e., there is no absolute truth or validity) and anti-essentialist (i.e., there are no 'essences' inside people that make them who they are) knowledge claims (see Burr, 2015) might not make sense for all educational researchers. In other words, any research failing (or declining) to provide research implications for what students should learn, how teaching should be organized or how student teachers should be educated does not meet the core missions of education as an academic discipline, at least as defined in traditional terms (Sivenius & Saari, 2015; see also Biesta, 2015). A similar danger potentially faces those educationally oriented researchers who explicitly state that their research is not about learning, but merely about the construction of meanings. This is not to say that all research should (or even could) be about learning; rather, it is simply meant to underline the discussed importance of the term from the perspective of educational research, theory and practice.

To conclude, the core theoretical argument of this dissertation is that, despite the above-illustrated challenges of integrating childhood sociology and educational research, there are also disadvantages to remaining strictly within either one of the two traditions. As underlined by Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt (2014), in addition to being people capable of examining their own lives and contributing to their surroundings in the here-and-now, children, young people and adults alike are also always developing and learning beings on the way somewhere. Therefore, strictly drawing on either a present- or a future-oriented philosophy inevitably misses something essential about what it is like to be a child or an adolescent as a part of social communities and cultural interactions (*Ibid.*). The child-centred framework of the new social studies of childhood can provide novel ways of examining adult-adolescent relationships in both educational research and practice. Accordingly, the emergence of educational frameworks that emphasise children's collective actions with peers and their agency in social contexts call for a wider recognition of the need to re-evaluate the roles of all those who take part in educational processes. As current literature exemplifies (e.g., Percy-Smith, 2012), it is difficult to imagine participatory research with adolescents without adults.

However, it is equally difficult to imagine educational institutions that deny the key roles of teachers and other adults in supporting students' learning, even if more responsibility for the learning process is given to the students or if learning is defined as taking place also beyond classrooms or situations of formal learning. In terms of developing food education, there is a need for critical discussion on what supporting and promoting adolescents' participation and agency actually stands for.

2.3 Methods and data

The empirical part of this dissertation is based on two datasets: Nordic survey data (2006−2007) (**Articles I and II**) and qualitative data from a case study conducted in a single Finnish school (2012−2013) (**Articles III and IV**). The analyses focus on home and school contexts, since these settings have traditionally been considered to have important educational responsibilities. Homes and schools (or, for adults, workplaces) are also the locations in which Nordic people typically eat their main meals of the day (Kjærnes, 2001; Raulio, Roos & Prättälä 2010) and in which adolescents spend a considerable amount of their daily time.

The original aim of the Nordic survey study was to understand the multiple influences in adolescents' lives on food choices and food-related learning. The questionnaire was built upon the notion that food-related learning does not take place in institutional settings alone; rather, it is also intertwined with other everyday situations. The questionnaire design and data collection was executed through cross-national cooperation with researchers from Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway (Päivi Palojoki, Christina Fjellström, Jette Benn, and Annbjørg Lindbæk). The data were collected through an Internet questionnaire and included respondents (14−17 years) from the named four countries (N=1539). In this study, a selection of variables related to school meals and family meals were chosen for examination. In addition, open-ended answers connected with the themes of the dissertation were used to complement the analysis.

At the quantitative stage of the dissertation process, Nordic school lunch systems and ideals around family meals were chosen as backgrounds for comparison. **Article I** included adolescents' evaluations of the influence of different parties on their healthy eating habits and an examination of the adolescents' school lunch patterns in relation to nationality and gender (statistical analyses). These analyses were complemented with a classification of adolescents' suggestions for making healthy choices at school easier (analysis of open-ended answers). **Article II** examined eating together with the family in relation to respondents' nationality, gender and the number of parents in the family (statistical analyses) and explored adolescents' considerations when choosing meals for themselves and for their family (analysis of open-ended answers). All statistical analyses were conducted

with SPSS, version 15.0. The analyses included examinations of means and standard deviations (descriptive analyses), a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) (differences among countries), a chi-squared test (analysis of school lunch patterns) and independent-samples t-tests (differences between boys and girls). The nationality of the respondents were transformed into a background variable when the datasets from each country were merged, and this was used accordingly in the analyses. In both Articles (I and II) ,open-ended answers were categorized in Excel in an inductive manner. In Article II, the definition of 'a proper meal' (Douglas & Nicod, 1974; Murcott, 1982; Mäkelä, 2001, 2009) was used as an aid in designing an analytical framework suitable for the data. The original questionnaire is included in full as an appendix to this summary (Appendix 1). Table 1 summarises the variables analysed in Articles I and II.

Table 1. Summary of variables analysed in Articles I and II.

Article	Section in the questionnaire	Question in the questionnaire	Variable description
I / II	1. Gender	I am __	Dichotomous variable (boy/girl).
I / II	2. Age	How old are you?	Free space to write in.
I	4. Having lunch at school	What do you eat for lunch at school?	Multiple-choice variable with five alternatives to choose from.
I	9. Making healthy food choices at my school could be easier	-	Dichotomous variable (yes/no).
I	9. Making healthy food choices at my school could be easier	If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please give an example below.	Open-ended question with free space to write in.
I	13. Different people's influence on respondents' food choice	What kind of an impact do different people have on your healthy eating habits?	Multiple-choice statements: scale 1–6, where 1 = 'a very low significance' and 6 = 'a very high significance'.
II	3. Type of family	In what kind of a family do you live for the most time?	Multiple-choice variable with two alternatives to choose from.
II	12. Food and the family	Do you eat together with your family?	Multiple-choice statements: scale 1–6, where 1 = 'very seldom' and 6 = 'very often'.
II	14. Making practical meal preparations/ open questions	If you bought or prepared a meal for YOURSELF, what would you choose?	Open-ended question with free space to write in.
II	14. Making practical meal preparations/ open questions	If you bought or prepared a meal for your FAMILY, what would you choose?	Open-ended question with free space to write in.

The qualitative case study, which followed the quantitative stage, focused on adolescents' food practices at school, with an emphasis on the above defined informal school. This delineation was seen as an opportunity to explore how adolescents interpret and talk about food-related issues during the school day and how they balance between the responsibilities of being a student and the aspects emphasized within their informal peer cultures. Overall, the aim was to produce deeper knowledge of the meanings and explanations that adolescents themselves attach to their food practices at school.

The planning of the case study fieldwork was supported by Hatch's (2002) and Patton's (2002) guidelines. The study school was chosen based on existing contacts and according to the chosen delineation of the Finnish metropolitan area. The data collection was delineated to the three 9th grade classes within the study school, including a total of 71 students (15−16 years) at the time of the project . The case study proceeded in three successive stages and was executed over the course of one school year (2012−2013). The data collection began with open-ended observations of the field school and was followed by focused observations, including one consecutive week of observations for each of the three 9th grade classes of the study school. The focused observations spanned across the school day and included observations of areas near the school's premises. The observations were then followed by assignments that were integrated with the students' typical school work, including writing essays, taking photographs and producing drawings. These assignments were planned and conducted in cooperation with the students' teachers of home economics, the mother tongue (Finnish) and art. The use of participatory and visual methods during the case study was based on an aspiration to incorporate adolescents as active agents in the research process (e.g., Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith & Campbell, 2011; Thomson, 2008). The final stage of the data collection consisted of visually elicited focus group discussions. The discussion outline was planned by the researcher around ambiguous themes that had arisen during earlier stages of the field period. During these discussions, the participants' drawings produced during the class assignments were used as activating materials (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). In addition to allowing the researcher an opportunity to engage with the adolescents in a calm and haste-free environment, the focus group discussions sought to provide the participants an opportunity to give additional explanations and to either strengthen or challenge interpretations made by the researcher. Throughout the fieldwork, the data collection included informal discussions with the adolescents, which were seen as opportunities to learn about important and topical themes related to the students' perspective (Mayall, 2001).

Article III focused on adolescents' perspectives on hot school lunches and the educational potential of these perspectives. Observational field notes, pupils' essays about food-related experiences at school, and data from the visually elicited focus group discussions were included in the analyses, since these data provided rich and versatile materials on the adolescents' food practices, views and experiences. The analyses in Article III utilized Hatch's (2002) steps of inductive analysis and Lana's and Corbett's (2011) notion of challenging agency (i.e., of examining what counteractions to formal rules or official aims might mean to the students themselves). **Article IV** provided a critical examination of the concept of participation and explored researcher-researched interactions during the qualitative research process. Analyses in this Article (IV) drew from the observational field notes and research diary entries, which provided materials on researchers'

subjective deliberations, and data on the interactions between the researcher and the researched. In Article IV, the analyses built on Finlay's (2002) definition of reflexivity as an examination of researcher-researched relationships and research co-construction. Revelatory moments during the fieldwork were used as analytic leads in the process of selecting significant data trails (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001; Trigger, Forsey, & Meurk, 2012). The Atlas.ti programme was used as an aid in the analyses for Articles III and IV. Table 2 summarises the data used in these publications.

Table 2. Summary of qualitative data analysed in Articles III and IV.

Article	Data	Description	Specification
III	Essays written by the students	An essay on the topic 'Food related experiences at school', mother tongue, 9th grade (3 classes), individual assignment.	57 essays, á 0.5−1 pages (A4)
III	Visually elicited focus group discussions	9th grades (3 classes), 14 discussions, 62 students, 25 boys and 37 girls, 14 groups, 4−6 students per group.	6 h 53 min 10 sec of recordings; 273 pages of transcript, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5
III / IV	Observational field notes	Detailed notes focusing primarily on participants' speech and interactions and spanning the entire field period. Includes the researcher's initial interpretations, which are separated from the remaining notes with squared brackets.	355 pages of transcripts, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5
IV	Research diary	Notes written mainly after the day in the field, including analytical deliberations and personal commentaries on the events.	50 entries and 76 pages, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5

Since the aim of the case study and the data collection became more focused as the field work advanced, not all of the qualitative data initially collected received equally strong emphasis at the stages of data analysis and reporting mentioned in Articles III and IV. Nevertheless, data beyond what are presented in Table 2 also provided important background information about the study school and the participants and helped in refining the plans for the successive stages of data collection. A detailed description of the variety of data collected during the case study in its different stages is provided in Appendix 2.

3 Results

This section brings together results from the presented sub-publications and aims to draw overarching conclusions based on the two presented datasets. Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of this kind can be referred to as multimethod designs (Niglas, 2004) or interpretive integration (Moran-Ellis *et al.*, 2006), which refers to the research involving separate data collection and analysis procedures, with integration at the stage of theoretical interpretation. Specifically, the quantitative results are seen as an opportunity to locate the qualitative results in a broader context (Silverman, 2006). The focus of the discussion is on adolescents' explanations and interpretations of their food practices and on developing school-based participatory research with young people.

3.1 Meals in schools and homes: A Nordic survey

Different historical and ideological backgrounds in Nordic countries have resulted in two predominant school lunch systems: a municipally funded hot school lunch in Finland and Sweden and bringing a packed lunch from home in Norway and Denmark (Prättälä, 2000). The differences among these systems are related to the expected roles and responsibilities of schools and families in educating young people about food and eating. From the perspective of adolescents, school meal systems and family meal ideals can be seen as broader cultural and societal contexts within which food patterns are formed. Thus, adolescents' choices and considerations can be examined as reactions to broader food-cultural codes and values and as being influenced by complex interactions among personal preferences, social influences and the limitations of specific settings (Bahr Bugge, 2010; Johansson *et al.*, 2009).

Against this background, **Article I** compared Nordic adolescents' school lunch patterns with their suggestions for making healthy choices at school easier. The results showed that the majority of adolescents reported regularly eating either a hot school lunch (80−81%) or a packed lunch (57−70%). Notably, the proportion of Finnish and Swedish adolescents reporting eating a hot school lunch on a regular basis was higher than that of Danish and Norwegian students regularly bringing a packed lunch to school. Gender differences were statistically significant in the Swedish and Finnish data, such that Finnish girls were more likely than boys to eat in the school dining room, but the reverse was true for Swedish children. Statistically significant gender differences were not found in the Norwegian and Danish data. Furthermore, Finnish and Swedish students believed more strongly than the Danish and Norwegian adolescents that teachers had an influence on their healthy eating habits. In all the studied countries, the adolescents emphasized the

influence of their mothers on their healthy eating habits. In addition, the respondents' own influence was highlighted.

Despite the relatively common trends of students eating hot school lunches or bringing packed lunches to school, many students felt that the process of making healthy choices at school could be improved. The proportion of adolescents who thought this way was largest in the Norwegian data (62%) and smallest in the Finnish data (32%), with approximately half of both Danish (55%) and Swedish (52%) adolescents believing in the potential for improved health-related decision-making. In the open-ended answers, two-thirds of the adolescents' proposals for facilitating healthy choices at school were related to suggestions for healthy foodstuffs that could be served or sold at school. The Danish and Norwegian adolescents, in particular, suggested limiting access to unhealthy alternatives in the school cafeteria. By comparison, Finnish and Swedish adolescents placed value on the possible compilations of school meals and the preparation of salads and vegetables in the school's dining room.

In accordance with a Norwegian study (Bahr Bugge, 2007), the results did not indicate that the participants sought a total reform of their respective school lunch systems. Nevertheless, the data did show that students' opportunities to make healthy choices at school could be better supported, a finding that has been confirmed by other studies examining a wider sample of European countries (Müller *et al*., 2013). Importantly, before new approaches to food education in schools can be implemented, the selection of foods served or sold at school should first be aligned with what is taught to the students during classes. While this statement might seem self-evident from a Nordic standpoint, this is not the case in the wider European or global perspectives (Müller *et al*., 2013; Weaver-Hightower & Robert, 2011). Current research shows a decreasing trend in the number of secondary school students attending school lunches (Manninen, Wiss, Saaristo, & Ståhl, 2015), underlining the need for further research in this area.

Article II examined the juxtaposition of family meals vs. solitary meals from adolescents' perspectives. The analyses explored participants' considerations when choosing meals for themselves and their families. The aim was to examine what Nordic adolescents considered to be appropriate meal choices in these two different social situations. Furthermore, the responses were seen as an opportunity to gain deeper insight into how adolescents themselves delineate and react to food-related issues and as a way to deliberate on relevant and interesting food educational approaches for young people. Notably, the article did not examine what kinds of meals were actually eaten; rather, it analysed adolescents' considerations of meal choices as proxies for how they related to food in these two situations.

The results showed that eating with the family was relatively common among the participants (mean values 4.0−5.0; scale 1−6; 1 = very seldom, 6 = very often), with the highest reported prevalence among Danish respondents and the lowest among Finnish respondents. These results are supported by a prior comparative

Nordic study (Holm *et al*., 2012). In all countries but Denmark, the number of parents in the family had a statistically significant effect on the frequency of eating with the family, with families with two parents receiving higher scores than those with only one parent. Based on the analysis of open-ended answers, the respondents had a good understanding of the traditional construction of a meal (i.e., a meal resembling the structural definition of a 'proper meal'), and tended to follow this meal format, especially when describing meals for their families. The analysis of open-ended questions revealed that the difference between the two social situations for meal choices (meals for oneself and meals for the family) was most apparent for those adolescents who would have chosen fast food dishes for themselves. Overall, girls were more likely than boys to mention dishes involving high levels of effort and structural complexity. These gender differences were lowest in the Danish data and most apparent among Norwegian adolescents. The results demonstrate that, at least in this sample, the socializing effects of family meals, or even of adolescents' ability to describe the construction of a 'proper meal' as applied in this study, might not affect meal choices across social contexts. This contextual variation is an important challenge for food educators.

3.2 Adolescents' school lunch practices: A participatory case study

In the Finnish context, school meals have been tools in the promotion of health in schools for over sixty years, with their educational aims stated in the National Curriculum (FBNE, 2008; FNBE, 2014; POPS, 2014). In the course of the past century, the initial aims of preventing nutritional deficiencies and supporting the poor have shifted to broader goals related to wide-ranging opportunities for formal food education (Janhonen *et al*., 2015; Janhonen *et al*., 2016; Risku-Norja, Jeronen, Kurppa, Mikkola, & Uitto, 2012). However, school lunch practices might involve different aims and meanings for adolescents than for adults (Ruckenstein, 2012; Wills *et al*., 2008). These differences are related to peer relations (Persson Osowski, Göranzon, & Fjellström, 2012), the dynamics of informal and formal schools (Paju, 2011; Punch *et al.,* 2011) and adolescents' search for agency in the school setting (Lanas & Corbett, 2011), which are important factors to consider when designing successful school-based participatory initiatives with students.

Based on these premises, **Article III** examined adolescents' experiences of hot school lunches as an educational resource. The aim was to analyse how adolescents' perspectives could be used in a more versatile way to promote participatory food education in schools. The starting point for this article was that an understanding of food-related social determinants in the informal school context could provide valuable pedagogical tools for teachers working with young people. In addition, participants' own explanations for acting against formal rules and aims

were seen as providing knowledge of the pupils' own interpretations of behaviours connected with school lunch practices.

The findings from Article III showed that adolescents considered school lunch breaks to be their free time and that they valued discussions with their friends. The contradiction between students' interpretations of the school lunch situation as free time and formal aspirations for the lunch break as an educational opportunity was concluded to be a potential hindrance to students' commitment to food education through school meal situations. Based on the results, merely increasing structured and adult-led activities during the lunch break does not seem to provide a solution for engaging students.

The results further illustrated the importance of the taste of school food and showed that the food to be served in the dining room often dictated students' choice of whether or not to attend school lunches. In some instances, expectations of the informal school created tension with formal educational aims for hot school lunches (e.g., in terms of how to speak about school lunches or the school school lunch personnel). Adolescents solved these contradicting expectations by constructing social hierarchies, making compromises, and conforming to peers' or general opinions. The data demonstrated that adolescents' desire for social belonging and independence were important justifications for breaking food-related rules—findings also supported by prior studies (Ludvigsen & Scott, 2009; Persson Osowski *et al*., 2012; Spencer, 2013). Notably, students' desires related to the contents of the school lunches did not contradict with Finnish school lunch recommendations or the many aspects of the meals already served to them in the study school. However, the students' overall attitudes towards school lunches were very critical, suggesting concrete challenges for participatory food education in schools. The results call for a critical examination of the practices claiming to give adolescents more responsibility in order to ensure that future opportunities include genuine options for choice. In parallel with other studies on developing food education in comprehensive schools (e.g., Jonsson, Pipping Ekström, & Gustafson, 2005; Prell, 2010; Wills *et al*., 2008), the article proposed that an emphasis on commensality and shared meals could serve as a common ground for the development of participatory and adolescent-centred food education in schools.

Article IV focused on researcher-researched interactions during the qualitative fieldwork. The article engaged in a critical examination of the conducting of participatory research with adolescents in the school context and aimed to promote researcher reflexivity as a way to develop participatory research practice. The article's background built on current critiques of the concept of participation, stating that the term has often been weakly conceptualized or presented without sufficient empirical grounding (e.g., Gallacher & Gallacher, 2008; Stoecklin, 2012; Wyness, 2012). The article further functioned as a meta-analysis of the case study, aiming to provide a more transparent and trustworthy presentation of the qualitative research practice.

Based on the results, three viewpoints were presented as focal points for researchers seeking to determine adolescents' perspectives in schools: 1) participation as negotiation, 2) limits of participation and 3) unexpected trails of participation. These focal points built on the notion that a critical exploration of participation should not be inscribed in specific methods (Hunleth, 2011), but should, rather, include the acknowledgement of participation as a two-way learning process between the researcher and the researched (Franks, 2011; Woodhead, 2010). The article concluded that this includes building an atmosphere of acceptance and allowing negotiation in participatory work, rather than defining reciprocity or dialogue as lack of conflict or disagreement. Furthermore, unpredicted and provocative data produced by young people, which are seldom discussed in research publications, were found to provide important opportunities for learning and for understanding one's own position in relation to others. Along similar lines, Bettez (2015) speaks about the creation of trust through the process of critical self-reflection, which she sees as an opportunity to connect with others on a deeper level. In reference to provocative data and unpredicted forms of participation, von Benzon's (2015) study draws interesting notions of imaginary and fantastical data produced in participatory research, thus bringing forth the negotiability of the notions of truth and untruth, as well as those of right and wrong. These themes reveal important and challenging prospects for future participatory studies.

As stated by Seale *et al.* (2014), and as discussed in Article IV, beginning with an overly open research space can be problematic in educational contexts. This statement connects the results of this dissertation to the earlier presented theoretical discussion: On one hand, an acceptance of unpredictable forms of participation requires leeway in both philosophical and practical terms, and, thus, cannot be exhaustively examined with frameworks that lean too heavily on pre-determined (i.e., essentialist, objectivist or developmentalist) epistemological assumptions. On the other hand, a fruitful discussion of students' participation in education cannot conclude with the elimination of the perspectives of either adolescents or adults. Consequently, productive deliberations might include suggestions for how productive intergenerational dialogue could be better supported and how the interrelationships between researchers (or teachers) and adolescents (or students) could be further developed. The results found through this kind of approach may not always be in line with the aims of the formal educational institution or the original research questions set by the researcher; however, instead, they can function as a potential space for re-negotiation, re-construction and re-conceptualisation.

3.3 Reflections on data and methods

Social experiences and lived realities are multi-dimensional and, thus, cannot be comprehensively described along a single dimension (Davis & Sumara, 2005; Mason, 2006). In order to fully understand adolescents' food-related worlds and experiences, both macro-level (e.g., large-scale surveys) and micro-level methods (e.g., interviews) are needed (Corsaro, 2005). In particular, surveys enable the explorations of the diversity and variability of adolescents' eating patterns as large-scale phenomena, involving comparisons of different groups and contexts. Micro-level approaches, on the other hand, enable explorations of adolescents as participants in their peer cultures and examinations into how they, themselves, make sense of and contribute to social reproduction and change. At their best, cross linkages of qualitative and quantitative data illustrate the social and cultural construction of the variables that quantitative studies seek to correlate (Silverman, 2006). From the standpoint of researching adolescents' perspectives, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods enables an understanding of both the relative social positions of young people in different countries and adolescents' social worlds and everyday experiences (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). In addition, the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods supports the development of theorizations beyond conventional categorizations and promotes critical thinking in relation to both conceptual definitions and issues concerning measurement and error (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Kelle & Erzberger, 2004; Mason, 2006). Research designs combining qualitative and quantitative approaches have also been said to bear the potential of enriching educational methodologies (Niglas, 2004). Finally, comparative research designs include the possibility of revealing aspects that might seem self-evident from a national vantage point (Alexander, 2009; Kjærnes 2001; Lauder, 2009) and of illustrating the wider trends and contexts that influence people's food choices (Holm *et al*., 2012).

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have specific advantages and disadvantages. As stated by Flyvjberg (2006), large samples provide breadth, but may remain superficial, whereas the challenges of case study data are reversed in terms of depth and particularity. On the other hand, variation in modes of data collection can provide opportunities to examine phenomena on varying conceptual levels. As referenced earlier, it must be remembered that each method examines reality in a specific way and is built upon certain traditions and methodological histories. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the theoretical backgrounds of individual methods, as well as to provide clarity regarding which theoretical framework the combined methods are intended to fit (Flick, 2004). Accordingly, the combining of quantitative and qualitative methods is not an indisputably superior way of answering research questions; rather, compared to single-method designs, it requires equally thorough (and often more extensive) consideration of than why this kind of research is being conducted and why the particular set of methods is being combined (Morgan, 2007).

As stated, the research design of the present study can be characterized as a multi-method design (Niglas, 2004), and the nature in which the qualitative and quantitative datasets were combined can be described as interpretive integration (Moran-Ellis *et al*., 2006). The term 'multi-method design' was chosen in an effort to highlight the quantitative nature of the data used in Articles I and II. In accordance with the definition of interpretive integration (*Ibid*.), these two datasets were collected from different samples of participants and analysed separately, and the results and interpretations of the sub-publications were not combined until the stage of writing the theoretical discussion of this summary. Notably, the realist ontology and relativist epistemology of the present study are compatible with descriptions of mixed methods methodologies (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010), and researchers relying on looser definitions of mixed methods approaches might describe the present study as such. In addition, it is acknowledged that the term 'triangulation' is often used in studies that combine multiple methods or perspectives and that a clear itemization of what and how was triangulated, as well as acknowledgement of critical discussions of the term (e.g., Flick, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010; Moran-Ellis *et al*., 2006), would have met similar ends. From the perspective of the evaluation of the results, the presented elements of the research design should, nonetheless, be considered study limitations. The following table (Table 3) summarises the core aims and conclusions for each sub-publication of this dissertation (Articles I–IV).

Table 3. Frameworks for Articles I–IV.

Article	Key words	Aims	Core conclusions
I	Adolescents, School lunch patterns, Nordic countries, Survey	1) Examining adolescents' school lunch patterns against Nordic school lunch systems 2) Analysing adolescents' suggestions for making healthy choices at school easier	1) Adolescents' healthy food choices could be better supported in schools 2) There is a need for cooperation among actors and coherence between what foods students are served and what they are being taught in class
II	Adolescents, Meals, Family meals, Nordic countries, Comparative survey	1) Examining the prevalence of eating together with the family against ideals of family meals in Nordic countries 2) Analysing adolescents' considerations when choosing meals for themselves and their families	1) Adolescents appear to have a good understanding of the traditional construction of a meal (i.e., 'a proper meal') 2) Adolescents' considerations of meal choices appear to have situational variation, which is an important notion for food educators
III	Adolescents, Food, Education, Schools, Social Environment	1) Examining school lunch practices against what adolescents themselves define as important 2) Analysing adolescents' perspectives as potential resources for food education	1) Social and taste-based aspects of school lunches could help in finding a common ground for food education in school dining rooms 2) Students' criticisms can be seen as opportunities for building dialogue between adults and adolescents
IV	Adolescents, Participation, Methodology, Reflexivity, School context	1) Critical examination of the concept of participation 2) Developing participatory methodologies in school-based research with young people	1) Researching adolescents' perspectives has limits, which requires critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher 2) Being open to negotiation and unexpected trails of participation can offer useful insights for participatory research in schools

Overall, the aim of using both quantitative and qualitative research materials in this study was to discuss up-to-date statistical data against and in relation to adolescents' everyday interactions and experiences. The questionnaire that provided the data for this study on adolescents' eating patterns and considerations of meal choices was based on the accumulated knowledge of a group of senior researchers from four Nordic countries. At the time of designing the questionnaire, very few comparative Nordic studies had been conducted with an emphasis on the multiple influences in adolescents' everyday lives on their eating patterns and food-related

learning. The questionnaire included a broad selection of variables, and analysing these materials provided a fruitful starting point for this dissertation. In retrospect, and from the specific perspective of this study, the questionnaire might have included a more specific itemization of alternatives in terms of both school lunch patterns and family meals, as well as a more versatile set of background variables to support the described analyses. Nevertheless, the pre-existing data provided a unique opportunity to analyse and compare adolescents' perspectives across national borders. In this way, the statistical analyses resulted in a worthy reference point in terms of the cultural and societal backgrounds of adolescents' school lunch practices and food related experiences in the following qualitative stage. As discussed in Articles I and II, since the survey data are not representative on a national level, generalizations based on the results should be made with caution. This should be considered a limitation of the study. Nonetheless, the results of the survey study provide, interesting prospects for designing parallel national and cross-national studies in the future. Although it is generally acknowledged that standardized questionnaires are suitable data collection methods for children over the age of 11 (Scott, 2001), designing suitable data collecting methods for participatory food education is an important area for further development.

The qualitative case study, as described, aimed to explore adolescents' food practices as a part of their daily school lives and to produce deeper knowledge of the meanings and explanations that adolescents themselves attach to food and eating. Below, the earlier described case study design was briefly discussed from the perspective of method choices. A more thorough account of the data collection process and a description of the study school is provided in Article III.

According to Cele and van der Burght (2015), participatory research practices are appropriate when the aim is to seek contextualized knowledge or when the aspiration is to change the environments that children use or relate to. However, acknowledging young people's perspectives in this line of research cannot be said to be restricted to a narrow list of methods; rather, it must be approached through a variety of data collection techniques. O'Kane (2008) lists the examples of ethnograpy, participant observation, focus groups, participatory activities and surveys, but underlines that this selection is always also influenced by factors like time, access, conceptualizations of children, and the researcher's goals and training. Furthermore, Clark (2004) argues that observation is an important aspect of 'tuning in' with children, but emphasises that this method often relies on a very adult-centric perspective on children's live, thus underlining the benefits of using multiple data sources. As in the present study, an increasing number of participatory projects use visual or so-called creative methods, which are based on promise of rich data and dialogic engagement with participants (Barker & Smith, 2012; Benzon, 2015; Fielding, 2007). Visual methods have also been claimed to allow participants engage in open-ended instructions and varying skill levels and modes of expression (e.g., Bagnoli, 2009; Clark, 2004). According to Heath *et al*. (2009),

task-centred activities, such as the class assignments designed for this study, give young people more control over the research process and flexibility in terms of the pace and intensity of data generation.

As Moran-Ellis (2006, referring to Pawson, 1995) notes, vignettes (i.e., descriptions or visual or verbal samples from the data) and questions developed in earlier stages of data collection can be used as invitations for participants to interact and respond to researcher-based interpretations. These inputs can function as mutual platforms for the elaboration of themes presented in the interview guideline, thus adding to the depth and reciprocity of the analyses and results (*Ibid.*). Accordingly, the primary aim of the focus group discussions and the use of the participant-produced drawings in the present study was to facilitate the closing stage of the data collection process and to allow the adolescents to support or contradict researcher-driven notions. This worked well, in my experience, and the participant-produced drawings proved fruitful for tapping into participant experiences and activating the discussion. These experiences are supported by prior studies that show that participants' drawings can help in building a relaxed atmosphere and in structuring and focusing the discussion (Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Yuen, 2004).

The school as an institutional context involves specific challenges for participatory work with young people, which requires flexibility and creativity from the part of the researcher (Gristy, 2015; de Laine, 2000). This includes an ability to bear the insecurities that originate from the obscurities of the field (*Ibid.*). However, as illustrated in Article IV and in other studies (e.g., Raby, 2007; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2013), openness to this insecurity and an acceptance of the element of surprise can also prove a rich source of counter-expectational data. Furthermore, the researcher's subjectivity and positionality can be used as tools to enhance the ethicality of the research throughout the research process (Mosselson, 2010). Participatory research literature also calls for caution and realism in arguments related to participatory research in schools (e.g., Fielding, 2007; Mearns, Coyle, de Graaf, 2014), which support the need for critical explorations. For example, problematizing the limits of participation can help in the development of participatory work with young people in schools, as well as provide illustrations of the power relationships embedded in these contexts (Cross, 2011). Importantly, analyses of difference between adults and young people do not have to mean an emphasis on categorical separation; rather, on the contrary, they can be approached as opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning and growth (Bettez, 2015; Kleipoedszus; 2011; Percy-Smith, 2012).

In comparison to the quantitative data, the qualitative research process provided numerous opportunities to pose specifying questions for the participants and to re-evaluate the focus of the data collection as the fieldwork proceeded. On the other hand, in addition to functioning as self-sustaining entities, the results of Ar-

ticles I and II and the experiences of analysing the survey data also helped in planning the initial formulations of research questions for the case study, thus adding to the complementarity of the sub-projects of this dissertation. As discussed in Articles III and IV, however, the chosen case study design suggests that the results drawn from the qualitative materials do not address variations across schools, contexts or age groups, which must be taken as limitations. The delineation between adolescents' perspectives and informal school further means that the views of teachers and other school-related adults are beyond the scope of this study. These are important considerations for further research.

4 Food education: Future perspectives

This chapter discusses the core themes of the dissertation from the perspective of promoting adolescents' participation and agency and outlines suggestions for further research in the area of food education. The final sub-section (section 4.5) draws together concluding thoughts from this dissertation process in the form of a personal commentary.

4.1 Promoting adolescents' participation and agency

Young people are increasingly being seen as more than mere passive recipients of their surrounding realities (Baraldi & Ieverse, 2012). At home, in school and beyond, young people can be seen as co-producers of the structures and meanings attached to food, as well as of the discourses connected with meals in the everyday contexts in which they participate (Anving & Sellerberg, 2010; Johansson & Ossiansson, 2012). The two important educational institutions—the school and the family—frame adolescents' agency and affect the amount to which children and young people can participate in deciding the issues that affect them (Aaltonen, 2012). Accordingly, and despite the structured boundaries of institutional contexts, young people often feel that they have the right to express their opinions and to take part in decision-making processes (Bjerke, 2011). However, their wishes do not always come to fruition (*Ibid.*).

The concepts of agency and participation offer a worthwhile stepping stone for exploring the tensions that arise between adolescents' views and institutional aims, as well as for finding potential points for the development of adolescent-centred education. Useful definitions of participation and/or participatory work are abundantly available in the current literature (e.g., Cockburn, 2005; Kellett, 2014; Mannion, 2007; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2012). These classifications typically emphasise the differences between listening, consulting and involving children and young people in decision-making (*Ibid.*). Definitions of agency, on the other hand, conceptualize this term as the capacity to act, make decisions and interact with other people (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Stoecklin, 2012) or as active subjectivity, which can be drawn upon to discuss choices and forms of self-expression (Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). In this way, agency and participation can be seen as interrelated concepts that are constructed in the interplay of surrounding structures and practices. Accordingly, Coffey and Farrugia (2014) remind us that explorations of agency should always also consider how practices are negotiated in relation to structures, including a critical examination of conceptual frameworks that drive analyses. In addition, Valentine (2009) calls for ap-

proaches to agency that acknowledge its uncomfortable dimensions, such as resistance to power or exercise of agency against peoples' own best interests. As stated by Mannion (2007) there is a need for participatory approaches that consider the relationships between children and adults and that focus on changes within these relations in specific contexts. Current studies have also raised the issue that participation is often seen as an individual quality and a competence that, despite good intentions, typically promotes existing norms and values instead of change and genuine engagement among young people (Aaltonen, 2012; Arnesen, Lahelma, Lundahl, & Öhrn, 2010; Rönnlund, 2014; Stoecklin, 2012). Further critical deliberations of these themes are needed for the fruitful development of participatory methodologies with young people, as well as for bringing about sustainable change in the institutions of which young people are a part.

4.2 Adolescents' views of education

Discussions of ways to better acknowledge the everyday experiences of students in education have increased during the past two decades, followed by a growing number of explorations of how to build educational content relevant and interesting for young people (e.g., Hokkanen & Kosonen, 2013; Illeris, 2008; Palojoki, 2003; Venäläinen, 2010). However, as stated by McCluskey (2014), there is still a significant level of ambivalence related to the focus on adolescents' perspectives in education. Despite the increase in participatory approaches and the willingness to engage young learners, much of the discussion on children's and young people's participation is still embedded in the frameworks of their developmental stage and age-related competencies, which might limit the ways that participation can be defined or approached (de Castro, 2012; Skivens & Strandbu, 2006). On the other hand, in many learning theories, participation is acknowledged as an important aspect (Brougère, 2012) that offers potential platforms for integration and collaboration. For example, sociocultural approaches to pedagogy understand learning as a reciprocal process including the active participation of the learner and the teacher's roles of encouraging and supporting students (Baraldi, 2012). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the respective definitions of 'active' and 'participation' determine how the roles of the teacher and the learner are understood and what forms of participation are acknowledged and accepted (Rönnlund, 2014).

From the standpoint of integrating adolescents' views and experiences in education, there is a need for further research in which important knowledge is defined from the perspectives of young people and their everyday lives. This appears especially timely now that the social and community aspects of learning have gained a firmer foothold within educational theory and practice. In addition, there is a need for theorisations that enable thinking about adolescents in the here-and-now in conjunction with learning paths that stretch into the future. Quennerstedt

and Quennerstedt (2014) propose that Dewey's (1916; 1938) concept of growth is a stepping stone for this line of thinking. In educational literature, Dewey has been considered among the founding thinkers of constructivist theory (Narayan, 2013). His work has also been characterised as a philosophical stance that acknowledges the relationship between practice and learning (Nevgi & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2009). In addition, given that Deweyan notions have inspired current applications within food educational research (Smeds, 2012), studies on informal learning (Hager & Halliday, 2009) and discussions on student participation and agency in education (Säljö, 2012), Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt's (2014) suggestion does seem to be one potential path for further research, although there may also be other theoretical approaches to consider.

4.3 Developing food educational initiatives in schools

Despite challenges and critical perspectives on participatory work, it must be noted that students' participation in the area of food education has seen positive improvement in recent years (Manninen *et al*., 2015). It has, for example, become clear that simply removing so-called 'unhealthy' options from the school dining room is not an effective pedagogical solution in the long run (Forero, 2009; Rawlings, 2009). In addition, instead of intimidation tactics related to the harmful effects of so-called 'unhealthy foods', positive approaches to teaching young people about food have been suggested (Atik & Ertekin, 2013). Prior studies also show that, instead seeking full control over their circumstances, young people simply ask to be treated with respect and for an intention to reach shared decisions (Bjerke, 2011), which would provide a good starting point for collaborative food education.

According to earlier research (e.g., Fleming, 2013; Percy-Smith, 2012), the development of food educational initiatives in schools will require a re-evaluation of the roles of adults and a more reflexive approach to participation and social learning. It has also been suggested that initiatives avoid using participation in a slogan-like manner (Gallacher & Gallacher, 2008; Stoecklin, 2012; Wyness, 2012) and that initiative planners remain open to interpretations that might not readily fit adult agendas (Fleming, 2013). As demonstrated by the present study, food and eating are interrelated with numerous social and cultural aspects, and young people should be allowed to experience these dimensions despite the emphasis on school lunch situations as educational opportunities. Accordingly, attention should be paid not only to the contents of school meals, but also to their social framing (Andersen, Holm, & Baarts, 2015) and to what social elements of school life signify for adolescents (Gristy, 2015). In Finland and elsewhere, food education provides abundant opportunities for cooperation between school subjects and all members of the school community, including the school catering staff (Janhonen *et al*., 2015; Lintukangas, 2009; Lintukangas & Palojoki, 2015) and the

commercial catering sector (Sporre, Jonsson, & Pipping Ekström, 2015). However, as Robert and Weaver-Hightower (2011) rightfully propose, implementing collaborative food education in schools requires a more thorough consideration of the issues related to school food than presently exists in teacher education programmes.

4.4 Moving beyond formal learning contexts

The life-worlds of contemporary youth are highly affected by social media and the Internet. In terms of food education, the development of electronic media has paved a path to a new range of global experiences, including tastes and cultures of places that the experiencer may never have visited (Bildtgård, 2010). In consequence, food communities are no longer built merely on a national level (*Ibid.*), and new ways of experiencing and thinking about food have emerged. These changes have required development work from educational researchers. At present, it is broadly acknowledged that learning in the 21st century requires changes to the ways in which education is defined. Much of this argumentation is couched in notions of globalization, the effects of digitalization and the development of digital learning environments (e.g., Kumpulainen & Mikkola, 2014; Säljö, 2012). In addition to examining electronic spaces, defining learning as processes that move beyond formal schooling requires thinking about the connections among different locations in young peoples' lives (Curtis, 2008; Fielding, Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010, 2012; Rawlings, 2009; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2013) and developing novel conceptualizations of young people's belonging (Cuervo & Wynn, 2014) and students' identities (Hjörne & Säljö, 2014).

4.5 Concluding thoughts: A personal commentary

Inspired by the organization of the book edited by Lewis, Kellett, Robinson, Fraser and Ding (2004), I would like to close with a more personal note, as well as a chronological reflection of the research process. This note seeks to meet three ends. Firstly, I wish that student teachers, whom I have imagined as representing one of my central audiences throughout the research process, will find encouragement and inspiration in this different perspective on the conducting of research. Secondly, I hope that this reflection will add to the transparency of the results (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002; Koro-Ljungberg *et al.*, 2012; Kumsa, Chambon, Yan, & Maiter, 2015). Finally, instead of aspiring to present a confessional story of the dissertation process, my aim is to offer deliberations of the research community in which the study was executed, as well as an exploration of the challenges of positioning interdisciplinary research.

I was fortunate to be able to work with a broad, comparative Nordic dataset during my Master's studies. Continuing with these analyses offered a fruitful stepping stone for this dissertation. In the early stages of the research process, I remember feeling frequently overwhelmed with the amount of literature on young people and food. Despite this, it was surprising to me how difficult it was to find studies discussing the social and cultural aspects of adolescents' food choices. This observation was paired with an overall experience that, though the topic of this dissertation awoke interest in almost everyone with whom I discussed it, the conversation almost invariably found its way into deliberations of how to prevent adolescents from making unhealthy choices. I struggled to try to explain what my efforts to study adolescents' perspectives meant in relation to these experiences.

The early stages of my dissertation process focused on examining adolescents' eating patterns and exploring the mechanisms forming the backgrounds of these patterns. I was also interested in the justifications that adolescents themselves gave for their food choices, and the subsequent aspiration to bring forth adolescents' perspectives continued throughout the research process. The support of my supervisors and fellow doctoral students at the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Helsinki and elsewhere helped in positioning the research, but also challenged me to develop the research approach. Visits to national and international conferences and discussions with colleagues also revealed some of the challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research. For example, I could be questioned by a nutritional scientist with a quantitative background about the relevance of analysing adolescents' considerations of meal choices instead of their actual nutrition intake. Or, I could be surrounded by educational researchers interested in school development, but who did not really share my interest in the area of food studies. Researchers from different fields had varying theoretical orientations and sometimes even totally different vocabularies, which made the exchanging of ideas and the giving and receiving of feedback occasionally challenging. As my work proceeded, I found myself thinking more and more often about what researching adolescents' perspectives actually meant: What were the advantages and limits of a survey study, and what other alternatives for data collection may be possible? It thus became evident to me that I wanted to collect qualitative data to complement the first two sub-publications of this dissertation.

Thinking back to the dissertation process, I remember the field period of the case study as being extremely hard work, involving long hours, constant self-reflection, doubt and contradictions. At the same time, conducting the qualitative case study was probably the most fun period of my dissertation experience, filled with an immensity of insights and inspiration. My hands-on experiences with the study school proved very important to me both in terms of my own professional development and for refining the study approach. I hope that this process ulti-

mately added realism to the conclusions of this dissertation and made the discussion more relevant from the perspective of educational practitioners working in schools and elsewhere.

At the time of writing this summary, the field of food education is facing very interesting times. This pair of words (i.e., 'food education'), which was rarely mentioned in academic literature when I began my doctoral studies, is now increasingly defined as a self-contained area of research within a growing body of literature. More broadly than ever before, food education is also mentioned in the Finnish National Curriculum taking effect in 2016. This suggests new opportunities for both teachers working in schools and researchers interested in food educational development; however, it also means that much fundamental work is needed for defining the basic concepts and backgrounds of the field, such as the learning aims for food education and the roles of all those taking part in the learning process. The concept of 'food sense' (*ruokataju*), which was developed in a project parallel to this dissertation (Janhonen *et al*., 2015; Janhonen *et al*., 2016), will hopefully function as a platform for further discussion in this area and facilitate the development of clearer conceptual definitions and statements of aims for food education. The contribution of this dissertation to these discussions, then, is an exploration of adolescents' agency and participation in food education. As stated, understanding phenomena from the perspectives of learners can be an undisputable asset for educators. However, a strict attachment to the future orientation of learning runs the risk of overlooking what is important for adolescents in the here-and-now. If the current approach continues, examinations of adolescents' perspectives will inevitably remain adult-defined, despite good intentions to acknowledge students' views. Importantly, giving more responsibility to adolescents and promoting their participation and agency does not mean undermining the importance of adults or overlooking their responsibilities. What it does require, however, is open-minded curiosity and a willingness to see issues in novel ways. Accordingly, in addition to asking what kinds of skills today's youth need to become competent, active and independent members of society, it is equally important to ask: What can we, as educators and researchers, learn from young people?

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Appendices

Notes for the reader:

The original Internet questionnaire in Appendix 1 is presented in the format of a working paper, which was used for communication among the researchers that collected the data. The text in the working paper is primarily in Swedish and Finnish, but it was was partly translated into English to facilitate discussion among the researchers. Originally, each study participant filled an Internet questionnaire in his or her native language (i.e., Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, or Danish). As the first author of Articles I and II, I was responsible for combining the individual datasets into one SPSS-file and of all data processing following this point.

Appendix 2 provides additional information about the breadth and depth of the data collection process during the qualitative case study. The data presented in the table follow the chronological progress of data collection.

Appendix 1: The original Internet questionnaire

Ditt svar är anonymt
Vastauksesi käsitellään nimettöminä.
(Dina uppgifter skickas till undersökningsföretaget QuestBack)
(Tiedot lähetetään sähköisesti yhteistyökumppanillemme nimeltä QuestBack)

Idag diskuteras mat och hälsa i många olika sammanhang i samhället. Vi är fyra forskare från Sverige, Danmark, Finland och Norge som är intresserade av att ta del av dina synpunkter på detta ämne. Dina svar är värdefulla och kommer att användas i framtida utveckling och forskning inom området. Enkäten är konfidentiell och i den uppsats vi skriver går det inte att spåra vem som svarat på frågorna.

Nykyään ruuasta ja terveydestä keskustellaan paljon eri yhteyksissä. Me neljä tutkijaa Ruotsista, Tanskasta, Suomesta ja Norjasta olemme kiinnostuneita Sinun näkemyksistäsi tästä aiheesta. Vastauksesi ovat arvokkaita ja niitä tullaan käyttämään ruokaan liittyvän tutkimuksen ja opetuksen kehittämisessä. Kysely on luottamuksellinen ja tutkittavien henkilöllisyys ei paljastu missään vaiheessa tulosten raportoinnin yhteydessä.

Vi hoppas att du vill svara på enkäten så snart som möjligt!
Toivomme, että vastaat kyselyyn mahdollisimman pian!
Tack för att du hjälper till!
Kiitos avustasi!

1. Gender
Jag är
Minä olen
Pojke/Poika
Flicka/Tyttö

2. Age
Hur gammal är du?
Kuinka vanha olet?

3. Type of family
I vilken typ av familj bor du mest i?
Millaisessa perheessä asut suurimman osan ajastasi?
I en familj med en förälder
Perheessä, jossa on toinen vanhemmista

I en familj med två föräldrar

Perheessä, jossa ovat molemmat vanhemmat

4. What do you eat for lunch at school /
Hur ser din lunch ut under skoldagen?
Mitä syöt koulussa lounaaksi?

Jag äter i skolmatsalen varje dag
Syön joka päivä koulun ruokasalissa

Jag äter i skolmatsalen 1-2 gånger i veckan
Syön koulun ruokasalissa 1-2 kertaa viikossa

Jag äter medhavd matsäck
Minulla on omat eväät

Jag äter mest snacks och godis som jag köper i eller utanför skolan
Syön useimmiten välipaloja ja karkkeja, joita ostan koulusta tai sen ulkopuolelta

Jag äter aldrig något i skolan
En koskaan syö koulussa mitään

5. Questions about food and mealtimes / open answers /
Enkätfrågor om mat och måltider!-
Kysymyksiä ruuasta ja aterioinnista!

Nämn tre saker, du tänker på när du hör begreppet ´hälsosam mat´.
Mainitse kolme asiaa, jotka tulevat mieleen, kun kuulet sanat 'terveellinen ruoka'.

6. Questions about the conception of the healthiness of own food habits

Kryssa för det alternativ som du tycker passar bäst in på dig. 1 står för Inte alls hälsosamma matvanor och 6 står för Mycket hälsosamma matvanor
Valitse vaihtoehto, joka vastaa eniten mielipidettäsi.
Vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: 'Ei lainkaan terveellisiä' ja vaihtoehto 6: 'Erittäin terveellisiä'.

Anser du att dina matvanor är hälsosamma, dvs, att du äter hälsosamt?
Oletko sitä mieltä, että Sinun ruokatottumuksesi ovat terveellisiä, t.s. syöt terveellisesti?

7. Evaluation of having better OWN food habits / dichotomy and open answers

Anser du att dina matvanor kunde vara bättre?
Oletko sitä mieltä, että Sinun ruokatottumuksesi voisivat olla paremmat?

Ja /Kyllä
Nej/Ei
Om ja - hur? Ge exempel:
Jos vastasit äskeiseen 'kyllä', kirjoita alle esimerkki

8. Evaluation of having better food habits in one's FAMILY / dichotomy and open answers

Anser du att din familjs matvanor kunde vara bättre?
Oletko sitä mieltä, että Sinun PERHEESI ruokatottumukset voisivat olla paremmat?

Ja/Kyllä
Nej/Ei

Om ja - hur? Ge exempel:
Jos vastasit äskeiseen 'kyllä', kirjoita alle esimerkki

9. Making healthy food choices at my school could be easier /
Att göra hälsosamma matval kunde vara lättare i din skola.
Terveellisten ruokavalintojen tekeminen voisi olla helpompaa koulussasi.

Ja/Kyllä
Nej/Ei

Om ja - hur? Ge exempel:
Jos vastasit äskeiseen 'kyllä', kirjoita alle esimerkki

10. Making healthy food choices in the society

Det skulle vara lättare att kunna göra hälsosmma matval ute i samhället, dvs. när man är utanför hemmet och skolan.
Terveellisten ruokavalintojen tekeminen voisi olla helpompaa yhteiskunnassa, eli silloin kun ollaan muualla kuin koulussa tai kotona.

Ja /Kyllä
Nej/Ei

Om ja - hur? Ge exempel:

Jos vastasit äskeiseen ‘kyllä’, kirjoita alle esimerkki

11. Factors affecting people’s healthy food choices

Hur mycket tror du följande faktorer påverkar människor att välja hälsosam mat? Kryssa för ett alternativ där 1 står för Inte alls viktigt och 6 står för Mycket viktigt

Kuinka paljon seuraavat tekijät vaikuttavat ihmisten mahdollisuuksiin valita terveellistä ruokaa?

Valitse vaihtoehto, joka vastaa eniten mielipidettäsi.

Vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: ‘Ei lainkaan vaikutusta’ ja vaihtoehto 6: ‘Erittäin paljon vaikutusta’.

Att dricka alkohol:
Alkoholin juominen:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att leva på landet:
Maalla asuminen:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att ha familj:
On perheellinen:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att vara arbetslös:
On työtön:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att ha vänner:
On paljon ystäviä
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att vara rik:
On rikas:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att leva ensam:
Asuu yksin:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att vara stressad:
On stressaantunut:

1 2 3 4 5 6

Att röka tobak/snusa:
Polttaa tupakkaa / käyttää nuuskaa
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att bo i en stad:
Asuu kaupungissa:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att följa hälsokampanjer:
Seuraa terveyskampanjoita:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att vara lycklig:
On onnellinen:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att ha en bra utbildning:
On hyvin koulutettu:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Annat, vad:
Muuta, mitä:

12. Food and the family

Välj ett alternativ där 1 står för Mycket sällan och 6 står för Väldigt ofta
Valitse vaihtoehto, joka vastaa eniten kokemuksiasi.
Vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: 'Erittäin harvoin' ja vaihtoehto 6: 'Erittäin usein'.

Lagar ni mat tillsammans i din familj?
Valmistatteko yhdessä ruokaa perheen kesken?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Lagar du mat till familjen?
Valmistatko Sinä ruokaa perheellesi?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Hur ofta äter du frukost hemma?
Syötkö usein aamiaisen kotona?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Pratar ni mycket om mat i din familj?
Puhutteko usein ruuasta perheen kesken?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Äter ni tillsammans i din familj?
Syöttekö yhdessä perheen kesken?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Lägger ni ner mycket tid på matlagning i din familj?
Kuluuko perheessäsi paljon aikaa ruuanvalmistukseen?
1 2 3 4 5 6

Kryssa för ett alternativ där 1 står för Mycket lite och 6 står för Väldigt mycket
Seuraavassa vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: 'Erittäin vähän' ja vaihtoehto 6: 'Erittäin paljon'.

Tror du att ni lägger mycket pengar på mat i din familj?
Arveletko, että perheessäsi kuluu paljon rahaa ruokaan?
1 2 3 4 5 6

13. Different people's influence on respondents' food choice

Kryssa för ett alternativ där 1 står för Mycket liten betydelse och 6 för Mycket stor betydelse
Valitse vaihtoehto, joka vastaa eniten mielipidettäsi.
Vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: Erittäin vähän merkitystä' ja vaihtoehto 6: 'Erittäin suuri merkitys'.

Vilken betydelse har olika personer för att Du skall ha hälsosamma matvanor?
Millainen merkitys seuraavilla ihmisillä on sille, että Sinulla olisi terveelliset ruokatottumukset?

Du själv, ensam:
Sinä itse, yksin:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Din familj:
Perheesi:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Mamma:
Äiti:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Pappa:
Isä:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Skolan:
Koulu:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Vänner:
Ystävät:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Lärare:
Opettaja:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Flick-/pojkvän: /
Tyttö-/poikaystävä:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Personal inom sjukvård ex. skolsköterska, läkare, dietist: /
Terveydenhuoltohenkilöstö, esimerkiksi koulun terveydenhoitaja tai lääkäri:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Staliga myndigheter och organisationer: /
Valtion viranomaiset tai eri järjestöt:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Livsmedelsindustrin och handeln: /
Elintarviketeollisuus ja kauppa:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Reklam, media: /
Mainokset, media:
1 2 3 4 5 6

Annat, vad?
Muu, mikä?

14. Making practical meal preparations / open questions /

Om du skulle välja att köpa eller laga en måltid till DIG SJÄLV - vad skulle du välja då?
Jos Sinun pitäisi ostaa tai valmistaa ateria ITSELLESI, mitä silloin valitsisit?
Om du skulle välja att köpa eller laga en måltid till DIN FAMILJ vad skulle du välja då?
Jos Sinun pitäisi ostaa tai valmistaa ateria PERHEELLESI, mitä silloin valitsisit?

15. Different conceptions on foods /

Svara på följande påståenden. Kryssa i det alternativ du tycker passar bäst där 1 står för Instämmer inte alls och 6 står för Instämmer helt och hållet.
Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista väittämistä?
Vaihtoehto 1 tarkoittaa: 'Ei pidä lainkaan paikkansa' ja vaihtoehto 6: 'Pitää täysin paikkansa'.

Ekologisk mat är bra för hälsan!
Luomuruoka on hyväksi terveydelle!
1 2 3 4 5 6

Industrins färdiglagade mat är lika hälsosam som hemlagad mat!
Teollisesti valmistettu ruoka on yhtä terveellistä kuin kotiruoka
1 2 3 4 5 6

Att laga hälsosam mat tar lång tid!
Terveellisen ruuan valmistaminen vie paljon aikaa!
1 2 3 4 5 6

För att äta hälsosamt måste man kunna laga mat!
Jotta voisi syödä terveellisesti, pitää osata laittaa ruokaa!

1 2 3 4 5 6

Det är hälsosamt att äta regelbundet!
On terveellistä syödä säännöllisesti!
1 2 3 4 5 6

Den viktigaste måltiden under dagen är frukosten! /
Aamiainen on päivän tärkein ateria!
1 2 3 4 5 6

Varma måltider är mer hälsosamma än kalla måltider!

Lämpimät ateriat ovat terveellisempiä kuin kylmät ateriat!
1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Learning and knowledge / open questions /

Vilka kunskaper tror du att du kommer att behöva i framtiden (när du flyttat hemifrån) för att kunna fixa dina dagliga måltider?
Millaisia tietoja uskoisit tarvitsevasi tulevaisuudessa (esimerkiksi kun muutat pois kotoa), jotta voisit valmistaa päivittäiset ateriasi?

Var har du framförallt lärt dig om mat, hälsa och matlagning?
Missä olet oppinut asioita ruuasta, terveydestä ja ruoanvalmistuksesta?

17. Feedback on answering the questionnaire

Var enhäten lätt att besvara?
Oliko kyselyyn helppo vastata?

18. Other feedback /open answers /

Är det något annat du tänker på när det gäller mat och måltider?
Mitä muuta ajattelet ruokaan ja ruuanvalmistamiseen liittyen?

Appendix 2: Overview of case study data

Stage	Data	Description	Scope
1	Research diary	Notes written mainly after each day in the field, including analytical deliberations and personal commentaries on various events.	50 entries, 76 pages, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5
	Observational field notes	Detailed notes primarily on participants' speech and interactions, spanning the entire field period. The researcher's initial interpretations, separated from the remaining notes with squared brackets.	355 pages of transcripts, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5
	Photographs taken by the researcher	Photographs from the school premises and of school spaces (i.e., the physical environment).	114 pc
	Documentary materials of the field school	School-level curriculum, information package for new teachers, floor plans of the school building, maps of areas surrounding the school, schedules for teaching and school lunches, name lists and responsibilities of teachers, and name lists and pictures of students.	273 pages (A4)
2	Essays written by the students	An essay on the topic 'Food related experiences at school', mother tongue, 9th grades (3 classes), individual assignment.	57 essays, á 0.5−1 pages (A4)
	Photographs taken by the students	Photographic assignment on the topic 'Friends and food at school', 9th grade optional home economics (4 classes), individual assignment	44 pc
	Screen shots from the Facebook platform	Screen shots of the progress of the photographic assignment on Facebook and in students' posts and comments on the platform.	97 pc
	Picture series drawn by the students	Picture series based on students' photographs, 9th grade optional home economics (4 groups), group assignment.	18pc
	Students' art projects on school lunches of the future	Group assignment 'Eating at school in the year 2030', a plan of the school dining room based on the floor plan of the space, one week's menu plan and written justifications, 9th grade optional art (1 class).	6 pc
3	Visually elicited focus group discussions	9th grades (3 classes), 14 discussions, 62 students, 25 boys and 37 girls, 14 groups, 4−6 students per group.	6 h 53 min 10 sec of recordings; 273 pages of transcript, font Times New Roman, font size 12, spacing 1.5