

KAISA TIUSANEN

Nice Food, Good People

Technologies of subjectivity and class distinction
in media texts about *the right kind of food*

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Helsinki, 23rd of March 2023

Kaisa Tiusanen

ABSTRACT

What kind of food might be categorised as good in our contemporary society? Describing food as *good* most often means that it *tastes good*, however, food is evaluated as good in other ways as well. These evaluations touch upon the moral judgements we make: what kind of food is worthy of our attention and approval, what kind of food is deemed as socially and culturally legitimate, and, most importantly, whether the food we eat and the culinary lifestyles we aspire towards make *us* good, worthy or legitimate. I argue that evaluating the subject of mediated food discourse – be it ourselves or ‘the other’ – is entangled, firstly, with cultural distinction and secondly, with governing the self. In this dissertation, I ponder how evaluation, the movement through which we belong somewhere or turn away from something else is done through mediated meanings connected with food consumption.

This dissertation approaches good food from the perspectives of *ethical eating* and *healthy eating*. Ethical and healthy food incorporate cultural evaluations connected with, for example, naturalness, pureness, cleanliness and fitness, and thus some of the central food-related judgements of goodness and legitimacy can be addressed through mediated meanings connected with ethicality and healthiness. In this dissertation, ethical eating is examined in terms of how organic and locally grown food (i.e., sustainable food) are framed in journalistic texts, and healthy eating is viewed through the wellness food culture of digital media.

The four publications open multiple perspectives on the contemporary mediated food culture and the legitimate subjectivities inhabiting it. The first publication analyses the meanings connected with organic and local food in *Helsingin Sanomat* through an examination of texts that can be categorised as ‘lifestyle journalism’, asking how organic and local food are legitimised in the data, and how *authenticity* and *nostalgia* are deployed in connection with sustainable lifestyle. The second publication centres on *Helsingin Sanomat* news articles and the class-related meanings created there in connection with organic and local food. The paper asks what kind of cultural distinctions are produced in these journalistic texts, and through which discursive strategies ethical consumption becomes associated with and attached to different class cultures.

The third publication delves into the cultural field of wellness, analysing the ways in which subjectivity is discursively produced in the blog content of three wellness food blogs run by women. The article seeks answers to the question of how, and through what kind of technologies of the self the ‘ideal wellness subject’ is created in the blog texts. Finally, the fourth publication examines digital wellness culture through an analysis of the #womenswellness intimate public of Instagram, concentrating on the affective practices observable in the food-related content of this intimate public and how gendered existence and popular feminism factor into the displays of feeling in that space. The paper asks what emotions are encouraged in the #womenswellness public of Instagram, and how these affective practices intertwine with contemporary configurations of feminism in popular media.

In these four research articles I approach my data predominantly through theoretical discussions on 1) social class (especially the middle class) and cultural distinction as well as 2) governmentality and the (gendered) subjectivities related to healthist and neoliberal ‘sensibilities’. With the intention of bringing these scholarly discussions together, the introductory part of this dissertation reflects on the research articles and on their theoretical frameworks through the concept of ‘the good life’. As I endeavour to answer an overarching research question focusing on the good people behind the good food, this dissertation asks: What kind of *a valuable subject* is being produced in contemporary food discourses?

I propose that mediated, everyday food discourses adhere to the good life through, firstly, *aspiring* towards something (a lifestyle or a state of being for example): reaching for a beacon glimmering in the distance, promising perfection and happiness if we only stretch our reach far enough. Secondly, these food discourses work to *secure* the symbolic distance between good and bad, solidifying and reaffirming the legitimacy of certain foodstuffs, practices and eaters and the illegitimate status of others. In the concluding section of this dissertation, I formulate four different subject positions that seem to be offered to the (right kind of) recipient in food-related media texts. These are the tasteful subject, the morally-righteous subject, the balanced subject and the resilient subject, all of which attach to cultural distinction, class and gender in different ways. This dissertation shows that the judgements and subject positions related to good food are not a matter of free choice or self-improvement, as the discursive negotiations relating to food depict how subjects are on unequal footing with regard to cultural status or possibilities for ‘self-actualisation’. On the basis of the analyses, what is evident is that formations of class and gender have a crucial bearing on from which positions and with what kind of stakes the good life is pursued to begin with.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Minkälainen ruoka määritetty kulttuurissamme *hyväksi*? Ruoka määritellään useimmiten hyväksi koska se *maistuu hyvältä*, mutta ruoka voi olla hyvää myös muilla tavoin. Ruokaan liittyvät arvomääritykset kiinnittyvät muodostamiimme moraalisiin arvostelmiin: siihen, millainen ruoka ansaitsee huomiomme tai hyväksyntämme, minkälaista ruokaa pidämme sosiaalisesti ja kulttuurisesti arvokkaana ja ennen kaikkea siihen, määritymmekö me itse hyväksi, arvokkaiksi ja legitiimeiksi kuluttamamme ruuan kautta. Tässä väitöskirjassa esitän, että ruuan kulttuurista diskurssia asuttavan subjektin arvo kietoutuu yhtäältä kulttuuriseen erottautumiseen ja toisaalta itsen hallinnointiin. Tutkimuksessa pohdin, kuinka arvottaminen ja se liike, jonka kautta kuulumme jonnekin ja etäännyimme jo(i)stakin muotoutuu ruuan kuluttamiseen kiinnittyvien merkitysten kautta.

Tämä väitöskirja lähestyy hyvää ruokaa eettisen syömisen ja terveellisen syömisen perspektiiveistä. Eettiseen ja terveelliseen ruokaan kiinnittyä muun muassa luonnollisuuteen, puhtauteen ja elinkelpoisuuteen (*fitness*) viittaavia kulttuurisia arvostelmia, ja siten joitakin keskeisiä (ruoka)kulttuurisia kysymyksiä voi lähestyä niiden analyysin kautta. Väitöskirjassa perehdyn eettisen syömisen merkityksiin luomua ja lähiruokaa käsitteleviä journalistisia tekstejä tarkastelemalla, ja analysoin ruokaa ja terveellisyttä digitaalisten mediasisältöjen wellness-ruokaan keskittyvien aineistojen avulla.

Väitöskirjan neljä osajulkaisua avaavat monipuolisia näkökulmia mediavälitteiseen ruokakulttuuriin ja sen tarjoamiin subjektiasemiin. Ensimmäisessä tutkimusartikkelissa tutkin luomu- ja lähiruokaan *Helsingin Sanomissa* kiinnittyviä merkityksiä ja selvitän, minkälaisin diskursiivisin keinoin ruoka määritellään luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä kulttuurista arvostusta ansaitsevaksi, ja miten erityisesti *autenttisuuden* ja *nostalgian* diskurssit kietoutuvat aineiston teksteissä kulttuuriseen pääomaan. Toinen artikkeli keskittyy *Helsingin Sanomien* uutisartikkeleihin ja niissä muodostuviin luokkamerkityksiin: artikkelissa tutkin, minkälaisia kulttuurisia erontekoja luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä tuotetaan, millaisiin luokkakulttuureihin eettisen ruoan kuluttaminen lehden diskursseissa kiinnittyy ja minkälaisiin diskursiivisiin keinoihin nämä käytännöt nojaavat.

Kolmas artikkeli uppoutuu wellness-ilmioon liittyviin merkityksiin, ja analysoin artikkelissa wellness-kulttuuriin yhdistyviä ruokablogeja kiinnittäen huomiota niihin minäteknikoihin, joiden keinoin 'ideaali wellness-yksilö' blogiteksteissä rakentuu. Neljäs ja viimeinen tutkimusartikkeli pureutuu digitaaliseen wellness-kulttuuriin analysoimalla Instagramin #womenswellness (pseudo)yhteisöä ja sen sisällöissä kierrätettyjä tunnesääntöjä ja neuvoteltua naiseutta. Artikkeliksi kysyy, minkälaisen tunteiden näyttämisen yhteisön tunnesääntöt kannustavat, ja miten nämä affektiiviset käytännöt kietoutuvat yhteen populaarimedian feminististen muodostelmien kanssa.

Näiden neljän tutkimusartikkelin puitteissa lähestyn aineistoani 1) sosiaalisen luokan (erityisesti keskiluokan) ja kulttuurisen erottautumisen sekä 2) hallinnallisuuden ja (sukupuolittuneisiin) subjektiviteetteihin liittyvien terveysaatteen (*healthism*) ja uusliberalismin käsitteiden kautta. Tarkoitukseni on tuoda työn yhteenvedossa yhteen edellä mainittuja teoreettisia näkökulmia ja niihin liittyviä tutkimusongelmia, ja siksi väitöskirjan yhteenvedossa lähestyn osatutkimuksia ja niissä tärkeässä osassa olleita teoreettisia kehyksiä *hyvän elämän* käsitteen kautta. Tavoitteenani on vastata yhteenvedossa kysymykseen, jota voi pitää eräänlaisena hyvää subjektia painottavana koosteena väitöskirjan analyyseistä ja osatutkimusten monista tutkimuskysymyksistä. Keskityn siten yhteenvedossa *hyviin ihmisiin* hyvän ruuan konteksteissa, kysyen: minkälaisia *arvokkaita subjekteja* nykykulttuurin ruokadiskurssit tuottavat?

Yhteenvedon lopussa esitän, että ruuan diskurssit kiinnittyvät hyvän elämän ideaaleihin ensinnäkin *tavoitellen* jotakin, kurkottaen kohti edessä siintävää täydellisyyttä (täydellistä terveyttä, kehoa, tasapainoa), ja toiseksi pyrkimällä *turvaamaan* hyvän ja huonon sekä hyvien ja huonojen ihmisten väliset etäisyydet, jähmettämällä asemaansa tiettyjen ruokien tai elämäntyylien kulttuurisen legitimiuden ja toisenlaisten ruokien tai elämäntyylien epälegitiimiuden. Hahmottelen yhteenvedossa neljä erilaista kulttuurista subjektiasemaa, joita analysoidut mediatekstit lukijalleen tarjoavat. Nimeän nämä subjektiasemat hyvän maun subjektiksi, moraaliseksi subjektiksi, tasapainoiseksi subjektiksi sekä resilentiksi subjektiksi, ja pohdin sitä, miten kulttuurinen erottautuminen, luokka ja sukupuoli kytkeytyvät subjektiasemiin aineistoissa erilaisin tavoin. Väitöskirja tuo esiin, kuinka ruokaan kiinnittyvät makuarvostelmat ja subjektiasemat eivät määrity ensisijaisesti esimerkiksi valinnanvapauden tai itsen kehittämisen kautta, ja kuinka ruuan diskursiiviset neuvottelut tuovat näkyviksi toimijoiden eriarvoisuuden suhteessa kulttuuriseen statukseen tai itsen toteuttamiseen. Analyysien perusteella voidaan todeta, että luokka

ja sukupuoli määrittävät vahvasti sitä, miten ja minkälaisista lähtökohdista hyvän elämän ideaalia yhteiskunnassamme tavoitellaan.

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ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The thesis is based on the following publications, referred to in the text as

Publications I to IV.

- I Tiusanen, Kaisa (2018) Ihannoitu ja henkiin herätetty menneisyys. Autenttisuus ja nostalgia sanomalehden luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä. *Media and viestintä* 41:4, 302–324. <https://journal.fi/mediaviestinta/article/view/77459>
- II Tiusanen, Kaisa (2021) Ruokakulttuuria keskiluokan armosta: Yhteiskuntaluokkaan kytkeytyvät diskurssit Helsingin Sanomien luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä. *Kulttuurintutkimus* 38:1, 3–17. <https://journal.fi/kulttuurintutkimus/article/view/95368/60144>
- III Tiusanen, Kaisa (2021) Fulfilling the self through food in wellness blogs: Governing the healthy subject. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 24:6, 1382–1400. doi:10.1177/13675494211055734
- IV Tiusanen, Kaisa (2022) Feeling grateful, kind, and empowered. Rules of feeling in Instagram’s #womenswellness digital intimate public. *Feminist Media Studies*. doi:10.1080/14680777.2022.2135122

1 INTRODUCTION

This PhD dissertation ventures out onto the field of *good food* and its mediated, cultural meanings. Food can be characterised as good in a variety of ways, some of which I introduce in the pages below. What is central in terms of the work ahead, is how the evaluations placed on food *transfer onto the eater*: what kind of a subject forms in mediated texts that formulate, create and perhaps contest cultural understandings of good food. Hence, this dissertation studies – through the culinary spheres of ethical eating and healthy eating – subjectivity and class distinction in media texts about the ‘right kind of’ food.

1.1 Studying Food Media

According to sustainable food scholar Michael Mikulak (2013), food is “good to think with”, and the story of food is as important as its physical substance: We yearn to understand our food as a narrative experience, and this is perhaps why food talk is so abundant and seems to be everywhere (ibid.). Food culture has always intrigued me personally: Not primarily from a gastronomic point of view – even though I, like many others, do enjoy well-prepared food, and I sometimes even attempt to cook something sophisticated or trendy myself – but as a means to conveying identities and values that do not necessarily have much to do with food. Food talk never seems to be about “just food”, but about the eater, in a surprisingly profound manner. Thus, for me, mediated food culture was the *organic* place to start sketching a plan for my doctoral dissertation.

In late 2016, I started my quest for a suitable food-related research topic by leafing through Finnish food magazines and by typing the word *food* on Google to see what popped up. What popped up was the following: then-contemporary dietary trends, of which low-carbohydrate diet (“karppaus”) was the biggest one in 2016; enthusiasm about medicinal foodstuffs and “superfoods”; a “food hoax” thematic raising concern for manufactured food being not as healthy or ‘real’ or nutritious as advertised; an expertise versus experience discourse where “common people” or

various non-experts attacked dietary authorities in terms of who knows best what the healthiest food to eat *really* is; and gastronomic trends such as molecular gastronomy, vegetarian food and organic food.

Obviously, food media can be studied from multiple viewpoints, and many analytic perspectives in terms of these food media topics could have rendered meaningful insights. In mapping out the vast mediated foodsphere however, I realized that nearly all food-related content boiled down to either *naturalness* or *healthiness* at their core. Both concepts could be considered as 21st century culinary “buzzwords” that are attached to foodstuffs advertised as agreeable. And, perhaps even more pressingly for an academic perspective, both shelter whole worlds of evaluations that affect cultural discourse.

Naturalness is a quality denoting food that is in some way in its natural state: perhaps organic or local, maybe freshly picked from the forest, true to its origins, or unpretentious in some genuine, disarming manner; ‘wild’, ‘earthy’ or ‘free’ meaning uncontained and unproduced (but also in a more poetic way), ‘simple’, ‘whole’, ‘honest’ or ‘pure’ (characterisations often used in a manner that is both vague and somewhat morally-laden), and finally, natural in terms of how things *should* be – normal, normative. The term healthiness is more self-explanatory, since stuff that is healthy, supposedly improves the well-being of one’s body. But culturally, healthiness relates to and is equated with many notions: in addition to meaning that someone or something is “not ill”, healthiness relates to activeness, fitness and athleticism, to practices, foodstuffs or habits that are ‘wholesome’ (nutritious, healing and restorative in some respect), hygienic, fresh, and ‘clean’, ‘sustaining’ in that they promise some sort of longevity, and perhaps even ‘vitalizing’ or ‘rejuvenating’ in pushing death as far back that it disappears from view.

Finally, it is worth noting that naturalness and healthiness both have also unsavoury connotations linked to racialist (suggesting that different levels of purity exist and some things or people are purer or more natural than others, see D’Amato and Falzon, 2015, in connection with organic food) and ableist (representing able-bodiedness as the unequivocal standard for meaningful, healthy living) thought: neither of these dimensions are directly explored in this dissertation, but are relevant to my argument of how moral or cultural judgement enters into and resides in the seemingly innocent field of mediated food talk.

And so, in a quest to ‘uncover’ some of the meanings connected with food culture, I decided to study media texts focusing on *sustainable food* and on *wellness food*. Studying texts on the subject of sustainable food in this instance means studying how organic and locally grown food are covered in mainstream journalism in

Finland. Analysing wellness food in turn centres on ‘the food of wellness culture’ and the subjectivities related to it in digital media. (See Sections 2.3 and 2.4.) My analyses amount to four research articles, two of which focus on sustainable food and two on wellness food culture. Sustainable food and wellness food function as my windows to contemporary food culture, where these mediated foodspheres offer perspectives on the evaluations and cultural negotiations intertwined with ethical and healthy eating.

Now, on the surface it does not seem that there is that much in common between sustainable consumption and wellness culture: Sustainable food has to do with authenticity and naturality in terms of the food eaten, and with good morals and conscious agency with regard to the consumer, whereas in wellness culture, the food is healthy, fresh and clean, and the wellness subject thus also healthy, active and often in pursuit of “the optimal self”. Healthy wellness food is not necessarily ethical, organic or locally produced, and sustainable food most certainly is not always healthy. The people consuming organic food might not be the same people participating in wellness culture (even though they most likely inhabit somewhat similar class positions). I argue that what unites these food-related lifestyles on a discursive level is pursuing *the good life*. Neither sustainable consumption nor wellness food consumption channel – in terms of the material analysed *here* – much effort toward goals outside the subject themselves (or one’s ingroup), and attention is directed at striving in life: to be happy, to be content, to be better.

Designating something as natural or as healthy is a moral judgement that designates that something as *good*. In my research, I ponder how all this evaluation, symbolic production and movement through which we belong somewhere or turn away from the ‘other’ is done through food and through meanings connected with food consumption. In the introductory part that follows (and as mentioned), I aim to reflect on my research through the concept of the good life. I argue that in contemporary culture, food discourse acts as a gauge that ascertains what is good and *who* is good. Food discourse reveals what we value, and perhaps through analysing food texts, we can also catch a glimpse of what things and people become formulated as a negation to all this goodness. My dissertation asks: What kind of *a valuable subject* is being produced in contemporary food discourses?

Below, I discuss the concept of the good life further, and describe how the above-mentioned research question is linked to the research questions presented in my articles on sustainable food and wellness.

1.2 Food and *The Good Life*

The philosophical question of what constitutes the good life – “the life that is lived in the right way, by doing the right things, over and over again” (Ahmed, 2010, 36) – is one of the most fundamental and original philosophical questions, one that Aristotle himself sacrificed a good share of his intellectual powers to tackle. The good life, or *eudaimonia*, is often introduced in connection with happiness, as *eudaimonia* might be translated to “happiness as good living”. Eudaimonism and hedonism are ethical philosophical traditions that are often juxtaposed as opposing perspectives on well-being and happiness: where hedonism emphasises the pursuit of happy feelings and pleasure, eudaimonism emphasises the pursuit of a meaningful, virtuous life, and, importantly, the fulfilment of one’s *true self*. Finally, in comparison with hedonistic, subjective pursuit of pleasure, philosophers and psychologists who have followed the Aristotelian tradition consider *eudaimonia* as objective rather than subjective, a way of living rather than a state of feeling. (Ahmed, 2010; Fischer, 2014; Grénman, 2019.)

Through perceiving the good life as objectively measurable and verifiable it becomes a concept that is highly normative: there exists a model for a good and virtuous way of living. This model in turn has been, after the 2000s, often investigated as well as formulated in the field of positive psychology, a discipline that studies happiness, or, nowadays, well-being. Well-being is measured by measuring *flourishing*, and the goal of positive psychology is to increase this flourishing. (Ahmed, 2010; Grénman, 2019; Seligman, 2012.) Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2010, 9) writes that theorists in the field of positive psychology offer ‘providing guideposts for the good life’ as the primary role of the discipline: “Happiness is often described as a path, as being what you get if you follow the right path.” The concept of happiness does not only describe what we *are* inclined toward but what we *should be* inclined toward – as a principle that guides moral decisions about how to live well. Ahmed argues that in wishing for happiness, we wish to be associated with happiness, and the very promise that happiness is what you get for having the right associations might be how we are directed toward certain things. Hence, happiness becomes a way of measuring progress, it becomes “the ultimate performance indicator”. (2010: 4, 199.)

Paraphrasing Ahmed (2010) and cultural theorist Lauren Berlant (2011), the things we like also establish ‘what we are like’, they take residence within our bodily horizon and gather near us (or we become propelled towards them), and they form “clusters of promises” promising good things to the ones that become in contact

with them. And here, food enters the field of eudaimonic pursuit as the promises of happiness and the good life become attached to food objects and everyday food practices and lifestyles. It could even be argued that in the field of food, these promises are especially strong as the objects are not merely placed near us or on us but *inside us*, ingested and finally turned into us in the manner of sustaining us as an organism. We cannot escape food: we need it to survive so it is difficult to imagine a life where food-related questions and choices would not ‘take residence’ within our bodily or mental horizons. Understanding food is complex because food houses such different notions of both the corporeal and tactile and the symbolical. Food heritage scholar Maarit Knuuttila writes: “Food is a phenomenon that exists simultaneously in both material and immaterial forms: in real daily life, there are raw materials – foodstuffs – and real edible dishes. When food is prepared, we eat it, and it is gone. It remains “alive” mostly in daily practices, in mental images, in memories, and in oral communication.” (2016: 87.)

Even though this dissertation does not focus on the materiality of the foodstuffs ingested or on the body that consumes food, it is important to keep in mind that food discourses exist in contact with the realm of the material. Food writer Pricilla Parkhurst Ferguson (2014: 52) argues that we, as human beings, have a need to talk about food because food is such an embodied and a private affair: as we cannot share the actual food that we consume, we talk about it. And, she continues that like food, talk disappears as well, and this shared ephemerality explains why food talk matters and also makes clear why talk is not enough. Food texts then extend the reach of local culinary practices and lay the foundation for a culinary culture and for culinary discourses that produce that culture. (Ibid.)

I propose that mediated, everyday food discourses adhere to the good life through, firstly, *aspiring* for something (a lifestyle or a state of being for example): a beacon glimmering in the distance, promising perfection and happiness if we only stretch our reach as far as possible. Secondly, these food discourses work to *secure* the symbolic distance between good and bad, solidifying and reaffirming the legitimate status of certain foodstuffs, practices and eaters and the illegitimate status of others: after all, “we tend to like those who like the things we like,” and distance establishes the edges of our horizon, as by rejecting the proximity of certain objects, we define the things we “do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, see, those things we do not want to keep within reach.” (Ahmed, 2010: 24, 38.)

Meanings are created amidst these movements of keeping a distance from and grasping for, of fortifying symbolic distinctions or striving to thrive. Finally, I agree (yet again) with Sara Ahmed in that critical cultural analysis can explore how ordinary

attachments to the idea of the good life are also sites of ambivalence, involving confusion as well as separation of good and bad things and feelings (2010: 6). Thus, exploring the meanings of good food reveals a universe of cultural negotiations and struggles over the things we value (and the things we value in ourselves).

1.3 Research Questions

Research questions guide the research process by condensing lines of inquiry into “processable questions” (Rantasila, 2020) and, simultaneously, often change remarkably over the course of a research project in order to ‘fit’ the final analysis. Oftentimes, during this dissertation project, I have found it burdensome to bend my research problem(s) into a singular or several research questions. But, over time, one becomes better at this, even if it might take a little time to realise the value of formulating good research questions. In what follows, I briefly introduce both the research problems and the research questions of all four analyses, after which I reflect on a composite research question that I endeavour to answer in the discussion section.

The first research article analyses the meanings connected with organic and local food in *Helsingin Sanomat* (the biggest daily newspaper in Finland), through an examination of texts that can be categorised as ‘lifestyle journalism’. The article seeks answers to the following questions:

How is organic and local food legitimised in the data, and how are *authenticity* and *nostalgia* especially deployed in connection with sustainable lifestyle?

The second article, based on critical discourse analysis like the first one, centres on *Helsingin Sanomat* news articles and the class-related meanings created and recycled there in connection with organic and local food. The paper asks:

What kind of cultural distinctions are produced in journalistic texts on organic and local food? How and through which discursive strategies does ethical consumption become attached to different class cultures?

The third research article delves onto the cultural field of wellness, analysing the ways in which subjectivity is discursively produced in the blog content of three wellness food blogs run by women. The article seeks answers to the following question:

Through what kind of *technologies of the self* is the ‘ideal wellness subject’ of wellness blogs created?

Finally, the fourth paper examines digital wellness culture through an analysis of the #womenswellness intimate public of Instagram, concentrating on affect that circulates in the food-related content of this intimate public and how gendered existence and popular feminism factor into the displays of feeling in that space. The analysis asks:

What feelings are most visible in the #womenswellness public of Instagram and what emotions are encouraged in this space? How do these affective practices intertwine with contemporary configurations of feminism in popular media?

Now, instead of formulating a general research question that could function as a summed-up iteration of all research questions presented above, my aim is to zoom in on the subjectivities of wellness and ethical lifestyle, and to reflect on what these are in terms of my data and analyses, and what, in turn, the answers might say about food media and culture more generally. Thus, my dissertation asks:

What kind of a *valuable subject* is being produced in contemporary food discourses?

Becoming (and hoping to become) a valuable subject is, I argue, at the core of making distinctions through food, striving for self-improvement, and negotiating the demands contemporary society places on us in terms of healthiness and ethical practice, for example. The ‘valuable’ in valuable subject directs my gaze to evaluations: (moral) judgements on taste, worth, and goodness.

1.4 Structure for the Dissertation

After this introductory section, the dissertation proceeds to offer context on the research field under investigation, that is, *mediated food culture* or *food media*. Introducing this field in Section 2 moves from reviewing general links between food and media to introducing the history of food media and the existing research pertaining to the field of food media scholarship, and finally to presenting the more specific mediated fields of ethical food and wellness.

Next, the dissertation moves onto the central theoretical concepts, and in Section 3, I review my conceptual frameworks, the first pertaining to class and distinction and the second to governmentality and the subject. Additionally, I introduce conceptualisations of gendered subjectivity that have an important bearing on

Publications III and IV. Finally, I reflect on how utilizing both Pierre Bourdieu's (distinction) and Michel Foucault's (governmentality) work affects my analysis and epistemological perspectives.

Section 4 centres on methodological and data-related questions, introducing the research materials (journalistic texts, wellness blog content and Instagram posts), the methodological perspective of my analyses (discourse analysis), and, finally, the ethical considerations relating to study design, research materials, data extraction, analysis and publication. In Section 5, I briefly introduce the four research articles that constitute the core of my dissertation.

Finally, the discussion (Section 6) brings together the key findings and core arguments I have endeavoured to make in my dissertation, and reflects on the composite research question and the core problematic of subjectivity and 'the good life' formulated in the introduction.

2 THEMES

The context of this dissertation warrants some introduction, as the topic of *food* or *food media* is rather extensive and can be conceptualised in different ways. In what follows, I delve into food media and food media research as well as into the more specific cultural phenomena – sustainable food and wellness culture – under investigation.

2.1 Food and Media

As I suggested above, many of the central questions of contemporary society are reflected and discussed through food. Some scholars talk about *a culinary turn* (e.g., van der Meulen and Wiesel, 2017) whereby “the kitchen and cooking have emerged as important differentiated cultural fields in the 21st century.” Sociologist Alan Warde (1997) has stated that food is simultaneously mundane and highly significant: “everyone eats”, most of us several times a day without much reflection and still, food is connected with many other highly meaningful aspects of living. According to Warde, food is meaningful because it is social, as usually people eat in company and subject to inspection by others (ibid.). This is certainly true, as eating and food choice speak about preference, taste, values and resources, and through food consumption we can both align ourselves with people like us and make distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and we can do this, as Warde reminds us, every day and several times a day. Furthermore, food and eating are also central to our subjectivity in a more personal manner: to our sense of self and our embodiment; the ways that we live in and through our bodies (Lupton, 1998).

And so, talk of a “culinary turn” or announcing food or talk about food as previously ‘marginal’ and now ‘popular’ feels a bit bizarre when one considers how important food really is (and has always been) to human communities. However, what *is* true is an increase in food related media content that has gained a strong foothold in our mediascape as a crucial part of lifestyle media. Lifestyle food media has intertwined with pervasive neoliberal technologies of medicalization and bodily surveillance, the triumph of nutritional sciences and governing through dietary

advice as well as with local and global crises of food scarcity, climate change and environmental degradation, the ‘obesity epidemic’, and concerns over factory farming and animal welfare. Thus, food represents a discursive constellation of power and knowledge that draws on numerous disciplines and ways of knowing (Mikulak, 2013).

2.2 Food Media: History and Academic Perspectives

Food writing and food media have a long history: Cookbooks are among the earliest printed books, and food programming is one of the oldest genres of radio and television. For centuries, media portrayals all the way from religious tracts to medical journal articles, cookbooks, film and television series, advertisements, news reports and digital media have made a major contribution to the generation and reproduction of cultural meanings and knowledges associated with food. (Lupton, 2020; Phillipov, 2017.)

By the end of the twentieth century, food had become a big business and a source of entertainment in late modern capitalist societies, with myriad television food shows, food magazines, celebrity chefs and food festivals combining to create a ‘food culture’. In recent decades food has offered profitable solutions to “an industry undergoing significant structural changes” such as deregulation of media markets, fragmentation of audiences, declining advertising revenues and increased competition. Food television has retained both audiences and advertisers at a time when overall television viewership is in decline: cookbooks have almost singlehandedly saved a number of struggling publishing houses, and food has helped capture new forms of audience engagement on digital media platforms. (Kobez, 2020; Phillipov, 2017.)

Newspapers and magazines seem to have tapped into the rising popularity of food content as well, resulting in a “social climb” of food journalism from the 1980s onwards, as food journalism rose from obscurity to be concerned as a crucial and esteemed part of the lifestyle section of any broadsheet paper (Phillipov, 2017). Before this, food journalism (if ‘journalism’ at all) was deemed an unimportant part of the newspaper, instructing women in cookery and home maintenance, thus being the ‘ghetto’ of the women’s pages or “a throwaway compendium of recipes and ‘what’s hot’ articles” (Brown, 2004; Reilly and Miller, 1997). The emergence of food journalism and food criticism has generated new audiences for food media, with

journalistic content focusing more on enjoyment and knowledge *about* contemporary food rather than on the *how-to* (recipes and tips) of food preparation (Phillipov, 2017).

In lieu of the scholarly perspective of looking at society “from below” rather than from above (which has gained academic legitimacy during the past half century, see Parkhurst Ferguson, 2015), the rise of food media in the popular arena has emulated a response in the field of academic research. Food scholars Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann (2015) note that even though questions related to food or food culture have not traditionally received a great deal of scholarly attention (which, in part, stems from the Western intellectual dualism that prioritizes cognition over embodiment and denigrates the material and practical nature of human life), since the 1990s, the study of food has moved from the margins to the centre of intellectual discourse. Food scholars have demonstrated food culture’s significance as a socio-cultural realm “ripe with meaning, symbols, myths, and latent messages about gender, class, race, and social standing” (ibid.: 34), as well as with underlying inequalities that impact the ability to make decisions regarding eating and preparing food (Byrd and Byrd, 2017). The meanings, discourses and practices around food – the ‘symbolic medium par excellence’ – and eating are worthy of detailed cultural analysis and interpretation (Lupton, 1998).

The popularity of food-related media content is presumably a reality in the context of Finnish society and media landscape as well, even if extensive investigations into Finnish food media or culinary journalism are few and fragmentary (see Section 2.5). A recent history of Finnish food by Ritva Kylli gives a glimpse of food writing in 20th century Finland: The first Finnish food magazine *Kotikokki* (“Home cook”) – more general home-making magazines, such as *Kotiliesi* (“Home stove”), had already been published for decades before this – laments in its first ever issue in 1952 on how Finnish food is known for being poorly seasoned and tedious (and how this is probably true). What becomes evident through these past culinary inserts however is the gradual modernisation and globalisation of Finnish food culture (in lieu of the modernisation of culture as a whole) through the introduction of food items and concepts such as coffee, pineapple, automatization (“restaurant automats”) and Coca-Cola (Kylli, 2021).

What seems apparent is that in Finnish culture, cooking was primarily an issue of care work and household maintenance for a long time, and only relatively recently has cooking become a (unisex) past-time with numerous magazines and newspaper food pages dedicated to new recipes, sharing food knowledge, and reporting on other culinary issues. In an examination of late 1980’s Finnish food culture, Food culture scholar Johanna Mäkelä (1990) recognises a cultural shift in food

consumption and food-related knowledge: In her view, rising standard of living alone did not adequately explain gastronomy's rise in popularity, and that novel global or cosmopolitan cultural tendencies as well as newly expanding food media contributed to (what could now be seen as) the introduction of *food culture* (and even *foodie culture*) to Finnish consumers.

For the most part, food journalism (in Finland and elsewhere) falls into the category of *lifestyle journalism*, which serves the public by providing judgements of taste and by arbitrating “taste cultures”, spotting culinary trends and identifying particular foods as worthy food choices (Fürsich, 2013; Johnston and Baumann, 2007). The sphere of lifestyle food journalism is gastronomic, meaning that it involves a communicative public-sphere dimension specifying what foods and food trends are interesting, relevant and high status for urban food consumers (see Johnston and Baumann, 2015: 38). Johnston and Baumann also remark that food writers, as experts within the culinary field, have considerable power to shape perceptions of food as worthy of consumer attention (2007: 165). Food media frames and also dictates what the environments of food consumption should be, how they should operate, and for whom they exist. Examining what the food writers, authors and culinary ‘experts’ write or say is thus an excellent access point for understanding the distinctions, judgements of taste and legitimation processes of the contemporary culinary field. (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Johnston and Goodman, 2015.) Food magazines and the food pages of mainstream journalism operate as legitimating institutions, distributing symbolic capital on the culinary – cultural and economic – field and often targeting the tastes of upper-middle and upper-class audiences (Johnston and Baumann, 2015). Food media in general appeals most strongly to the members of the “urban middle classes” or the “educated cosmopolitan classes, with the cultural and economic capital to put stylized food production and consumption to work in the production of the self” (de Solier, 2013; Phillipov, 2017).

As mentioned above, research on food media or mediated food culture has been ample in recent decades and years, both from the viewpoint of food scholars turning to media as well as media scholars' increased interest in food-related content and media practices (e.g., Appadurai, 1988; Cairns and Johnston, 2015b; DeSolier, 2013; Halkier, 2010; Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Leer and Povlsen, 2018; Lewis, 2008; Lupton and Zeldman, 2020; Miller, 2007; Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012; Reilly, 2006). And, with special importance in terms of this dissertation, research on food and media culture takes part in scholarly conversations on distinction and class (e.g., Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Johnson and Goodman, 2015; Phillipov, 2016; Potter

and Westall, 2013; Shugart, 2014; Zimmerman, 2015), gender and embodiment (e.g., Dejmancee, 2016; Hollows, 2003; Rodney et al., 2017) and neoliberal governmentality (Cairns and Johnston, 2015b; Hanganu-Bresch, 2019; Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain, 2012; Rieffestahl, 2014; Schneider and Davis, 2010).

Finally, a few Finnish studies as well have focused on the mediated meanings of food in the last fifteen years or so, and scholarly investigations have centred especially on journalism (as is the case with my dissertation as well): these studies include analyses on the qualities of good food in two journalistic articles (Aarva et al., 2006); food framings in Finnish *Sotilaskoti* magazine between the years 1967 and 2007 (Jallinoja and Suihko, 2007); framings of organic agriculture on Finnish news media (Lehtimäki, 2018); and discourses of food waste in *Helsingin Sanomat* (Raippalinna et al., 2019). Additionally, a few studies have analysed food-related meanings in the wider field of media as well: these include research on media framings of genetically modified food (Väliverronen, 2007); coverage of the 'fat wars' in the media (Jauho, 2013; Syrjäläinen et al., 2016); public representations of healthy eating (Huovila, 2016); and discussions relating to the Vegan Challenge on social media (Laakso et al., 2022). Existing scholarship regarding Finnish food media is thus still quite fragmentary, and a coherent account on food texts remains absent for now – and, admittedly, my own work on journalism on organic and local food will provide scholarly analysis pertaining to a similarly limited corner of the Finnish mediated foodsphere.

2.3 Food Politics and Ethical Food

Even though journalistic food texts are most often published in lifestyle magazines or the lifestyle sections of newspapers, food politics are not absent from these texts. The proliferation of media texts devoted to food has given new prominence to food-related political, environmental and societal issues. Growing media interest in the origins of foodstuffs and the ethics of food production has contributed to an unprecedented visibility of 'alternative' food politics, as the discourses typically associated with alternative food networks now regularly appear in mainstream media coverage. (Phillipov, 2018.)

Food politics are discussed in popular food media from both consumeristic and citizenship-based viewpoints. Whereas consumerism enables an individualized view of food politics that exacerbates status distinctions, the realm of citizenship entails a collective politics targeting social and ecological problems in the food system.

Lifestyle media reporting often falls into the first category, and topics such as local seasonal eating, organic food and animal welfare are highlighted on the expense of more complex and unsexy topics such as social justice, hunger, food security, national food sovereignty or labour exploitation. Here, sustainable living becomes strongly associated with trendiness, and a desire to protect the environment is overlaid with personal motivations like pursuing good taste and protecting one's health. (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Lundahl, 2014.)

Hence, the culinary worlds entangled with organic and local food and their journalistic discourses negotiate and recreate meanings connected with ethical eating in contemporary culture. Ethical consumption can be defined as purchasing and using products not only according to the personal pleasures they provide but to ideas of what is right in a moral sense (Johnston et al., 2011: 295). Ethical consumption is dubbed as sustainable, ecological (or eco-), natural or green, depending on the context. The terminology is somewhat tricky as the variance between expressions – ethical, sustainable, ecological, natural, green – is not necessarily systematic and different terms are often used interchangeably or in order to denote differences in tone.

In my publications on organic and local food, I have mostly used the Finnish term “luonnonmukainen” (denoting some kind of mixture of ‘organic’, ‘natural’ and ‘ecological’). Writing in English, I have chosen *sustainable food* as a general term with which I refer to natural, green and/or ethical food consumption here: even though *organic* in most countries (e.g., the United States, Great Britain and *luomu* in Finland) is a certificate used for produce that has been produced in accordance with certain standards regarding the use of pesticides and keeping livestock, the journalistic content intertwined with organics spreads beyond the certificate, onto the field of naturalness, ethicality or sustainability. Furthermore, as my data includes journalistic articles that deal with both organic and/or locally grown food (see Sections 4.1, 5.1, and 5.2), a general term – sustainable food – is needed in denoting the culinary field in question.

A correlation between high education, high income or high cultural capital and positive attitudes towards ethical consumption has been identified in various studies (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Niva et al., 2014). Highlighting both individual consumer choices and the common good is characteristic of the cultural discourse of ethical consumption, and the ethical consumer of this discourse is portrayed as an active agent bringing change about. These conceptualisations thus often have a moral undertone that is intertwined with class privilege, and the question of whether ethical food consumption is an elite practice has been raised by many scholars. In

constructing some foods as ethical and thus better than other foods, the practices, locations and the consumers of ‘unethical’ food become moralized in the process. (Grauel, 2016; Johnston et al., 2012.)

From the perspective of critical scholarship, sustainable consumption is problematic also in terms of its plausibility as a true alternative to unsustainable modes of capitalism. According to Michael Mikulak (2013), organic food in particular is an example of how green capitalism “internalizes and incorporates critique into meagre accommodations, greenwashing, and the establishment of new markets that prioritize growth and consumerism above all else,” and that the popularity of organic food and other consumables represents “a failure of the system to accommodate any radical change.” Mikulak continues that the realities of organic food and the related greening of capitalism reveal how a political movement becomes monetised by emphasising choice and ethical consumption above values such as preservation of nature, cooperative organization and small-scale production (Mikulak, 2013). Mikulak’s perspective is perhaps overtly critical, however, it is important to point out how organic food production and marketing is a business, where the ideal of ethical practice competes with other objectives, such as maximising profits.

2.4 Digital Media and Wellness Food Culture

In addition to print media, cook books and lifestyle television for example, digital media have offered opportunities to represent food cultures through creating and sharing content. Websites and blogs have been joined by social media and content sharing sites in producing a diverse array of portrayals of food preparation and consumption. Food has been a major preoccupation of internet content creators and their audiences since the emergence of the World Wide Web in the late twentieth century. Circulating food-related content on digital media makes reaching extremely large audiences possible: the affordances of social media and content-sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest and YouTube are accompanied by visual media that can be uploaded and shared on these platforms. People’s physical and habitual foodscapes are increasingly digital, as they source and purchase food online, utilize food delivery apps, download recipes and share their meals on social media. Food and digital culture are thus mutually implicated in the contemporary processes of knowledge production and power distribution through

digital food culture. (Feldman and Goodman, 2021; Lupton, 2020a; Lupton, 2020b; Mann, 2020.)

The proliferation of social and digital media in recent decades has allowed amateur food bloggers to become a prominent subset of this food culture. Social media influencers play an important role in drawing attention to food cultures and trends, and people no longer rely solely on “experts” to provide information about what food to eat. ‘Lifestyle influencers’ who focus on aspects of everyday life such as diet, food preparation, food preservation and sustainable food consumption practices have in many cases attracted large followings on their blogs or platforms such as Instagram or YouTube, and generated income from spin-off activities such as publishing books. Influencers typically use blogs and social media platforms to document their lives and lifestyles, and to market products and services for social and economic gain. (Baker and Walsh, 2020; Kobez, 2020; Lupton, 2020a.)

Digital media food content and the food-related lifestyles of lifestyle influencers touch upon a wide variety of culinary practices, such as vegetarian and vegan cooking, fitness-related cooking (making food that is optimal for muscle building, for example), ‘traditional’ cooking (pickling, curing and so on) and baking. Additionally, and specifically relating to the work at hand, digital media has an extensive field of communities, content and influencers promoting healthy lifestyles that fall under the umbrella of *wellness*.

The term wellness was popularized in the late 1950s; ‘high-level wellness’ was defined as “a condition of change in which the individual moves forward, climbing toward a higher potential of functioning” (Dunn, 1959: 447), and a distinction was made between *absence of illness* (objective and passive) and *wellness* (active and subjective). In the context of consumption, wellness refers to the adoption of attitudes, activities, lifestyle choices, and consumption habits that enable the pursuit of optimal health. Wellness refers to an integration of a holistic health paradigm into one’s life by making lifestyle choices and “self-care decisions” that improve quality of life, such as getting an adequate amount of exercise and sleep, maintaining a healthy diet, taking care of one’s physical appearance, dealing with stress and responding to the first signs of illness. Wellness has evolved into a massive consumer industry in recent years, enabling consumers to incorporate wellness activities and lifestyles on a daily basis. (Grénman, 2019.) Wellness culture includes myriad lifestyles and practices, from meditation retreats, clean eating, detox diets and health-focused wearable devices to comprehensive wellness policies used in schools, hospitals and private companies. These products and programmes promote health

and self-improvement strategies while promising to boost productivity and curb health care costs. (Blei, 2017; Braun and Carruthers, 2020; Tiisanen, 2021.)

The wellness lifestyle is especially preoccupied with nutrition, as what you decide to “put in your body” is often thought to directly ‘cause’ both wellness and illness. A focus on wellness food brings together various wellness topics (nutrition, lifestyle and fitness, as well as spirituality and mental health) and puts emphasis on the deeply embodied dimensions of wellness culture. Foodstuffs in the centre of wellness culture are a diverse mixture of clean food (unprocessed food considered to be as close to its natural state as possible), “nutraceuticals” (foods that are “more than food” but “less than pharmaceuticals”), and food that simply makes one feel good and nourished. (Baker and Walsh, 2018; Télessy, 2019; Tiisanen, 2022.)

In the academic world, aspects of wellness culture are most often addressed through the concept of *healthism*. ‘Healthism’ stems from theorizations regarding ‘medicalization’ that date back to the 1960s. Medicalization refers to the expansion of medical interventions into areas of life that were previously considered outside the medical sphere, and according to early critics (e.g., Szasz, 1961), medicalization transforms social behaviours and problems into symptoms of diseases, which allows medical practitioners to manage and govern the lives of individuals. (Mayes, 2014; Tiisanen, 2021.) Political economist Robert Crawford (1980) has defined healthism as an ideology where health is the primary focus in the search for and the achievement of well-being, a goal which is to be attained primarily through the modification of lifestyles, and with or without therapeutic help. Healthism does not address the expansion of the jurisdiction of medical professionals but rather points to the dissemination of medical perception and ideology among the wider (middle-class) population. (Crawford, 1980; Turrini, 2015.)

The ‘healthist’ wellness lifestyle is profoundly individualistic in that it medicalizes the subject as well as encourages the subject to turn away from traditional medical professionals and institutions, thus making the individual entirely responsible for their own health. This individual responsibility entails a process of blaming which generates a new moralism, according to which healthy behaviour becomes the paradigm of good living. Studying phenomena tied to healthism focuses attention on the hybrid formations which cut across the boundaries between medicine and popular culture, public spaces, clinics, health professionals and private, everyday life. (Crawford, 1980; Turrini, 2015.) In my investigations on digital wellness culture, I view healthism as a health-focused, neoliberal mode of perceiving both the self and others, in which ‘achieving health’ is the primary perceivable path to happiness.

3 CONCEPTS

Next, I introduce the central tools for my analyses: the concepts of 1) social class and cultural distinction and 2) subjectivity and governmentality. Following this, since the world of wellness food media is distinctly feminine, I briefly reflect on how subjectivity as *gendered* has been previously theorised and how I take this into account in my own analyses. Lastly, I return to the theorists (introduced in Sections 3.1 and 3.2) whose writings have influenced my thinking the most, as I touch upon the similarities and differences between Pierre Bourdieu's and Michel Foucault's perspectives on power and agency.

Through the aforementioned concepts, my work becomes connected with different theoretical discussions, traditions and fields, and here my aim is to both introduce these different discussions and reflect on how they have guided my own thinking. The central concepts have been used in somewhat different ways in the dissertation process: some concepts have provided me with insights with the help of which I have been able to formulate my research problems (e.g., social class, cultural capital, governmentality, neoliberalism, postfeminism), whereas some have had utility as practical tools, the usage of which has directly aided the analysis of research material (e.g., Bourdieu's habitus and the notion of homology between cultural fields, and Foucault's governmentality and the technologies of the self). To conclude, the introductions below are in no way exhaustive presentations of the theoretical concepts or their related traditions, instead, my aim is to offer a 'basics' of the theoretical framework of my publications and compactly explain how I have personally used each concept.

3.1 Class and Distinction

Food is deeply entwined in relationships of power and privilege, and food consumption has become a means for constituting identity and emphasising status among peers. Dominant cultural understandings of wealth, poverty and inequality are reproduced in everyday discourses, and analysing these discourses can offer insights of the ways that food practices are implicated in the construction of group

boundaries that reinforce social inequality. (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Lindblom and Mustonen, 2015.) In what follows, I present some central theoretical notions of social class and cultural distinction as well as reflect on their importance in terms of my analyses (especially in terms of Publications I and II centring on sustainable food).

The sociological definition of social class emphasises economic and societal stratification, as social class denotes “a social group, conceived as located within a hierarchical order of unequal such groups, the identity and membership of which is primarily determined by economic considerations such as occupation, income and wealth” (Milner, 1999: 1). In addition to this characterisation however, social class is a useful term because of its social constructedness and thus its entanglement with culture: My interest lies in classed cultural practices and how certain class practices become legitimated in mediated contexts (even if they are obscured and often normalized as class-less on the surface).

A few theorists have suggested that class as an identity is no longer valid in ‘late modernity’ as individuals construct their identities reflexively: they see class not as a modern identity, but as a traditional, ascriptive one, which has no place in a dynamic and globalized world (Skeggs, 2003, on the work by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck). Theories on the supposed death of class have since become unpopular among sociologists, and class has returned to the fore as a ‘real’ and functional theoretical concept. As sociologist Mike Savage (2000) notes, the rise of individualization never did mean a decline of class cultures, but marked a shift from working-class to middle-class modes of subjectivity centred on individuality and mobility (see also Section 3.2). Representations of class are formulated through rhetoric and discourse: they are often old classifications, brought up to date and refolded with new aspects to fit into the contemporary society. And, as very few media workers are recruited outside the middle classes, the working-class existence is framed in public discourse through uniformed and rigid class representations. (Skeggs, 2003.)

Jennifer Smith Maguire (2016) notes that scholars have long observed the complex interrelationship between food practices and social class. Research has demonstrated how social class acts as a structural determinant shaping access to food, and especially to food that is healthy and desired. Class-related impediments to such access include economically constrained food budgets and disadvantaged residential locations that lack adequate public transportation and/or food supply systems, resulting in experiences of food insecurity becoming more likely for working-class and low-income families. However, the significance of class resides heavily in the cultural context that shapes food practices and preferences. The

embodied collective habitus of social class gives rise to preferences, rituals and routines that bind food to both individual and collective practices and to identities. (Bourdieu, 2010; Johnston et al., 2011; Smith Maguire, 2016.)

In social sciences and Cultural Studies, understanding lifestyle, taste and consumption as hierarchal and as corresponding to the hierarchy between social classes (*cultural stratification*, see e.g., Lizardo, 2008) is primarily based on Pierre Bourdieu's analyses on cultural distinction (*Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, first published in English in 1984). Following Bourdieu's theorisations on (French) society, what is considered valuable, worthy and good culture is determined through struggles over social prestige, and this fight over status is fought to a large extent through distinction in the cultural field (Purhonen et al., 2014). Thus, socio-cultural distinction or inequality is not only material or economic but cultural, as cultural factors are not merely manifestations of social inequality but produce and recreate it. One's social standing – who I am, and perhaps even more importantly, who I am not – is performed symbolically in myriad ways, and indicators for high status differ between different historical and cultural environments. (Purhonen et al., 2014.) In my analyses on food journalism (Publications I and II), the processes of legitimation connect with cultural distinction through consumption, moral evaluation and aesthetic disposition.

Distinction becomes visible primarily in the field of consumption, where consumption practices and goods signify a consumer's status: According to Bourdieu, objects and goods do not hold any obvious meanings separate from the cultural tastes through which they are evaluated (2010). A cultural field can be formed on the basis of consumption of different objects, products and 'experiences' that indicate what kind of *capital* each social group has and how much. Social classes and class tastes are distributed in a cultural field according to the composition and the volume of capital they possess. Bourdieu (2010) distinguished four different types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic.

Economic capital quite straight-forwardly refers to income and possessions. *Cultural* capital can be possessed as acquired bodily dispositions and ways of thinking (cultural competence, habitus, taste), cultural products (material possessions of paintings, books and musical instruments for example) as well as in an institutionalised form (education, scholarly degrees and other acquired knowledge). The accumulation of cultural capital takes time and is strongly linked to a person's social background. *Social* capital refers to one's social connections and networks, and the 'profits' of social capital are often transformable into economic or cultural capital. *Symbolic* capital is an umbrella term for all other types of capital as those can

be converted into symbolic capital, into symbolic stature. (Bourdieu, 2010; see Kahma, 2011.) Differences in the accumulation of capital differentiates social classes from each other: at the top of the class structure are the groups that possess high amounts of economic and cultural capital, and at the bottom are groups with the least amount of capital (Bourdieu, 2010).

Distinctions are thus visible on the social space made of fields of consumption. To Bourdieu, what is essential is a homology between different fields: all areas of culture are assembled hierarchically and in a structurally corresponding manner between different classes. A society's class structure corresponds with how aesthetic preferences are divided in that society, and taste is thus shaped by one's position in that class structure (and vice versa) (Bourdieu, 2010; Kahma, 2011). In the social space, in each cultural field the dominant and the dominated classes – or groups with dominant or dominated capital – are amidst continuous interaction and captured in the field of struggle over symbolic legitimacy and political power (Bourdieu, 2010).

Taste is an essential stake in the class-based struggle on cultural hegemony as well as a central instrument of symbolic power. Bourdieu's theory on distinction separates three distinct class tastes from one another: the legitimate taste (the 'taste of freedom') of the upper classes, the cultural goodwill (the middle-brow taste) of the *petit bourgeoisie* and the taste of necessity (the 'popular' taste) of the lower classes. Legitimate taste is abstract and pure, attending to form at the expense of content, and its taste differences are subtle in nature. Cultural goodwill mimics the legitimate taste and practices of the upper class, and the popular taste of the lower classes imposes a taste for the necessary (of economic necessity, in contrast to 'aesthetic refinement'). (Bourdieu, 2010; Purhonen and Roos, 2006.) In the cultural space, social actors are simultaneously both classified and classifiers: "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier," as "social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed." (Bourdieu, 2010: xxix.)

Finally, *habitus* determines how individuals classify their own surroundings and the cultural goods that they are subjected to. *Habitus* refers to 'internalised taste' that operates as a kind of inherited mechanism inscribed into bodies that neutralises and discursively obscures the hegemony of the upper classes (Bourdieu, 2010). The dominant and dominated classes are distinguishable from each other as a matter of *habitus*, and the legitimate taste of a society is identified with the taste of its ruling class (Gronow, 2002). Through taste and *habitus*, power works through mis-recognition whereby cultural privilege and power are seen as ascribed rather than

achieved, and thus natural and legitimate (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). In the field of consumption, tastes and the lifestyles they manifest are stratified through social differences and thus through social class and class tastes (Holt, 1998).

Habitus is a subjective (but not individual) system of internalised structures, and in being based on a subject's social status and previous experiences sets limits to behaviour and enables particular practices of perception and action (Bourdieu, 2010; see Purhonen et al., 2014). With regard to the dissertation at hand, matters relating to habitus are often evoked in *Helsingin Sanomat* texts where one's (an interviewee, a person-of-interest or the journalist themselves) 'place in society' is displayed in an indirect manner: through descriptions of a person's disposition – appearance, parlance, clothing, place of residence, overall manner of existence and so forth – the agents become depicted as representatives of the class positions they assumably inhabit, and thus the Bourdieuan field becomes visible through merely hinting at the signs of habitus 'known' to the reader. Because of its established status as a legitimate cultural practice, sustainable food practice is often worked into the very disposition of someone in *Helsingin Sanomat* content: sustainable food reads as a definitive sign or *proof* of capital, and people attached to it become branded as high-status.

In the context of much contemporary research on taste and distinction, and more specifically, in the context of this dissertation, the social class most under scrutiny is the middle class. According to Gornick and Jäntti (2013), there is no consensus over the definition of the middle class, even within disciplinary traditions. Sociologists typically invoke definitions that extend beyond income measures, often incorporating educational attainment and/or occupational characteristics, with the overarching aim of capturing power relations. Economists more often identify the middle class with respect to income distribution (Gornick and Jäntti, 2013).

The term *middle class* has been used in several different ways in social science, referring to, for example, professionals such as lawyers and upper-level white-collar workers in the financial sector (e.g., in the British tradition); to associate professionals or managers (or “even basic engineers”), to “wage earners who live comfortably” (in the US tradition); and as a “median class, rather than a middle one” (Chauvel, 2013: 115). Middle could be categorized as ‘average’ or – as in Marxist tradition – as between the power elite and ‘real people’. Often, instead of *a* middle class a plural (the middle classes) is used, as distinguishing between a lower middle class and an upper middle class apparently more clearly represents, at least for social scientists, the reality ‘in the middle’ (Chauvel, 2013; Gornick and Jäntti, 2013).

Alderson and Doran (2013) remark that after the economic downturn in 2008, the issue of “hollowing of the middle”, polarization and rising income inequality

have posed challenges to the study of the middle classes. More than the economic realities facing the middle classes, the idea of the middle class is somewhat mythical as it “far supersedes mere figures”: Shugart (2014: 263) writing in the context of the United States, notes that “the middle class has long been symbolic of the very nation, the operationalization of its ethos.” According to Shugart, there continues to be a profound disconnect between an understanding of a middle-class lifestyle and the socioeconomic realities of it.

This disparity is nothing new, however, courtesy to the recent (and the ongoing) economic crises, this disconnect has been dramatically exposed. And so, while the middle class might not be exactly disappearing, its mythology is seriously endangered. (Shugart, 2014.) The same can be said in the context of the Finnish middle class(es), to whom the feeling of insecurity and the fear of falling are realities of the 21st century middle-class ‘state of mind’, even if the economic or occupational realities might not be entirely as grim as they are perceived to be (Siltala, 2017). This endangerment has not resulted in a dismantling of middle-class ethos but in even more complex discursive strategies in marking difference and establishing distance from the ‘other’ classes. As Lawler (2005) states and as mentioned above, social identity lies in difference, and difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat.

Regardless of the economic stratification of our classed contemporary societies, the ‘endangerment of the middle class’, or middle-classness as ‘false consciousness’ (e.g., Lange and Meier, 2009), the middle class is a crucial and an applicable term in cultural analysis and media studies delving into lifestyles and distinctions made in and between cultural texts. The upper middle class is only a *relative* elite, and this elite status is insecure and anxious, as the threat of downward mobility is always present (Zimmerman, 2015). And, to preface the following section on subjectivity, middle-classness often aligns itself with the imperatives of neoliberal citizenship, and, as a consequence, the “liberal professional middle class” is “always already aspirational” (Zimmerman, 2015), i.e., highly motivated to succeed and to improve one’s social status (see Section 3.2).

The middle-class subject is thus a perfect candidate in the race towards the self as an ‘ideal’ subject. Examining middle class as a political entity gains access to the ideological meanings imprinted onto middle-class culture. Middle-class lifestyle – agency, temperance, respectability and good taste – appears in our culture simultaneously as ordinariness and as an aspirational criterion for a good life (Lahikainen and Mäkinen, 2012). Lahikainen and Mäkinen’s conceptualisation encapsulates neatly why I rely relatively heavily on middle class as a central concept:

the simultaneous normativity and aspirationality makes the field of middle-class culture full in evaluations of goodness and “life worth living” and the conceptualisation also illuminates why middle-classness presents culturally as dynamic, mobile and somewhat labile, constructing ‘others’ as immobile and reserving any sort of agency to itself (in characterisations made *by itself*, in media content formulated by middle-class cultural producers and intermediaries).

Classifying middle-classness as a sociological or empirical category or as a legitimate, normative lifestyle does not entirely capture the continuous distinctions made *within* the middle class. As middle-class existence is determined through difference, the exact location or ‘residence’ of this legitimacy shifts according to one’s perspective. If the ‘median’ middle class cultivates differences and distance in relation to the working class, the upper middle class endeavours to set oneself apart from the *ordinary* middle class through a display of even more distinct tastes and lifestyles (e.g., Cappellini and Parsons, 2012; Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Kaplan, 2013). The upper middle class is referred to in academic literature on cultural distinction as, for example, the new middle class (e.g., Giddens, 1981; Lange and Meier, 2009), the people possessing high cultural capital (e.g. Carfagna et al., 2014; Holt, 1998), the liberal professional middle class (Zimmerman, 2015) and in the context of food, as foodies (Johnston and Baumann, 2015), all of which are used to describe the group of people with the power to define legitimate consumption.

In the context of sustainable food for example, middle-classness almost always means an *omnivorous* approach to taste and consumption. The cultural evaluations that were previously based on stark boundaries between high-brow culture and popular culture have experienced a transition to cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Kern, 1996). In food culture, omnivorousness manifests itself as an emphasis on democratic ideals as well as through the transformed understandings of good taste. This ideology of democratic cultural consumption refers to a cultural backlash against snobbery, as a broadening of the old high-status cultural – in this context, culinary – repertoire. However, omnivorousness does not imply indifference to distinctions. Rather, its emergence suggests that the rules governing symbolic boundaries are changing, and *high-brow* and *low-brow* are being replaced by more complex hierarchies between legitimate and illegitimate (Peterson and Kern, 1996). Omnivores are not necessarily less status seeking, and status is sought out in newly selective ways. Social differentiation and class distinction resonate throughout the contemporary food scene, as new spaces are adjusted to middle-class ideals. (Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Leer, 2016.)

In the *Helsingin Sanomat* research material, legitimacy of omnivorous taste is central to how culinary capital is assigned or discursively accumulated. The apparent celebration of omnivorousness (highlighting the rustic-ness, simplicity or inexpensiveness of sustainable food practices, for example) muddies the waters of cultural distinction and, paradoxically, often offers *more* space for differentiation: classed distinction becomes obscured through continuous insistence on this contemporary culinary practice as being founded on the principle of *equality*; practice that is proclaimed to be far removed from exclusivity or status. The principles of equality and of sustainability bundle together in journalistic discourses of organic and local food, resulting in a curious dance of asserting distinctions, celebrating ‘green luxuries’ and insisting on the accessibility of these luxuries.

3.2 Governing the Subject

Ethical consumerism and wellness culture both operate as sites of what Michel Foucault (2007) called ‘the conduct of conduct’ or, governmentality. Governmentality describes the dispersion of governmental functions across a range of spaces, institutions, experts and authoritative discourses. Governmentality is not so much about efforts to control or dominate, but rather involves relations of power that aim to guide and shape the actions of others as well as the way we act upon ourselves. (See Zimmerman, 2015.) In Foucault’s (2007) conceptualisation then, power is not simply about repressing bodies, but is itself embodied. Below, I introduce a constellation of concepts related to governmentality inasmuch as they have bearing in my analyses on food media and the self. These concepts – governmentality, neoliberalism, technologies of the self, care of the self and therapy culture – are relevant especially in terms of Publications III and IV focusing on wellness food culture and its manifestations in digital media.

Foucault’s work illustrates a shift in the governance of the citizenry, from the exercise of power over death to power over life; from repressive, centralized power to productive forms of what he calls ‘biopower’ (Esmonde and Jette, 2020; Foucault, 2008). As Lauren Berlant quotes Foucault, sovereignty (the rule of a sovereign power) was not (and is not) the right to put people to death or to grant them life, nor the right to allow people to live or to leave them to die. It is the right to take life or let live. Sovereign agency signifies the power to *permit* any given life to endure, or not. Biopower, however, is the power to *make* something live or to let it die, the power to regularize life, the authority to *force* living not just to happen but to endure

and appear in particular ways. (Berlant, 2011: 97.) Biopower encourages the citizenry to take up dominant beliefs about the ‘right’ ways to live one’s life and to manage oneself (Esmonde and Jette, 2020).

The governmentality perspective allows for an exploration of the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed (Foucault, 1982), for example, how populations and individuals non-coercively come to take up certain behaviours (such as eating healthily), which are generally in the interest of the state without a law being in place that enforces such behaviour, and how they come to perceive such behaviour as being in their own interest (Schneider and Davis, 2010). Scholars have extended this conception of power as productive and embodied to the context of neoliberalism (Cairns and Johnston, 2015). Although neoliberalism is a doctrine of political economy, it is also a principle of civilisation that shapes the socio-cultural makeup of people (McGuigan, 2014). In Foucauldian analyses, neoliberalism marks the rise of the technologies of governing populations that construct economic logics of calculation and invite people to become self-governing (Clarke, 2008; Rose, 1989).

Neoliberalism, then, is a dominant political rationality that moves from the management of the state to the inner workings of the subject, normatively constructing individuals as entrepreneurial actors (Rottenberg, 2014). A neoliberal discourse brings about the neoliberal self. Neoliberal governance is not externally imposed onto bodies, but operates *through* the embodied actions of free subjects, often by exercising choice in the market (Cairns and Johnston, 2015). The neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008) is “an entrepreneur of himself”, concerned with maximizing themselves, their human capital, as a source of revenue (McFalls and Pandolfi, 2014). McGuigan paints a picture of a neoliberal self that, being subjected to the uncertainty and unpredictability of their surroundings, must fashion themselves as a competitive individual who is exceptionally self-reliant and rather indifferent to the fact that their predicament is shared with others, and, therefore, is incapable of organising as a group to do anything about it (McGuigan, 2014: 236). According to Clarke (2008), neoliberalism should be understood as the latest in a history of “depoliticization” of politics attempting to conceal political conflicts behind varieties of technical expertise.

Critical cultural analysis or discourse analysis is often concerned with how things are re-articulated under neoliberal influence, by taking existing discourses, projects, practices and imaginaries and reworking them within a neoliberal conception of, for example, development, progress and legitimacy (see Clarke, 2008). The concept of neoliberalism has received some criticism over the years (e.g., Clarke, 2008;

Rottenberg, 2014) for being overtly deterministic and for having been “stretched too far to be productive as a critical analytical tool” (Clarke, 2008: 135).

Nevertheless, some fifteen years after Clarke’s concerns neoliberalism and the neoliberal subject are still central concepts used in critical research. My aim has been to remain sensitive to the pitfalls of using neoliberalism as a catch-all concept of critical analysis. In the footsteps of Ong (2006) who argues that neoliberalism should be studied not as a ‘culture’ or a ‘structure’ but as mobile techniques of governing, I have utilized the concept as intertwined into the technologies of subjectivity in a range of different ways and with different levels of enthusiasm or compliance in terms of becoming the ‘ideal self-governing subject’. Neoliberalism, in my understanding, always co-exists with and is ingrained into similar but conceptually unidentical contemporary subjectivities. In my analyses, I have paid attention to *classed* and *gendered* subjectivities and how they ‘collide’ with neoliberal modes of subjectification and governmentality (see Section 3.3 on gendered subjectivity).

A widely used (Marxist) definition characterises neoliberalism as the political or ideological project of a dominant class seeking to change the balance of power in global capitalism and create new means of capital accumulation, and that under neoliberal economic structure, class inequalities have increased in most capitalist countries (see Harvey, 2005; Navarro, 2007). Neoliberalism restores and consolidates class power under the veil of individualism and freedom while expunging class struggles or differences from mainstream political vocabularies (see Tyler, 2013). The ideal entrepreneurial neoliberal subject preoccupied with self-governing and self-improvement is a *middle-class* subject (even if the profits of such tireless labour are often reaped elsewhere). As mentioned above, contemporary middle-class existence is characterized by a constant anxiety over downward mobility, a ‘fear of falling’, that has structured the middle class, its sensibilities and its lifestyle (Repo and Yrjölä, 2015; Zimmerman and Eddens, 2018). In many critical analyses of contemporary media culture, middle-class people are seen as the primary targets as well as the reproducers of neoliberal ethos (see Section 3.1).

Both ethical consumption and wellness culture are striking examples of how governance works in contemporary culture. According to Zimmerman (2015), ethical consumerism is inseparable from the neoliberal processes of privatisation and the defunding of public services, for it participates in articulating lifestyle and consumer culture through the dominant modes of agency associated with late modernity. My research on mediated ethical consumption shows that these neoliberal modes of individualism emphasising risk management and free choice (see

ibid.) are entangled with contemporary class identification, especially in terms of the middle class (see especially Publication II and Section 6 for further discussion).

Wellness culture in turn is deeply enmeshed with medicalization, healthism and the body as a disciplinary site, as wellness culture has internalised the understanding that individual responsibility for health is a primary moral duty of an ideal subject (see Cairns and Johnston, 2015; Crawford, 2006). Healthist self-discipline becomes inscribed into bodies, quite literally: As Lupton (1996) states, a dietary regimen not only demonstrates to others that one has a high level of self-control, but it is expected that a 'healthy' diet will result in a slimmer body, thus providing a more permanent sign of self-discipline to all those with whom one comes into contact. And, although "cloaked in the apparently neutral discourses of medicine, science and economics," the language of contemporary nutritional science as well draws upon moral sub-texts around bodily discipline and the importance of self-control. It is thus assumed that control over food is control over subjectivity, as by controlling what one eats, one can control what one is. (Lupton, 1996; see Tiusanen, 2021.) And, in a similar fashion with ethical consumerism and subjectivities tied to it, the healthist construction of self (as separated from the unhealthy other) is adopted by the middle class, who develop a neoliberal ethic based on autonomous individualism, self-control, self-determination and self-responsibility (Crawford, 1994).

Governmentality, then, is a contract between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self (Foucault, 1988). What are the technologies of the domination of the self, the procedures of self-mastery and self-knowledge suggested or prescribed to individuals in order for them to determine their identity, maintain it or transform it, and how is this done in this current moment in society (Foucault, 1988)? Foucault introduces four major types of technologies (of production, of sign systems, of power and of the self) through which knowledge about ourselves and our civilization is produced, and of these, the *technologies of the self* are the most pertinent in terms of neoliberal governance and contemporary subjectivity. In Foucault's characterisations, technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." (Foucault, 1988: 18.)

According to Rodrigo Hernandez-Ramirez (2017: 53) people today exercise power and control over themselves to develop more attractive bodies, to follow healthier lifestyles, to live ethically and to be more productive, and dietary and culinary movements, exercise routines, productivity methods, mindfulness and

meditation all fit within Foucault's original concept. Hernandez-Ramirez continues that, we may even argue that the current tendency of self-actualisation is returning to the classical principle of 'taking care of one self', even if the specific reasons why humans desire to transform themselves, along with the availability of the tools designed to achieve it have changed drastically.

In the quote above, Hernandez-Ramirez points to another one of Foucault's (1986) influential (if arguably not one of the most famous ones) concepts, the *care of the self* which I have worked with especially in lieu with the technologies of the self, in Publication III. Foucault employs the concept in connection with 'relations of oneself to oneself': the care of the self could be categorized as a dimension of self-governing that is preoccupied with the subject looking inward, acting according to individual ethics. Care of the self refers to an active, lifelong process of attending to and 'returning' to oneself, cultivating oneself, and ultimately bettering oneself through this rigorous self-surveillance (Foucault, 1986). Foucault pinpoints the concept and the practices and ideals tied to it to the Hellenistic culture where the care of the self was "a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence" (Foucault, 1986: 47). Care of the self was thus a way of living, involving several practices and procedures that were developed, perfected and taught, and so 'returning to oneself' was not a solitary practice but a social one that even took institutional forms (Foucault, 1986).

Additionally, taking care of oneself is "not a rest cure" but hard work, as "there is the care of the body to consider, health regimens, physical exercises without overexertion" and "the carefully measured satisfaction of needs" (Foucault, 1986: 51). In the neoliberal era, self-governing and capability to care for oneself can be considered as being once again universal duties (see Hamann, 2009), and many of the aspects of care of oneself sound incredibly familiar especially in the context of wellness culture. In fact, the Hellenistic culture Foucault describes has a lot in common with healthist and medicalised modes of subjectivity as well as with contemporary 'therapy culture' analysed by scholars (e.g., Illouz, 2008; Rose, 1989). Firstly, the cultivation of the self seems to have had increased medical involvement that was expressed through an intense attention to the body, and secondly, caring for oneself demanded the acceptance and acknowledgement that one is always "in a state of need", needing "to receive medication and assistance", and "ill or threatened by illness" (Foucault, 1986: 57). Thus, medicine was not conceived simply as a technique of intervention to rely on in cases of illness: medicine was "supposed to define, in the form of a corpus of knowledge and rules, a way of living, a reflective

mode of relation to oneself, to one's body, to food, to wakefulness and sleep, to the various activities, and to the environment” (Foucault, 1986: 100).

Hence, current scholarly attention towards “psy discourses” that “make the practice of self-knowledge a simultaneously epistemological and moral act” (Illouz, 2008: 3) is not entirely new as even the Greeks positioned the subject as a fragile entity in relation to its surroundings. However, the contemporary neoliberal therapy culture considers not only the body as ill or threatened by illness, but also the mind – one’s identity, personality, emotions and thoughts – that is in need of constant betterment, be it overall performance-driven “cultivation” (through mindfulness techniques, for example) or, more often than not, a need for treatment, curing something that is always lacking and unwell. According to Illouz (2008: 3) “psy discourse” is a “political technology of the self”, an instrument used and developed in the general framework of the political rationality of the state, and its aim of “emancipating the self” is what makes the individual manageable and disciplined. Illouz continues that, where some sociologists view the therapeutic discourse as driving a wedge between the self and the society, Foucault suggests, on the contrary, that through therapy the self is made to work seamlessly for and within a system of power. (Illouz, 2008; see also Salmenniemi et al., 2019.)

3.3 The Feminine and Feminist Subject

It is vital to note that the modes of self-government are far from unisex. Especially in connection with wellness – which is most often a feminine pursuit (e.g., O’Neill, 2020) – it is important to keep in mind that the neoliberal ‘business’ of being an individual is highly gendered: girls and women are positioned as the particular ‘beneficiaries’ of the neoliberal culture of enterprise and are also expected to be the perfect embodiments of its values and ideals (Franssen, 2020; Gill, 2007; Rottenberg, 2014; Rutherford, 2018; Scharff, 2016).

Even though feminist scholars somewhat disagree about the usefulness of Michel Foucault’s work for feminist theory and practice (see McLaren, 2002), Foucauldian perspectives on the technologies of selfhood have been employed extensively in feminist studies (e.g., Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990; McRobbie, 2009). Contemporary modes of self-governing have been widely analysed from gendered viewpoints, and especially, the negotiations between neoliberal and feminist ideas have been an influential field in feminist scholarly work (e.g., Banet-Weiser et al., 2020). Postfeminism (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009), neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg, 2014;

2017) and popular feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2018) are interrelated concepts used in investigating the ways in which current notions of femininity and feminism incorporate, revise and possibly attack (see Gill, 2007) the feminist ideas of previous decades. I have employed all of these concepts (to varying degrees) in my analyses on digital wellness subjectivity, as the three conceptualisations offer divergent aspects on contemporary gendered subjectivity.

Postfeminism is often described as a “sensibility” that emphasizes choice, “being oneself” and “pleasing oneself” as central prerogatives to an active, self-reinventing subject (Gill, 2007). According to feminist scholar Rosalind Gill (2007: 149), some relatively stable features that constitute postfeminist discourse are “the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference.” Additionally, these themes are structured by stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability as well as gender (Gill, 2007).

Catherine Rottenberg’s concept of neoliberal feminism emphasizes neoliberalism’s entanglement with feminism. Neoliberal feminism is neoliberal because it “offers no critique – immanent or otherwise – of neoliberalism”, and because it conjures a neoliberal feminist subject that is “mobilized to convert continued gender inequality from a structural problem into an individual affair” (Rottenberg, 2014: 419, 420). Sarah Banet-Weiser’s (2018) concept of popular feminism in turn refers to practices related to women’s rights accessible to a broad public (e.g., commodities and hashtag activism addressing self-confidence and body positivity, for example) that are highly visible on social media platforms. Popular feminism is, according to Banet-Weiser, a ‘happy’ feminism, as “seeing and hearing a safely affirmative feminism in spectacularly visible ways often eclipses a feminist critique of structure, as well as obscuring the labour involved in producing oneself according to the parameters of popular feminism” (Banet-Weiser, 2018: 4).

As Gill argues in connection with postfeminism, what marks a culture defined by contemporary neoliberal feminist sensibilities as different from gendered surveillance and control of previous decades is the dramatically increased intensity of *self*-surveillance, the extensiveness of surveillance over entirely new spheres of life and intimate conduct, and the focus upon the psychological: the requirement to transform oneself and remodel one’s interior life (2007: 155). Theorizations on

contemporary feminisms are thus interested in gendered manifestations of contemporary governmentality and the “psychological turn” (e.g., Gill and Orgad, 2018) introduced in the previous section.

Postfeminist sensibilities and their *embodied* consequences become especially magnified in wellness contexts. For women especially, internalising body norms and governing the body take place in everyday settings and everyday life (Harjunen, 2016). According to Sandra Bartky (1997), the disciplinary power and self-surveillance of our society operate to control women in particular, as the disciplinary techniques (especially – but not limited to – dieting and controlling one’s hunger and weight) through which the ‘docile bodies’ of women are constructed are exhaustive in regulating the body’s size, appetite, posture and general comportment in space.

Bringing together feminist scholarship with contemporary sociological research, Bourdieuan modes of capital have, in some studies, been accompanied with an additional concept of aesthetic or physical capital (Anderson et al., 2010; Smith Maguire, 2008) that can be seen as having special bearing in terms of gendered configurations of distinction, status and subjectivity. The feminine ‘aesthetic entrepreneur’ is faced with a requirement to amass aesthetic capital (for example, a lean figure and a youthful-looking face), even though utilising this capital for economic or social exchange is frowned upon (see Sarpila et al., 2020). The entrepreneur of wellness culture, who has seemingly replaced becoming more beautiful or attractive with becoming more fit, healthy and happy, might be viewed as an actor who has found a way to bypass this paradox of feminine existence, by gaining agency and capital that is not considered as vain and trivial by the society. A more pessimistic reading of gendered wellness discourse might be that the work that goes into accumulation of aesthetic or bodily capital is thoroughly obscured (hidden behind a love of vegetables for example, see Publication III), and wellness-themed governing only blurs the linkage between gendered bodily discipline and acceptable subjectivity.

It is also worth mentioning that even though feminist analyses on embodied cultural discipline owe much to the theorisations of Michel Foucault, Foucault has been criticised for treating ‘the body’ as “if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life” and for being blind to disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is extraordinarily feminine (Bartky, 1997: 95). Finally, in addition to the gendered nature of self-discipline and healthism, healthist bodily governance has an intrinsic racial dimension as well, as

the white (middle-class) body is considered to represent the “normal” body that other bodies are compared with (Harjunen, 2016).

From the perspective of a “feminist” subject, contemporary forms of feminine cultural subjectivity introduced above have an ambivalent stance towards traditional feminist issues and structural gender inequality. According to Gill (2007: 161) it would be entirely false to suggest that the media has somehow become feminist: instead, the media offer contradictory, but nevertheless patterned, constructions of feminism, and, as is often the case in neoliberal cultural formations, these gendered, semi-feminist discourses work in part to incorporate or naturalise aspects of feminism as well as to commodify feminism via the figure of the woman as the empowered consumer (Tasker and Negra, 2007). As Rottenberg (2014: 420) remarks, the answer to why neoliberalism has spawned a *feminist* – rather than simply a female subject – *at all* has to do with this naturalisation where the neoliberal, popular forms of feminism help to render feminism palatable and legitimate (Rottenberg in Banet-Weiser et al., 2020: 8) and where “seeing or purchasing feminism” becomes equivalent to working towards changing unequal societal structures (Banet-Weiser, 2018: 4).

My perspectives on wellness food content in digital media put significant emphasis on the femininity of the subject that is constructed amidst those spaces. In my interpretation, the subject of wellness is not a subject that ‘just happens to be female’, but gender is at the core of how those subjectivities become discursively formed. This is why I work with the concepts of postfeminism, neoliberal feminism and popular feminism (as well as the notion of ‘domestic femininity’ for example) in deciphering what ways of being and feeling become formed as legitimate in wellness media texts. Moreover, as many meanings connected with food – in terms of care work, preparing food, shopping, feeding the family, dieting and taking care of one’s figure – are ingrained into femininity rather than into masculinity, gender can be considered as being inseparable from food-related practices and meanings.

3.4 Bourdieu, Foucault and Power

As I have iterated in the pages above, the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault are central to the analyses of this dissertation. Even if my work does not necessarily *combine* Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s theories, I employ them both in analysing the relations of media texts, cultural discourse, difference and the subject. For this reason, in what follows, I (rather briefly) address how the works of Bourdieu

and Foucault emphasise different aspects of our reality that, taken both into account (instead of considering only one or the other), can deepen understandings and analyses of said reality, and can be used side by side in analysing cultural formations that deal with *both* distinction and governmentality.

Despite major differences in their approaches to society, culture and theory, Bourdieu and Foucault have important similarities in their ideas about, especially, power and the subject. The underlying difference in style in Bourdieu and in Foucault can partly be, in my understanding, accounted to the fact that Bourdieu was a sociologist and Foucault a poststructuralist philosopher. For example, in the writings of Foucault, research is not so much the application of a previously established frame of reference onto a field of investigation, but rather a continual transformation of the concepts and their associated relationships: instead of applying patterns to their fields, Foucault instead produces new concepts. Contrasted with Foucault's transformations is Bourdieu's controlled transposition of his concepts, applying a conceptual framework to various subjects or fields with only minor variations. However, what Bourdieu and Foucault had in common was a desire to transcend established academic boundaries. (Callewaert, 2006; Laval, 2017.)

Critical social and cultural research taking after Foucault or Bourdieu engage, at least in some respect, with power and its definitions. For both scholars, power and agency are related: for Bourdieu, power is culturally and symbolically created and constantly re-legitimised through the interplay between agency and structure in habitus and through the ongoing struggle between social agents and the social field. For Foucault, power is never only repressive but also productive, as biopower is generative of ways of being and behaving. In terms of power, the major difference between Foucault and Bourdieu is (and, that can be said about their respective perspectives on most things under study really) whether power is located anywhere at all: for Foucault, power has no central focus as it is inscribed into institutions, processes, practices and people, and as such, it is not really exercised by particular agents or institutions. In contrast, for Bourdieu, power is linked to resources, to forms of capital, and those with more resources are likely to exercise power over those with less. (Akram et al., 2015.)

Finally, in terms of crucial similarities between the two scholars, Bourdieu and Foucault share an understanding that agents' preferences are shaped by processes of which they are not necessarily aware. Such an approach does not undermine the autonomy or agency of the subject, as it rather acknowledges the subtle (but crucial) ways in which power operates to affect individuals. For both Bourdieu and Foucault, power cannot be reduced to the actions of particular agents, as it is diffused

throughout society and operates through both institutions and individual bodies. Thus, the scholars are concerned with the question of how does a social system survive without depending upon explicit forms of repression or physical coercion to maintain order, and as such, their work is centred on uncovering the obscured nature of power. (Akram et al., 2015.)

Utilizing the works of Foucault and Bourdieu differs in terms of the object under study and thus the central theoretical concepts applied to that field of study. For the most part, I have employed Bourdieu's work on distinction and capital in the first two research articles examining class and distinction, and Foucault's theories on subjectivity and governmentality in the last two papers concentrating on the (feminist) subject of wellness. My analyses in no way form any kind of synthesis of Bourdieu's and Foucault's work but, engaging with both scholars somewhat side by side has, in my opinion, granted me a perspective that takes into account both the actual, tangible and mental resources (the unequal distribution of which directly affects the distribution of capital in a society) *and* the (discursive) formations of knowledge that become inscribed into bodies in investigating how normalcy and legitimacy form in mediated contexts.

In conclusion, it could perhaps be suggested that in general, Foucault's work has provided me with realisations and perspectives with the help of which I have asked *questions* from the field of study. Foucault's conceptualisations do not really offer answers in terms of what people, social classes or governments "do, what is put into action, what materializes in the real world" and, even in terms of biopower or governmentality, he is not "describing and explaining social history, but the history of knowledge" (Callewaert, 2006: 91). Contrarily then, Bourdieu's relatively stable and detailed account of social fields and their agents has helped in *answering* those questions asked, as the strength of Bourdieu's work lies in its capacity to grasp the importance of social position in understanding socio-cultural meaning-making (see Masquelier, 2019). Next, I will turn to the methodologies of asking those questions and to the field(s) of this inquiry.

4 METHODS

In this section, I go over the data-related and methodological aspects of my research. First, I briefly introduce journalism, blogs and social media as sites of data gathering, and how I have approached those fields as material for my analyses. Second, I reflect on critical discourse analysis and discourse studies, where all four of my analyses situate methodologically. Third, I examine the research ethics related to my research, particularly in terms of the ethics of studying digital media content.

4.1 Journalism, Blogs and Instagram

The four analyses (and thus four publications) are founded on three different sources: the first two analyses on *Helsingin Sanomat* content on organic and local food, the third on wellness food blogs, and the fourth on Instagram's #womenswellness food content. Publications I and II are based on a data set that consists of 414 *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper items, the research material for Publication III comprises 170 blog texts, and Publication IV has a data set including 300 Instagram posts. As a whole, the analyses of this dissertation are based on the examination of 884 texts.

The process of choosing and gathering material for analysis has not been – as is probably often the case with theses – a straight-forward path, and, after (several) changes made in the original research plan, the specific spheres for data gathering and the materials themselves has been switched or modified as well. The first data set of 414 *Helsingin Sanomat* news items has been the only material that has remained as practically unchanged during the dissertation process. The reason for this is that I had gathered a substantial part of *Helsingin Sanomat* data before starting as a doctoral student: I had compiled the initial part of the material (news items from 2011 to 2013) for my graduate thesis analysis in 2013–2015 (Ruohonen, 2016). The rest (2016–2017 news content) were collected in May 2017. Thus, the data set for the first and second analyses contains 414 journalistic items that mention organic or local food.

Helsingin Sanomat was chosen to be examined for reasons related to reach and to the assumed demographic of the readership: *Helsingin Sanomat* is, firstly, the biggest daily newspaper in Finland and thus an institution that reaches a significant number of people every day; secondly, *Helsingin Sanomat* is an urban newspaper and, as such, could be assumed to have a consumer-centred (rather than a producer- or farmer-centred) view on organic agriculture and locally grown produce (see Publications I and II for more details). “Organic” and “local” were chosen as keywords on the basis of their shared discursive dimension located in current culinary trends of sustainable, ecological or “green” consumption (see Section 2.3).

In contemplating and planning for the third analysis of my dissertation, I wanted to shift my focus from ethical consumption towards the consumption of healthy food, specifically towards a particular kind of *holistic* health culture that seemed to me to be the other (along with sustainability) major mainstream current in contemporary food-related culture that has become discursively entrenched in public discussion (as well as, most likely, in private subjectification) on nutrition and lifestyle (see Section 1). However, health and nutrition are covered in different ways in different media outlets (see Mäki-Kuutti, 2020), and mainstream media (for example, *Helsingin Sanomat* in a Finnish context) are not necessarily the ones where emerging cultural currents are born in. For this reason, I decided to turn to digital media in investigating wellness culture that originates in the Web 2.0 content (blogs, social media, photo sharing platforms). Through wellness analysis, I also wanted to broaden my scope from Finnish media content to digital media content that reaches a more transnational audience.

The blogosphere of the World Wide Web is very fragmented, and separate blogs connect with one another mostly through mutual recommendations and through assessing which bloggers a singular blogger ‘follows’. Hence, I initiated the data gathering at a single key blog site (or digital media personality/brand) that functioned as ‘ground zero’, and blogs relevant to thorough analysis were identified by selecting an ‘entry point’ via which the rest of the data were then chosen and gathered for analysis (see Jäntti et al., 2018). As a result, the data gathering process resulted in three Finnish wellness food blogs to be analysed, and the final data set comprised of 170 (English-language) texts extracted from these blogs (more information about the data gathering process and on the individual blogs, see Publication III). All three bloggers can be considered as popular, and thus as having influence on the field of wellness blogging, in Finland and more globally. And on that note, regionality or nationality have relatively little significance in wellness content, as the importance of

national cuisines, heritage or other characteristics are often downplayed in a sub-culture that appears as truly *global* and homogeneous in its content and aesthetics.

Likewise, the final research article, Publication IV, delves into transnational wellness content, although from a different theoretical perspective and based on different research material. In a similar fashion with the blog analysis, I concentrated on ‘new media’ while outlining the final analysis. To start with, I was interested in a cultural phenomenon of regarding food as healing, as curing illnesses (see Section 3.2 on ‘care of the self’), as I had come across digital media content where feminine power, the female body and feminism become enmeshed with the healing properties of foodstuffs.

I chose Instagram as the starting point for data gathering, as Instagram is heavily populated both by women and by wellness-related lifestyle content. The hashtag *womenswellness* was chosen on the grounds that it brought together the aforementioned themes. The intimate public of #womenswellness weaves these aspects together in a manner typical for Instagram: through advertising and selling commodities and services while heavily utilizing realness and emotional connectivity. The final dataset included 300 publicly available Instagram posts obtained by tracking the hashtag *womenswellness* via Instagram’s Most Recent feature that exhibits all posts using #womenswellness in a reverse chronological order.

As can be gathered from the paragraphs above, the research material for this dissertation consists of two differing cultural fields, that are mainly united in being about contemporary mediated, food-related culture. I have endeavoured to work *on the terms of* the (sub-)culture under study: instead of gathering all data from, for example, *Helsingin Sanomat* (as it would certainly have been possible to study healthist food culture from a journalistic angle as well) I have aspired to analyse the different formations of food culture in their “natural habitat” which, in my opinion, for gastronomic culture seems to be (lifestyle) journalism and for wellness culture digital and social media. What brings these different data sets ‘together’ are the methodological choices made in all four analyses. Next, I will reflect on the foundations of and on my own usage of critical discourse analysis, which is the primary methodological framework utilised here.

4.2 Discourse Studies

In studying contemporary culture, I maintain a poststructuralist perspective that investigates the socially constructed nature of knowledges, emphasises the centrality

of language in meaning-making and critically examines the socio-cultural contexts in which meanings are created and reproduced (see Williams, 2014). And, perhaps even more importantly, a poststructuralist viewpoint gives significant importance to the *margins* of anything under study, as the “limits of knowledge play an unavoidable role at its core” (Williams, 2014: 1), and any settled form of knowledge is made by its limits and cannot be defined independently of them.

Poststructuralist analyses work through tracing the effects of a limit that is defined as *difference* (Williams, 2014). Power becomes especially visible near these limits, margins and differences, and, while it is important to be aware of the power relations inherent in material restrictions relating to food production and consumption, power should not be considered solely a repressive force, but as a property that permeates all dimensions of social life, and therefore cannot be ‘removed’. (Lupton, 1996; see also Section 3.4.) In analysing power, distinction and subjectivity, I have looked at the cultural texts before me primarily from the viewpoint of *discourse*.

As suggested above, all analyses of my dissertation are founded on critical discourse studies as a research method and as a general approach to analytical interpretation. My dissertation is not primarily a methodologically explorative enterprise in this sense: rather, the focus of my work has been on how contemporary food-related phenomena are possible to examine with the aid of different theoretical concepts. The method of critical discourse analysis has served both as the designator of my epistemological perspective and as a toolkit of practical analytical methods, via which the relationships between phenomena and concepts have been scrutinised. The importance of critical discourse analysis in terms of my perspectives and results should not be underestimated: critical discourse analysis has had a profound impact on my viewpoint as a researcher.

Discourse-analytical thought is founded upon constructionist understanding of language use as part of ‘reality’ and of construction of that reality (Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen, 2016). According to Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen, discourse analysis is the study of language use and of other activities of meaning-making that examines how our social reality is produced in varying situations of social practice. Discourse analysis is not interested in how language might *reflect* reality, but how reality is produced through language use and *in language*, as we cannot (per constructionist understanding) experience reality as “pure” but always as bent to convey meaning according to some viewpoint or other (Jokinen, 2016). Additionally, in discourse analysis, the relationship between the researcher and their subject is understood as

constructivist: in describing the social reality through analysis, the researcher also actively takes part in constructing that reality (Jokinen, 2016).

As is the case in much of my work on this dissertation, attending to discourse as a methodological concept and applying critical discourse analysis owes much to Michel Foucault, who is regarded as the originator of discourse theory and who can be thought of as a pioneer of discourse analysis (even if he himself did not “use” discourse analysis as such). Foucault proposed that the variations in language are *ordered*, and as such they have an effect on our social reality. Discourses are those regulated, culturally shared ways of meaning-making, that alter the things (objects, events, subjects) they are imposed upon. From a Foucauldian perspective, the concept of ‘discourse’ refers to a shared understanding of reality in each time period or each situation. (Foucault, 1981; Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009.) The rules of discursive practice dictate *what* can be thought (of) and in what ways those thoughts can be formulated (Alhanen, 2007: 70). Instead of contemplating the essence of a subject, attention is directed to events, to (language put to) action and to practice, that define the subject (Alhanen, 2007; Foucault, 1981, 2002). Foucault’s *discursive formulation* is a group of statements that has been compiled according to some sort of regularity (and thus ‘rules of formation’) amidst discursive practices, and discourse is a group of statements inasmuch as they reside in said discursive formulation (Foucault, 2002).

And, as referred to above, discourse analysis as a method is not straight-forwardly founded on Foucault’s ‘model’ (see e.g., Foucault, 2002: 35), since Foucault’s visions of the rules of discursive formation are somewhat ambiguous, and in any case, all discourse analysis should not be founded upon deploying these rules incessantly as methodological devices. Foucault did not intend on formulating a general theory of discourse analysis, but wanted to show instead on which level the rules formulating discursive practices can be analysed. (Alhanen, 2007: 62.) Foucault’s understanding of discourse was established as a counterforce for theorisations that relied on the “infinite continuity of discourse” (2002: 28): the purpose of his discourse theory was to show that the universally fixed structures were, all along, the results of *construction*. From a more general perspective, ‘discourse’ is a polysemic and dynamic concept that can be used to denote different things in different contexts. In discourse analysis, discourse is often defined as a vernacular assemblage that is greater than a singular sentence, in their context (Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009).

My own appreciation of discourse studies (Foucauldian or otherwise) is multifaceted. For one, discourse analysis is not interested in deciphering the ‘hidden agendas’ of subjects or the mystical, veiled origins of phenomena by interpreting

what was done, said or written (see Alhanen, 2007: 56). Instead, discourse studies endeavour to determine what statements seem to form particular discourses, what material formulates them, and how is it that a particular statement appeared in this discourse rather than in another (Foucault, 2002: 30). The purpose of analysis is to unveil discourses of ‘knowledge’ as collective practices that regulate how (and what) statements can be formulated (Alhanen, 2007: 61). Critical discourse analysis seeks to approach texts in an open manner, by avoiding predetermined judgements about the current zeitgeist they perfectly fit into or about a historic continuum they determinately manifest. This type of methodological or epistemological approach is not necessarily unchallenging, but it encourages the researcher to constantly re-evaluate both their pre-judgements about the field under study and the perceptions already formed during the course of an investigation. I have found this to be sensible to keep in mind, especially in working with almost monolithic concepts laden with moral (and other) judgements, such as ‘middle class’, ‘feminism’ or ‘neoliberalism’.

On the other hand, the openness of discourse analysis as a methodological tool has attracted me to it: discourse analysis is not a strict research method that should be ‘applied’ to data in a predetermined manner to extract self-explanatory results. Instead, discourse analysis is defined as a loose theoretical frame of reference that permits employing varying analytical focuses and wandering on uncharted methodological avenues (see Jokinen et al., 2016). Thus, in addition to Foucauldian foundations of discourse theory, I have utilised discourse-analytical methodological ‘tool boxes’ as formulated in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, or, presently, Critical Discourse Studies, CDS) based on the works of Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk (e.g., van Dijk, 2015; Wodak, 2002; Wodak and Meyer, 2015).

Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk often emphasise how critical discourse studies should be understood as an analytical practice or as a critical perspective towards analysis and not so much as a definite research method (e.g., van Dijk, 2015; Wodak and Meyer, 2015). Importantly, a critical approach to discourse presupposes an ethics: critical discourse analysis is specifically interested in the critical analysis of discursive power abuse or domination (van Dijk, 2015) and it examines the naturalised and uncontested ‘truths’ of a given society, and how inequality is formed and justified through language and discourse (Jokinen and Juhila, 2016; Wodak, 2002). When analysing the relationships between power and discourse, power is understood (in a Foucauldian manner, see Section 3.4) as productive and as entangled with social practice (Jokinen and Juhila, 2016). Critical discourse analysis presumes that cultural power is distributed and exercised through discourse (Machin and Mayr, 2012), and it pays attention to the ideological consequences of discursive

practice and critiques practices that uphold or legitimate pre-existing relationships of dominance and control (Jokinen and Juhila, 2016).

Discourse analysis befits the analysis of media texts (Fairclough, 1999; Valtonen, 1998), since in discourse studies, textual material is seen as relevant in terms of analysis *in itself*, rather than merely as a form of depiction of a research object the text ‘describes’. I have utilised discourse studies’ practices in varying ways, depending on theoretical viewpoints chosen in each instance. In addition to discourse, I have used a few concepts as methodological ‘tools’ in my analyses, especially in my research on wellness subjectivity. Whereas the articles on organic and local food employ critical discourse analysis’ methodological tools more ‘as such’ (even though rooted in the data and its specificities), in the last two analyses I have used the concepts of narrative, technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988) and feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983) as analytical devices that, in my opinion, in those instances – rather than belonging solely to a given theoretical framework – have lent more depth to the analyses.

However, all four analyses are data-driven in that analytical categories have been produced through processing the research material itself (rather than being pre-determined, see Sections 5.1 to 5.4). This data-driven practice has required a hermeneutic approach to analysis in that conclusions have been gradually drawn via a circular motion, working between textual close reading and developing methodological categories: by going back and forward multiple times, in order to develop adequate knowledge of a given data (and, thus, to be able to ask the relevant questions from that data) and to gain a relatively ‘compact’ as well as detailed description of material under study. This kind of ‘probing’ manner of investigation has to do with the following section as well, since, especially, venturing into the analysis of digital media brings about ethical questions to which ready-made solutions do not necessarily exist.

4.3 Research Ethics

In this dissertation, considering research ethics has been especially pertinent in terms of the analyses on wellness culture and digital media (compared with the rather established practice of analysing mainstream journalistic materials). In what follows, I will take a look at ethical questions that have bearing on the analyses and configurations of Publications III and IV. The existing ethical guidelines for blog or social media research are ambiguous, contradictory, continuously changing and often

depend greatly on the interpreter or their institution or discipline (see Sloan and Quan-Haase, 2016). Ethical research and data management thus require situational deliberation, weighing possible risks and paying attention to the principles of ethical research practice.

In terms of research materials – wellness food blogs and Instagram’s #womenswellness content – I have paid attention to ethical questions during study design, data collection, analysis and publication. As there is no clear ethical framework for social media research (and many of the contributions that *do* exist are often conflicting, see Townsend and Wallace, 2016), I have approached ethics by relying on a guide to social media research ethics by the University of Aberdeen (Townsend and Wallace, 2016), and on internet research guidelines by AoIR (Association of Internet Research, Franzke et al., 2020) and the Norwegian NESH (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 2019). In terms of Finnish sources, I have engaged with TENK’s (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity) ethical principles of research with human participants (2019) and the material provided by vastullinentiede.fi (“responsible research”) web page on ethical handling of social media data.

In general, analysing digital media is linked to questions of informed consent, privacy, legal questions such as terms of service, and “the blurring boundaries of individuals, their data, and text” (Rantasila, 2020). With regard to digital media, issues relating to research material and the field under investigation relate particularly to informed consent (or informing participants) and to protecting subjects’ right to privacy (i.e., the reasonable expectation of privacy). Additionally, compiling research data from blogs and social media platforms becomes also a question of collecting personal data. In terms of research, the basis for processing personal data and for data gathering is either consent or public interest (Responsible research, 2019).

Compiling all Internet research under a singular guideline would be problematic since Internet data is produced and accumulated – even in the field of ‘blogs’ or ‘photo-sharing platforms’ – by very different entities with very different motives. For example, the possible vulnerability of participants is emphasised in ethical considerations even when the gathered data is publicly available: considering content published on sites such as, for example, communities built around health-related issues or blogs administered by children as public would not adequately take into account the vulnerability, the nature of content shared or the young age of possible study subjects in such groups of social media users, as examining such data often requires careful anonymisation and/or acquiring informed consent from subjects.

From an ethical perspective, an extensive assessment is often needed: one that considers the presumed intent of the platform user in terms of the publicity or privacy and the ‘objective’ of the generated and published data. Has the platform user unequivocally intended this content as public (Responsible research, 2019)? In addition to ascertaining the level of publicity of each material, the following aspects can be considered: can the user reasonably expect to be observed by strangers (i.e., ‘anybody’ might read their posts)? Are the research participants vulnerable (children or vulnerable adults)? Is the subject matter sensitive and can publishing it bring harm to the subjects (see Townsend and Wallace, 2016)?

The primary aspect that has guided my ethical considerations in terms of publicity (and thus in terms of acquiring consent) is the perceivable purposes for these digital media users (bloggers and Instagram posters) to publish content in digital media. In both wellness food blog texts and in #womenswellness posts, the objective is arguably to reach Internet users that might become possible readers, followers and consumers of published content. Presumably both bloggers and Instagram posters aim at widening their readership (see NESH, 2019; Townsend and Wallace, 2016) and thus accumulating visibility to obtain social or monetary gain through adverts, commercial collaborations and, in some cases, through promoting their own products.

Thus, in terms of ethical considerations, the arguably commercial nature of the content pursuing ‘visibility’ (through, for example in Instagram, using multiple hashtags that render their posts searchable and that might steer traffic to the user in question [Laestadius, 2017], in addition to commercial giveaways and requests to ‘tag’ the user on content produced by followers) analysed here, I have considered the reasonable expectation of privacy as well as the sensitivity of the material published to be low.

Especially in terms of the commercial wellness food blogs analysed in Publication III, I have considered the bloggers as influencers (per generating content perceivably being their primary vocation and source of income) and thus I have decided to consider them as public personas and mentioned them by name/brand name in the article. I deemed it necessary to identify the bloggers (even though their names/brand names are not used in the title or abstract of the article nor repetitively in the analysis itself) instead of pseudonymising them even though it would have been simple to do so: pseudonymising would have rendered the data collection process obscure, and questions of copyright could have become an issue in analysing material produced by such a small and publicly known group of people. In terms of the #womenswellness content quoted in Publication IV, as a way of ensuring ethical

procedure, excerpts from posts have been pseudonymized, and screenshots containing visual material have been altered to conceal identifiers in an effort to lessen the likelihood of used material being traced back to a specific account (Tiusanen, 2022). The comment sections of individual #womenswellness posts have only been considered as background material for the final analysis, and data regarding individual comments or commenters are not included in the analysis or the research article itself.

Finally, I have endeavoured to ensure the ethicality of my research also during data collection, since research ethics is tied into the methodology and analyses of the research (franzke et al., 2020; Rantasila, 2020). In both digital media studies, I have collected the data manually from their original sources (compared with automatic data mining for example) which, as Laestadius (2017) states, enhances the researchers understanding of the intent of the posts and the ways in which (other) users experience exposure to Instagram content, as well as provides the researcher with an opportunity to assess the relevance of each post to their study in question and thus minimize the collection (and storage) of irrelevant data.

For the reasons relating to commerciality and visibility stated above, I have deemed acquiring consent unnecessary. I have thus based the data collection and the processing of personal data as being of public interest, per European Union's GDPR (Data Protection and Regulation) law. The Data Management Plan (see Finnish Social Science Data Archive) pertaining to the research conducted contains three plans (per the amount of separate data sets of this dissertation) and is stored in my personal archives.

5 RESEARCH ARTICLES

Next, I introduce the research articles by providing summaries on them, in the order of their publication (and analysis). The articles that comprise this dissertation are published in two languages: the first two in Finnish and the remaining two in English. I have generated informal translations for the Finnish-language article titles below. All four publications should be read as independent pieces, each approaching the field of mediated food culture with a distinct objective and unique research questions. However, it is possible to regard Publications I and II as a ‘couple’ since they originate from the same data sample and taken together, they have a strong cumulative aspect to their findings. Publications III and IV could be considered as interconnected rather than coupled, as they examine a particular cultural phenomenon through somewhat resemblant data sets and with distinct research questions.

5.1 Publication I

The article titled *Ihannoitu ja henkiin herätetty menneisyys: Autenttisuus ja nostalgia sanomalehden luomu- ja läbiruokateksteissä* (“The idealised and resurrected past: Authenticity and nostalgia in journalistic texts on organic and local food”) was the first article of this dissertation to be written and published (*Media ja viestintä*, “Media and Communication”, 2018). The study approaches meanings connected with organic and local food in *Helsingin Sanomat* through examining cultural legitimation: how is food defined discursively as distinctive and as worthy of cultural prestige? The analysis centres on discourses of *authenticity* and *nostalgia* as legitimating culinary discourses, through which the distinctiveness of certain kind of food becomes repetitively validated. My purpose was, through this study, also to broaden the field of Finnish food media research and to join in the conversations in the field of contemporary critical research on food media (e.g., Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Phillipov, 2016) addressing the cultural processes of legitimation and distinction (as well as themes relating to authenticity and tradition or heritage pertinent to sustainable food).

In the paper's analysis sections, I engage with authenticity and nostalgia by dividing both concepts into smaller sub-categories: 'authenticity' is sectioned into 1) local singularity and 2) historic tradition as well as 3) artisanship, 4) individuality and 5) simplicity, whereas 'nostalgia' manifests through the discursive constructs referred to in the article as 1) resurrection of the past and 2) pastoral luxury. In my analysis, I examine the links these discursive categories have with cultural legitimation and with cultural capital and power. The analysis thus investigates especially the life-stylistic and aesthetic elements tied to sustainable food in journalistic texts and public discussion. Defining food as legitimate is not attributed to so-called 'rational' or factual justification or even deliberate argumentation, but legitimation is carried out through repetition and the reproduction of judgements of taste.

Money, the cost of food and the exclusivity of certain foodstuffs are left unmentioned in the *Helsingin Sanomat* content. The analysis shows how societal inequality is often disregarded in the discourses of authenticity and nostalgia by emphasising genuine, 'true' or natural character of something – thus concentrating on qualities that are conveniently 'outside of history' (see Mikulak, 2013) and off no consequence in terms of societal or economic realities. In addition to valuing authenticity and naturalness, the second most important criterion for legitimate food in the data is tastiness, not sustainability or ethicality: the (privileged) reader is regarded and addressed as a consumer and not as a citizen in spite of myriad politically tuned meanings connected with sustainable food consumption and production. The article demonstrates how lifestyle journalism functions as the gatekeeper for legitimate (culinary) culture. Through the discourses portrayed in the analysis, journalistic texts justify time and time again why a particular food, personality or tradition showcased in these texts becomes characterised as worthy, good and genuine and thus deserving of the reader's attention and fascination.

This study is perhaps the most extensively data-driven analysis of the four analyses conducted, primarily because, having a blank page in front of me and not knowing where to start, I decided to begin by tackling the research material in its entirety: I began by analysing, categorising and weighing 'all' the discursive material I possibly could 'uncover' in my data sample of 414 journalistic texts, ending up with a dozen separate discourses, themes or frames all technically deserving of more detailed analysis. The rationale for this was to convey the meanings connected with organic and local food in a manner that did not exclude anything, however, I quickly realised that this approach was not sensible in terms of argumentation nor reception or appropriation of my analysis by its audience. Thus, exclusion in terms of study

design, extraction and analysis became the first of many lessons learned in the course of writing this dissertation.

Finally, I had to justify the decision of concentrating on authenticity and nostalgia both to myself and to future audience by quantitatively examining what percentage of the analysed texts seemed to rely on these discourses compared with other possible discourses or themes, even though quantitative analysis was not otherwise central to my methodological approach. Additionally, by beginning with analysing everything detectable in the data, I did not make the task of finding the central, appropriate theoretical perspectives to support my claims easy for myself, and ended up originally with a mixed bag of too many suitable theories. And, even though when reading the first article now I can see uncomfortable traces of these ill-advised choices, these ‘growing pains’ have perhaps been valuable lessons in learning the craft of academic writing.

5.2 Publication II

The second article, published in *Kulttuurintutkimus* (“Cultural Studies”) journal in 2021 (published online in 2020), is titled *Ruokakulttuuria keskiluokan armosta: Kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja luokka Helsingin Sanomien luomuruokateksteissä* (“Food culture by the grace of the middle class: Cultural distinction and class in *Helsingin Sanomat* texts on organic food”). In this article, I investigated – instead of the life-stylistic and aesthetic meanings studied in the previous article – in what ways cultural distinction and class cultures manifest in the analysed texts and how they are reproduced in food journalism. My aim was to ascertain what kind of distinctions are produced in *Helsingin Sanomat* organic and local food content, to which class cultures is the consumption of sustainable food attached to, and what discursive strategies these practices rely on.

The analysis is based on texts from the *Helsingin Sanomat* data sample where food is mentioned and covered in connection with class, standard of living, other economic factors or cultural or societal status. In this way, the analysis highlights the formation of class distinctions and the meanings attached to social class. In the article, I present three different discourses through which ‘classed’ food talk manifests in the data, naming these discourses as 1) the social-critical discourse, 2) the middle-class strategies of cultural distinction discourse and 3) the reassurance of equality discourse. The three discourses differ from each other in terms of how the strategies of distinction, class privileges and the justification of these privileges is

framed and processed. Class tastes and class distinctions are both criticised and upheld as well as obscured and justified within these discourses.

The key concept in this analysis is *middle class*, as the meanings connected with lifestyles and cultural distinctions are mostly formed through middle-class conceptualisations in mediated contexts (Tiusanen, 2021). The middle class and values, expectations and (often invisible) ideals attached to middle-classness become unfolded through textual analysis and demonstrate subtle sites of distinction through which class identities and differences are upheld in seemingly unbiased media texts. The analysis indicates that (despite criticism against ‘classed’ cultural inequalities present in the data as well) in contemporary food culture that emphasises sustainability and ethical conduct, good food and aspirational lifestyle are composed through middle-class ideals. Additionally, the analysis demonstrates how morality often becomes accentuated in culinary discourses: in a culture that scorns ‘snobbish’ conspicuous consumption, food consumption is not linked to the sin of materiality – like purchasing ‘things and stuff’ is – as distinction in that culture is formed through actions and the expression of values: by proclaiming agency, high morals and cultural sensitivities rather than remaining imprinted onto old status symbols (Tiusanen, 2021).

The first two articles give insight into the discursive field where understandings related to good taste, morality and societal status are formed through valuations and judgements connected with sustainable culinary practice or ‘green consumption’ in general. Many themes and differences of contemporary culture can be and are discussed *through* ‘ethical’ food, and ultimately, those notions might have very little to do with the food itself.

Originally, in sketching my dissertation plan in 2016–2017, the idea was to conduct research on four different contemporary food-related themes in four different fields, thus gathering four different materials for analysis. However, processing the *Helsingin Sanomat* data early on, I realized that it would be impractical (and possibly impossible as well) to introduce all the pertinent perspectives related to contemporary ethical lifestyle portrayed there through only one set of research questions, in a single research article. And, focusing only on legitimate, life-stylistic and gastronomical perspectives would leave unmentioned the more overtly classed discourses of distinction and, importantly, also the critical discourses that were a relevant, albeit minor part of the overall data sample. As I wrote in the concluding paragraph of the first article, in addition to connecting organic and local food with authentic and nostalgic cultural dimensions, the data also links – surprisingly often – ethical food with issues of social and economic inequality: with social class, poverty,

inequality and breadlines, critiquing “food elitism” and interpreting organic and local food consumption as being status-oriented, and thus, the journalistic texts both uphold hegemonic discourses of legitimate food and simultaneously criticise these discourses “from within” (Tiusanen, 2018). In many ways this particular observation greatly influenced my decision to write a second article basing analysis on the *Helsingin Sanomat* data.

5.3 Publication III

The third article titled *Fulfilling the self through food in wellness blogs: Governing the healthy subject* was published in *European Journal of Cultural Studies* in late 2021. In the article, I analyse wellness food blogs by paying attention to the technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988) through which the ‘ideal wellness subject’ is formed in the blog texts. The study maps out how subjectivity manifests and is configured in the blog data, examining especially how the subjectivities related to wellness culture draw from postfeminist, neoliberal and healthist ideologies based on individual responsibility and self-control. The third research article is the first of two studies that focus on mediated health-related phenomena and content. As I have discussed in the introduction, the wellness phenomenon is, on the scale of discourses and lifestyles emphasising health and healthiness, a hugely impactful contemporary sub-culture, the framings and values of which strongly affect also food talk that has nothing to do with wellness culture or wellness practices specifically.

The study design and the selection process for research material has been lengthy in both this study on wellness food blogs and the final study on Instagram’s wellness content. My aim with regard to research data was finding a worthwhile corner of wellness culture that would qualify as being relatively popular, influential and thus noteworthy enough to be able to convey, after analysis, something relevant about the discursive dimensions of wellness-related subjectivity. As I have brought up in the previous section, three Finnish-English commercial wellness food blogs were selected as venues for data gathering.

In analysing the blog texts, I focused on discourses relating to subjectivity and the technologies of that subjectivity, that seemed to ‘aid’ the bloggers in aligning themselves with their healthy future selves. The article argues that the wellness subject persists through employing (discursive, affective and bodily) techniques of balancing, healing and self-narrativization in order to keep on striving towards a self that meets the requirements placed on a neoliberal individual. What is also

noteworthy is that in the highly gendered world of wellness food, the above-mentioned techniques morph with culturally feminine and postfeminist sensibilities that demand women to strive for a normative, palatable femininity, rigorous self-care and self-love, continuous self-labour as well as bodily perfection.

Thus, the subjectivities of the wellness food blogosphere exist amid a postfeminist and neoliberal discourse of individuality, risk and self-control, and the technologies of the self aim towards establishing complete control: “control over needing to choose and not having to choose, over performing in ways that are legitimate and not too pathological, over safeguarding the body and optimizing the functionality of the mind, over health and risks endangering that health and over the self and over one’s surroundings.” (Tiusanen, 2021.)

Finally, the extreme individuality and turning to the self of the wellness discourse renders social and political factors nearly invisible, and, compared with myriad contemporary food-related discourses that intertwine with cultural capital, privilege, taste and distinction, actors in the wellness food sphere seem to work very hard to obscure any standpoints related to distinction. Of course, this kind of indifference to cultural, political or social stances makes the language of wellness a neoliberal discourse *par excellence*, as all that is left visible is the prerogative to police and cultivate the self through culturally hegemonic pursuits that are based on (the right kind of) consumption.

The gendered and postfeminist subjectivity of wellness addresses almost exclusively upwardly mobile, aspirational women and is ‘unapologetically middle-class’ (see McRobbie, 2013). Wellness operates on a neoliberal cultural plane that is inherently middle-class but simultaneously seemingly ‘above class’. However, even if the discourse does not appear ‘classed’ in itself, the technologies of the self are highly class-related, as the educational, cultural, embodied and economic capital required to enact these subjectivities renders wellness food culture inaccessible to many consumers and thus establishes the quest for perfect balance, excellent health and continuous preoccupation with the nourishment of the self as privileged pursuit.

5.4 Publication IV

The final article focuses, as mentioned, on the themes related to gendered wellness culture as well. The fourth study titled *Feeling Grateful, Kind, and Empowered. Rules of Feeling in Instagram’s #womenswellness Digital Intimate Public* was the last article to be written, published in *Feminist Media Studies* journal in October 2022. In the article, I

employ the concept of feeling rules (Hochschild, 1983) in exploring the affects circulated in Instagram's #womenswellness content.

My aim was to find answers to the questions of what feelings are most visible in the #womenswellness public of Instagram and what emotions are celebrated or instigated in this space, as well as how these affective practices intertwine with contemporary configurations of feminism in popular media. And, in terms of the gendered sensibilities observable in #womenswellness, the analysis suggests that popular feminist emotional schemas are undoubtedly present in the affective space of Instagram's wellness content: a tension between compliant and resistant feminism remains unresolved there, as the feeling rules in the seemingly *ethical* (see Kanai, 2019) digital intimate public appear mostly ambivalent in the face of exhaustive neoliberal modes of self-governing and structural inequalities in contemporary society.

My analysis concluded that feeling is the essential fuel that enables the #womenwellness intimate public to operate, and the affective entanglement produced through performative confession circling around “seemingly solvable but never resolved issues” (Kanai, 2019: 55) enable this space to exist in the first place. Interestingly, the legitimate emotions or subject formations present in this space do not necessarily follow the gendered discourse previously observed in analyses on postfeminist media (see Banet-Weiser et al., 2020). For example, emphasising confidence (see Gill and Orgad, 2015, on ‘the cult(ure) of confidence’) seems to have been partly replaced by the encouragement of public expressions of vulnerability and thus the appreciation of affective authenticity. The shift apparent here is the partial displacement of *post*-feminism with popular feminism that gravitates toward played-up feminist-ness of “protecting one’s boundaries” and saying no to diet culture.

The #womenswellness space is certainly sparse in legitimately “resistant voices”, but, #womenswellness affective practices might have some countercultural potential that affects understandings of gender in our society in a precisely popular manner. However, I further conclude that even if the rules of feeling in contemporary feminine culture may change, what remains constant is the rigorous self-governing needed to survive as a woman in neoliberal culture. Finally, in connection with the privileged, middle-class wellness observed in the wellness food blogs, the popular feminist wellness culture seems to have expanded its reach to “all women”, regardless of ethnicity, social status, body size or physical ability or disability. Thus, in (and as part of) the process of battling gender inequality, popular feminist discourse of wellness welcomes all of us to surrender ourselves to bodily, mental and emotional forms of self-governing.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The Valuable Subject of Food Media

In this dissertation, I have endeavoured to answer, in addition to the research questions of separate analyses, an overarching, composite research question that focuses on the matter of cultural evaluations and ‘the good life’ and how subjectivities are formed through food-related, mediated phenomena. This dissertation then asks: What kind of *a valuable subject* is being produced in contemporary food discourses?

In what follows, I reflect on my analyses in connection with this question, introducing alternative (albeit interconnected) ways to answer it.

Firstly, it is important to take into account that the subject that inhabits the food discourses analysed here is either *middle-class* (Publications I and II) or *gendered* (Publications III and IV). The selves that are addressed and the subjectivities that become discursively validated are not *any* selves but certain kind of selves that have been invited to take part in and to be ‘affected’ by the discursive food space in question (and under investigation). To be addressed as middle-class or as female are relevant ‘limitations’ as they seriously restrict the ways in which selfhood *can* be fathomed *at all* in a given discourse. These two subject positions are of course often merged together, especially in connection with the feminine subject of wellness culture, who is to a large extent a middle-class subject as well. But, middle-classness (in terms of sustainable food) and femininity (in terms of wellness) are the primary aspects of self-formation through which subjects are invited to take part in these food-related sub-cultures.

In the first analysis that focuses on how organic and local food are legitimized in *Helsingin Sanomat* through the deployment of qualities related to authenticity and nostalgia, the valuable subject is a *tasteful* subject. Sustainable food or consumption is arguably not celebrated because it is ethical or ecological – these qualifications are mostly absent in the data – but because it is both *tasty* and *tasteful*: it is imbued with traits that have to do with culturally distinctive qualities as well as with aesthetic and gustatory pleasure. The subject is thus not ‘charmed’ to take part in this discursive space (or to transform their selfhood accordingly) to become an ethical subject but

to become a subject that, through participating in the culture of organic and local food – even if only through consuming mediated content that showcases this culture – becomes associated with (and acquainted with) good taste.

In the second analysis, which investigated the class-related meanings created and recycled in connection with organic and local food in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the research material hails a subject that could be characterised as a *morally righteous* subject. Here, food-related evaluations, lifestyles and practices are brought to the fore primarily in an effort to emphasise or reinforce classed distinctions and differences. Rather than being ‘merely’ a cultural sign relating to distinctive tastes, food functions symbolically through establishing classed difference between the lower classes and the upper middle class. This difference is formed and maintained through discourses laden with moral connotations, where class distinction or difference is not an issue of material, economic or even cultural resources but a difference in moral conduct. The upper middle class subject is portrayed as a morally virtuous subject (which in turn justifies their dissociation from ‘others’), one that is, for example, active, ethically ‘aware’, individual, knowledgeable, prudent, respectable and hard-working. In this data, morally righteous conduct (which is in this case often directly linked to practices of sustainable food consumption) is simultaneously tightly tied with middle-classness and classed legitimacy as well as emphasised as conduct that is *accessible to all*: “almost anyone” can purchase bread made of organic flour, organic meat is inexpensive if one purchases it in large batches and knows where to buy it, and, the most natural products of all – berries, mushrooms, game – are basically free for taking if one is just willing to make the effort.

Turning to the subjectivities of digital wellness content, the third analysis focuses on the ways in which the ideal self is discursively produced in the blog content of three wellness food blogs, and addresses a (female) self that is a *balanced* subject. The neoliberal and postfeminist subject of wellness food blogs could be imagined as walking on a tight-rope, always in danger of falling: falling into either the pathological space of orthorexic health- (and self-)obsession or into the boundless, chaotic world of want and desire. Balance is searched for and the self is governed amidst these both in terms of societal norms and ‘inner subjectivity’. To become balanced, one needs to satisfy both the cultural expectations – of being healthy but *not* too healthy, of enjoying food but not enjoying it *too much* – and the private expectations relating to caring for oneself in a healing and wholesome manner that supersedes corporeal care and ventures into the field of mental and spiritual care and affect regulation. Importantly, the gendered balanced subject is in a perpetual state of emergence,

never completely balanced but on an endless journey towards optimal and ultimate balance, and thus, control.

Finally, the fourth and final analysis examines digital wellness culture through an analysis of the #womenswellness intimate public of Instagram, concentrating on affect that circulates in the intimate public and how gendered existence and popular feminism factor into the displays of feeling in that space. The self that forms through this analysis is the *resilient* (gendered) subject that adheres to the discursive-affective community rules of rigorous emotional self-governing (of honesty, gratefulness, kindness and so on) and competence in order to function amidst the demands contemporary culture places on women. Resilience could be considered as a regulatory ideal, part of a distinctive set of qualities and dispositions deemed essential for neoliberal life. Resilient subjects are adaptable, survive in any situation and ‘bounce back’ from whatever life throws. (Gill and Orgad, 2018.) This resilience is a strong gendered affective norm as well as a result of negotiations between the gendered subject and their environment, where the subject survives their surroundings by managing emotions, affective display and themselves (mentally and bodily). In this data, the cultural expectations become – as well as being obediently internalised – also *contested* in the popular feminist discourse, resulting in a subject that could be considered somewhat resilient also in the face of cultural gendered expectations relating to palatable and healthy femininity.

The valuable subject of food discourses studied in this dissertation is thus tasteful, morally righteous, balanced and/or resilient. This subject is formed through movements of either becoming better (aspirationality) or through maintaining boundaries (distinction), and different measures of goodness and worthiness are thus present in these discourses: *Accumulating value* (for oneself) of wellness culture and *evaluating the self and others* (and the self through others) of sustainable food lifestyle. And, a question of value accumulation in terms of the valuable wellness subject borders with the notion of *extracting* value, through which a more explicitly economic perspective becomes apparent. Rather than solely making oneself better (more resilient, more balanced, healthier, happier), the subject can be seen as being thoroughly (self-)commodified as well, preoccupied with not only accumulating ‘personal worth’ but with being able to capitalise on that worth in the global market (for a more comprehensive account on the commodified self, see e.g., Mäkinen, 2012).

It is also worth noting that, looking at the formulations of subjectivity presented above, there is an aspect to middle-class subjectivity and gendered subjectivity through which difference in their position in our society becomes apparent: even

though these are both hegemonic subjectivities in their respective discursive fields, feminine subjectivity is formed through continual negotiation whereas the middle-class subject wields the sovereign power of evaluation on their turf, on which they stand steadily and uncontested. This of course has bearing on how goodness is approached: whether value is secured through keeping others at bay or through self-betterment. On a sociocultural level, femininity is a subordinate subject position whereas middle-classness is a dominant one, and this inevitably has an effect on how these subjectivities are positioned (and these subjects themselves addressed) in contemporary discourse.

Negotiations and struggles relating to the good life reveal how subjects are not on equal footing when it comes to eudaimonic pursuit. Even Aristotle believed that living and pursuing the good life is a matter of societal structures, and in order to live the best life one must have the resources and good fortune to do so: “In one fell swoop, Aristotle denies the possibility of eudaimonia to women, the poor, the ill and the slaves, as well as to those who will one day become ill or poor and so on.” (McKenzie, 2016: 132). Sara Ahmed offers one classic description of “the profile of the kind of person who is most likely to be happy”, that includes qualities such as living in an economically prosperous, democratic and politically stable country, belonging to a majority group rather than to a minority, being “at the top of the ladder rather than at the bottom”, tending politically to “the conservative side of middle”, being married, being healthy, active, having aspirations that concern social and moral matters (rather than merely money making) and feeling like they are “in control of their lives”. And, as Ahmed notes, and as we can see for ourselves, the face of happiness “looks rather like the face of privilege”. (2010: 11.)

However, even securing the good life for privileged subjects can be a complex matter nowadays, as the aspirations connected with upward mobility, job security, political and social equality and meritocracy (Berlant, 2011: 3) seem to be gradually dissolving in the precarious contemporary life. Later, Berlant (2011: 117) wonders whether after dreaming of the good life, merely “having a life” is the process to which one is made to settle for. The matter of whether a tireless construction of a valuable subject is enough to ‘reach’ a good life remains unanswered here, however, in terms of the discursive apparatuses of good living, the end does not really even matter that much: what is elementary is the journey towards a good life, movement that continues on, detaching from something and reaching for something else. And, if this movement is something that requires our full attention and perpetual servitude, the questions of cruel optimism or even stupid optimism (Berlant, 2011)

might be worth pondering on. However, this is a question for another inquiry and not this dissertation.

Finally, I would like touch upon the *ethics* of searching for the good life. According to Sara Ahmed, “[s]o much happiness is premised on, and promised by, the concealment of suffering, the freedom to look away from what compromises one’s happiness.” (2010: 196). As I mentioned in the introduction, neither the lifestyle of organic consumption nor wellness consumption channel much effort towards goals outside the subject, and attention is directed towards striving in life. In terms of ethical consumption, the ethics of it are shown (through my analyses at least) in a rather dubious light, and with regard to the ideal wellness subject, the neoliberal ethos of turning away from issues of politics or inequality does not make it seem that the virtuous life directs much virtue toward anyone but the self.

Reflecting on publication IV however, the resilient, popular feminist subjectivity of the digital intimate public seems to open up a rift between self-optimisation and resilience, between thriving and settling for an impasse offered by contemporary life. In #womenswellness, the *cultivation of the self* is replaced in part by the *care of the self* and, even if for Foucault (1986) these are essentially the same thing, in thinking about the intimate public(s) of digital media, self-cultivation, the tireless strive to self-betterment, is slowed down to and substituted with sustaining the self through self-care. The responsibility of a neoliberal subject to strive is occasionally rejected in #womenswellness discourse, and replaced with settling for self-continuity instead of self-extension (see Berlant, 2011). Is this a feminist impulse of rejecting societal norms? Or, is a more stagnant and precarious version of self-optimisation truer for women and thus promoted to women? Whichever the case, the gendered digital environment becomes marked by ambivalence towards the prerogative to thrive. Ambivalence is perhaps more than welcomed, as ambivalence opens up a space to wonder whether we are free to be *unhappy*, whether pursuing the good life is ethical at all, and whether the most virtuous thing to do – and the key to happiness as per Epicurus – would be managing realistic expectations.

6.2 Concluding Remarks

Through using food culture as a window to symbolic formations and mediated social relations, I have endeavoured to show what kind of traits are considered as legitimate and valuable in terms of the contemporary subject. I have argued that in mediated food discourse, evaluating the subject – be it ourselves or ‘the other’ – is entangled,

firstly, with cultural distinction and secondly, with governing the self. I have proposed that mediated, everyday food discourses adhere to the good life through *aspiring* towards something and through *securing* the symbolic distance between certain foodstuffs, practices and eaters. This dissertation shows that the judgements and subject positions related to good food are not a matter of free choice or of equal opportunity for self-optimisation, since what becomes evident through my analyses is that formations of class and gender have a crucial bearing on from which positions and with what kind of stakes the good life is pursued to begin with.

In terms of studying mediated manifestations of class(ed) distinction, media texts do not merely *reflect* cultural currents, but have considerable power in moulding public discourse and shaping perceptions of both contemporary cultural trends and more fundamental questions related to societal hierarchies and hegemonic discourse. In connection with cultural stratification, lifestyle media are one of the primary arenas of distinction, where positive attributes cumulate on certain cultural products and where legitimacy – what things and lifestyles are worthy of attention – is dictated and disseminated into the wider cultural sphere. Lifestyle (especially gastronomic) media texts offer guidelines both for culturally legitimate consumption practices and for ‘reading’ these collectively valued styles of symbolic appropriation off of other people and their consumption habits, cultural evaluations and possessions (see Lizardo, 2008). But, again, what is important to keep in mind is that (lifestyle) media is inherently middle-class in its perspectives, and investigating cultural stratification beyond the middle class by analysing mainstream media could prove more complicated.

The contemporary wellness phenomenon in turn is thoroughly mediated, and wellness culture (compared with wellness as a concept equivalent to well-being) cannot be separated from the digital media environment responsible for its rise in popularity. And arguably for this reason, wellness culture as well is tied with (white) middle-class understandings of value, worth and subjectivity (see O’Neill, 2020). Despite its cultural relevance as a hugely impactful contemporary sub-culture, only a handful of studies have focused on wellness culture (e.g., Conor, 2021; Hendry, 2022; Mickey, 2019; O’Neill, 2020, 2023), although, interest in this sub-culture appears to be growing quite rapidly. And for good reason, as the wellness phenomenon also affects lifestyle discourses and contents that go well beyond and have little to do with wellness practices specifically.

There are of course limitations to this research, even though I do not think this is a shortcoming as such: certainly, the idea of being able to provide a limitless study does not really fit within the principles of critical cultural analysis or poststructural

epistemology. This dissertation and the publications in it offer only some perspectives to the data analysed and especially to the field of mediated food-related phenomena in general, and the perspective of the researcher very much has bearing on the end result: what is emphasised, what is made visible and what is deemed as unimportant. I have tried to remain transparent in my work so that things that have not fit a chosen theoretical frame have not been hidden away, although, I have made ‘omissions’ in terms of how much data and what analytical perspectives are examined in each research paper (partly after learning from my mistakes on the first one).

I guess I am reluctant to say that I should have studied more or I should have had larger data sets (which I do not think is the case). Something I did brood over at some point was the fact that my research did not form a harmonious entity, that a perfect picture of the field did not emerge as a ‘result’, as the topics and research materials seemed somewhat randomly scattered into the field of food media. However, I am glad that I held on to the ‘method’ of researching things that perk my academic interest, and going towards things that make one say “there’s something here” rather than holding on to some sort of predetermined structure a dissertation should conform to.

Another aspect that might be considered as somewhat limiting is that media texts, almost by default, get less topical as time passes them by and new trends and phenomena replace the old. The oldest and newest data sets analysed in this dissertation are separated by nearly a decade, as the oldest news articles covering organic and local food have been published in 2011. However, sustainable or ethical food consumption is far from being ‘outdated’ in our current ecological predicament, and the “eco lifestyle” appears to be here to stay, whatever characteristics its precise manifestation might entail yesterday or today. It could be argued that the exclusive status of organic food is more often explicitly recognised in media coverage now, compared with ten years ago (which does not diminish its value as a legitimate consumable worthy of media attention). Trends in ethical consumerism continue to mark differences between culturally legitimate and illegitimate consumers as well as moral and immoral subject positions. The reality of a fast-paced cycle of relevance and visibility holds true in connection with digital wellness content as well, and the minutiae of cultural particularities seems to transform even before the very eyes of the researcher. However, as with the ethical eating discourse, the subject positions related to this sub-culture do not convert from one to another quite as fast as the “wellness trends of the day” do. This is why analysing the structures behind cultural phenomena offer valuable insight into what it means to be a participant (even if passive or unwilling) of our contemporary (media) culture.

Lastly, a practical limitation in writing an article-based dissertation is the inability to utilise hindsight, the inability to go back to the beginning and alter things to better suit the current configuration of one's research. Striving for perfection in that sense is very difficult in a dissertation written in this form. However, as the saying goes: "A good dissertation is a done dissertation. A great dissertation is a published dissertation. A perfect dissertation is neither." (@AcademicsSay)

In this composite account – or summarising report, or meta-analysis – that has filled the pages above and served as an interconnecting piece between publications that approach the theme of food media from rather different viewpoints, I have chosen not to try to account for everything that I have thought or written during this process. Instead, I wanted to ponder on the larger question of the valuable subject that emerges from the data studied and sort of lurks on the side lines of the mediated, culinary meanings I have scrutinised here. As a result, this summarising report does not necessarily discuss *everything* I have said in my publications (as I have already said it!) but works as a summary of (and as a bridge between) the separate analyses.

This dissertation looks rather different from the dissertation I sketched in my application for a PhD student position in late 2016. To me, this is not really surprising as my method throughout this project has been to remain open to the sea of mediated food culture, to be able to find meanings that are somewhat in a state of emergence culturally. In this regard, this dissertation could have looked very different, if during study design (which I did in various points in time over the years) something else would have caught my attention and guided me elsewhere. And yet, it would be difficult to imagine that the dissertation would differ all that much from the dissertation at hand: during all of it (and still) I am drawn to cultural meanings where power and divisions become produced by those who live amidst them, moulded by them and policed by them.

But, regardless, I try to search for real *agency* in cultural texts as well: do we as cultural beings (or the people who produce texts we read and absorb) have real choice in the choices we make, or does our freedom result in making choices that have already been made for us? Do we have any saying in who we are, what we are 'in to' or where we belong to, or are these characteristics decided for us as we read what we like and like what we read. And, even though this agency is often hard to come by, it can be searched for in the fringes and margins of hegemonic cultural discourse. Studying this kind of agency is somewhat tricky though, the means of which have not yet completely revealed themselves to me.

In the meantime, however, I have made plans regarding future research that approaches contemporary culture, class culture and digital media (and, perhaps even “fringe agency”), and my aim is to study the affective entanglements of middle-classness in digital media, specifically from the point of view of *refusing* a middle-class identity in our precarious contemporary moment. This future research focuses on both precarity and legitimacy and their affective negotiations on digital media content produced and circulated predominantly by millennials and Gen Zers (generation z), and it also follows the theme of ‘a good life’ I have pondered on in this dissertation as well, asking: What kind of feelings are attached to the concept of middle class in digital media? How is the refusal of middle-classness and the often simultaneous strive for a ‘good life’ reconciled, and what kind of discourses and affects are formed in the process? I am eager to study something that is not, at face value at least, thoroughly conceptualised in economic or neoliberal terms. Time will tell whether this is actually the case.

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PUBLICATION

I

**Ihannoitu ja henkiin herätetty menneisyys. Autenttisuus ja nostalgia
sanomalehden luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä**

Kaisa Tiisanen

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Artikkeli



VERTAISARVIOITU
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Ihannoitu ja henkiin herätetty menneisyys

Autenttisuus ja nostalgia sanomalehden luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä

Artikkeli pureutuu luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoiviin diskursseihin Helsingin Sanomissa. Hyödynnän aineiston tekstien tutkimuksessa aiempaa ruokajournalismin ja kulttuurisen maun tutkimusta sekä autenttisuuden ja nostalgian käsitteisiin liittyviä teoretisointeja. Selvitän, minkälaisin diskursiivisin keinoin ruoka määritellään luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä kulttuurista arvostusta ansaitsevaksi, ja miten erityisesti autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskurssit kietoutuvat aineiston teksteissä kulttuuriseen pääomaan. Käytän aineiston analyysissa kriittisen diskurssianalyysin työkaluja. Analyysin perusteella Helsingin Sanomien tekstit nojaavat luomu- ja lähiruokaa ja siihen kytkeytyviä merkityksiä legitimoidessaan 1) autenttisuuden kontekstissa perinteeseen, historiaan, käsityöhön, henkilökohtaisuuteen ja yksinkertaisuuteen sekä 2) nostalgian kontekstissa menneisyyden henkiin herättämiseen ja ylellisyyteen. Lisäksi lehtitekstien näkökulmat kietoutuvat hyvään makuun sekä kulttuuriseen pääomaan, jossa ruuan ja kuluttamisen poliittisuus jää oletetun hyväosaisuuden ja rahan näkymättömäksi tekevien puhetaipojen varjoon.

AVAINSANAT: diskurssianalyysi, journalismi, ruokakulttuuri, autenttisuus, nostalgia

Ruuan kuluttaminen on sekä universaalia ja arkista että sosiaalisesti merkityksellistä kuulumista ja erottautumista (Warde 1997, 180). Ruuan kulttuurin tutkimuksessa ei olla kiinnostuneita ainoastaan siitä, mitä syödään vaan myös siitä, miten ruuasta puhutaan ja kirjoitetaan, miten ruokaan liittyviä merkityksiä hyödynnetään julkisessa keskustelussa ja miten sosiaalisia kytköksiä muodostetaan ruuan kautta (Johnston & Baumann 2015, 30). Käsillä oleva artikkeli pureutuu ruuan ja kielien merkityksiin ruokakulttuurin ja journalististen tekstien analyysin avulla. Tarkaste-

len niitä diskursiivisia muodostelmia, joiden avulla luomu- ja lähiruuan merkityksiä legitimoidaan kuluttamisen ja maun journalistisissa konteksteissa. Pohdin, minkälaisia kulttuurisen luokittelun strategioita ruokajournalismi käyttää hyväkseen ja millaisten aikaan, paikkaan, kuulumiseen ja menneisyyteen kietoutuvien merkitysten avulla ruoka määritellään arvostusta ansaitsevaksi (kulttuuri)tuotteeksi. Artikkelin aineisto koostuu Helsingin Sanomien luomu- ja lähiruokateksteistä.

Tässä artikkelissa pyrin kriittistä diskurssianalyysia hyödyntäen vastaamaan kahteen kysymykseen: Millaisin diskurssein luomu- ja lähiruoka legitimoidaan aineiston teksteissä, ja miten aineistossa hyödynnetään erityisesti autenttisuuteen ja nostalgiaan nojaavia puhetapoja?

Journalismi, ruokakulttuuri ja maku

2000-luvulla ruuan yhteiskunnalliset ja kulttuuriset merkitykset ovat nousseet tärkeiksi kulttuurintutkimuksen ja monitieteisen ruokatutkimuksen aiheiksi. Suomessa ruokakulttuuria on tutkittu viime vuosikymmeninä kohtalaisen runsaasti sosiologian (esim. Purhonen ym. 2014; Lindblom & Mustonen 2015) ja kirjallisuudentutkimuksen (esim. Kainulainen & Parente-Čapková 2006) aloilla. Kattavimmat ruoka- tai ravintodiskurssien tutkimukset ovat käsitelleet niin sanotun rasvakeskustelun kriittisiä puhetapoja ja kulttuurisesti määräytyviä merkityksiä suomalaisen median teksteissä (Jauho 2013; Syrjäläinen, Ryytänen, Heinonen, Jauho & Jallinoja 2016) sekä ravinnon geenimuuntelua käsittelevien media-aineistojen kehystyksiä (Välvirronen 2007). Lisäksi ruuan merkityksiä mediassa on 2000-luvulla tutkittu ravitsemusymmärryksen julkisen tuottamisen (Huovila 2016), naistenlehtien ekodiskurssien (Lundahl 2014), kausiruuan, ekologisuuden ja verkkosisältöjen (Lindqvist 2014), Sotilaskotilehden ruoka- ja terveys sisältöjen (Jallinoja & Suihko 2007) sekä lehtitekstien hyvän ruuan tunnusmerkkien (Aarva, Pakarinen ja Vartiainen 2006) näkökulmista.

Tämän artikkelin tarkoituksena on laajentaa ja päivittää suomalaista ruokamedian tutkimusta analysoimalla Suomen suurimman ja luetuimman lehden ruokatekstien puhetapoja. Journalismin tutkimus kaipaa tuoretta analyysia ruokaan liittyvistä vakiintuneista diskursseista ja niistä tekstuaalisista käytännöistä, joissa tietyt ruuan merkitykset määritellään kulttuurisesti legitiimeiksi. Ruokakulttuuria ja ruokajournalismia on 2010-luvun kansainvälisissä tutkimuksissa käsitelty monipuolisista näkökulmista. Tämän artikkelin viitekehys koostuu ennen kaikkea legitiimiä makua, kaikkiruokaisuutta ja luonnonmukaisuutta käsittelevistä nykykulttuurin analyyseista. Näitä teemoja on viime vuosina tutkittu muun muassa kaikkiruokaisuuden ideaalin sisäisten ristiriitojen (Johnston & Baumann 2007; 2015), korkean kulttuurisen pääoman ja ”ekohabituksen” (Carfagna ym. 2014), ruuan tarinallistettujen politiikoiden (Mikulak 2013) sekä keskiluokan muuttuvien ruokamakujen (Zimmerman 2015) näkökulmista.

Ruokasivut ovat olleet osa sanomalehteä yli sadan vuoden ajan (Voss 2014, 1), milloin kotiäidin arjen apulaisen ja milloin ruokahuijauksia selvittävän tutkivan jour-

nalismien roolissa. Menneiden vuosikymmenien resepteistä tai ”nousevien trendien” luetteloista koostunut ruokajournalismi on muuttunut 2000-luvulla arvostetuksi journalismin osa-alueeksi, jonka hienostuneiden ja ajankohtaisten reportaasien luomiseen lehdet ja journalistit näkevät vaivaa (Brown 2004, 50). Ruokajournalismilla on merkittävä rooli kulinaaristen trendien paikantamisessa sekä niissä prosesseissa, joissa jonkin ruoka määritetään kiinnostavaksi tai kulttuurista arvostusta ansaitsevaksi (Johnston & Baumann 2007, 170). Ruokamedia kehystää ja monin paikoin myös sanelee sitä, minkälaisia ruuan kuluttamisen ympäristöt ja käytännöt voivat olla, minkälaisia niiden tulisi olla ja keitä varten ne ovat ylipäättään olemassa. Ruuan mediasisällöt luovat ymmärryksiä hyvästä ruuasta ja kelvollisista kuluttajista tai kotikokeista. (Johnston & Goodman 2015, 209.)

Lifestyle-journalismi, johon kuuluvaksi merkittävä osa tämän analyysin aineistosta luokituu, on määritelty usein ”pehmeäksi uutisoinniksi”, journalismiksi, joka näkee yleisön ensisijaisesti kuluttajina ja tarjoaa lukijoilleen arkipäivän neuvoja viihdyttäväksi paketeiksi muotoiltuina (Hanusch 2013, 1). Siinä missä perinteisen journalismin määritelmät korostavat journalismin roolia yhteiskunnan portinvartijana, lifestyle-journalismin tehtävänä on toimia ”maun kulttuurien” välittäjänä: makuarvostelmien muodostajana ja niiden tarjoajana lukijakunnalle (Fürsich 2013, 12).

Kulttuurisen maun muovautuminen ja makuarvostelmien kamppailu hegemonisesta asemasta ovat sosiologian ja kulttuurintutkimuksen kentillä runsaasti analysoituja, teoretisoituja ja kiisteltyjä aiheita. Ruokakulttuurin analyyseihin ovat vaikuttaneet muun muassa Zygmunt Baumanin ja Anthony Giddensin näkemykset elämäntylien yksilöllisestä valinnasta sekä erityisesti Pierre Bourdieun teoria distinktioista ja pääomakategorioista (ks. Potter & Westall 2013, 156). Kulttuurisen maun tutkimukset ovat vuosikautia – ja tänäkin päivänä – pohjautuneet Bourdieun ajatukseen makuhierarkioista yhteiskunnallisen luokittelun ja erottautumisen välineinä: maun kautta luokittelemme muita, ja tulemme samalla itsekin luokitelluiksi (Bourdieu 1984, 6, 1–2).

Bourdieun makuteoriat ovat viime vuosina saaneet rinnalleen ajatuksen kaikkiruokaisuudesta kulttuurin ja kuluttamisen kentällä. Kaikkiruokainen maku – avoimuus ja monenlaisen kulttuurin arvostaminen vastakohtana ulossulkevalle snobistiselle makukäsitykselle – on tärkeä etenkin koulutettujen keskiluokkien keskuudessa, missä kulttuurinen kompetenssi osoitetaan jäykkien luokitteluiden sijaan taitotiedon ja avarakatseisen arvostamisen avulla (Bennett ym. 2009, 177–178). Legitiimi maku on perinteisesti liitetty eliittiin ja sen omi(sta)maan kulttuuriseen pääomaan, jonka kautta kyseisellä yhteiskuntaluokalla on valtaa määrittellä se, mikä on hyvää ja mikä huonoa makua (Fornäs 1998, 121). Kaikkiruokainen maku ei merkitse sitä, että kaikki kulttuurin tuotteet olisivat samanarvoisia: kaikkiruokaisuudessa *korkea ja matala* korvautuvat niitä monimutkaisemmalla *legitiimin ja epälegitiimin* hierarkialla, jossa hyvän ja huonon määritelmät muuttuvat aiempaa nopeammassa tahdissa.

Maun lisäksi analyysini kytkeytyy luonnollisuuden ja luonnon kulttuuriin merkityksiin, jotka toimivat vahvana diskursiivisena taustana suuressa osassa ruoka-

journalismia. Luomuruoka viittaa suomen kielessä säänneltyyn luonnonmukaiseen tuotantoon¹. Luomun ja lähiruuan kulttuuriset merkitykset ulottuvat kuitenkin tuotantomenetelmiä ja sertifikaatteja laajemmalle, ja Helsingin Sanomissa erityisesti lifestyle-teksteissä luomun ja lähiruuan käsitteitä hyödynnetään viitattaessa yleisemmin luonnonmukaisuuden, ekokulutuksen ja luonnollisuuden merkitysolottuvuuksiin.² Luptonin mukaan keinotekoisien ja luonnollisten ruuan vastakkainasettelu ymmärretään kulttuuritutkimuksessa kuluttajien reaktioksi globaalin ruokateollisuuden aiheuttamaan epävarmuuteen. Luonnonmukaiseen syömiseen kietoutuu ajatus oman ympäristön ja kehon kontrollin palauttamisesta kuluttajalle, ja luomu- ja lähiruoka liittyvät siten laajaan kulttuuristen ymmärrysten järjestelmään, jonka tärkeimpiä arvoja ovat luonnollisuus, terveellisyys ja henkisyys. (Lupton 1996, 87–89.) Alun perin vastakulttuurina suosiota kerännyt luonnollisten ruuan liike (ks. esim. Gusfield 1992) määrittyy nykyään vahvasti myös trendikkyuden kautta. Useissa tutkimuksissa on – sekä Suomessa että kansainvälisesti – havaittu korrelaatio korkean koulutuksen, tulojen ja sosiaalisen statuksen sekä ekologista ruokaa kohtaan esiin tuotujen myönteisten asenteiden välillä (Klintman & Boström 2006; Cairns ym., 2013; Niva ym. 2014; Atkinson & Deeming 2015).

Ruoka on yksi lifestyle-journalismin tärkeimmistä aiheista, ja ruuan tarinat kytkeytyvät aiempaa voimakkaammin laajoihin yhteiskunnallisiin, esteettisiin ja symbolisiin näkökulmiin (Nørgaard, Kristensen & From 2013, 33). Ruokakulttuuriin kietoutuvien mediatekstien analyysi kiinnittää huomion makuarvostelmien ja elämäntyyliin liittyvien merkien lisäksi kulttuuriseen ja yhteiskunnalliseen valtaan: analyysi auttaa ymmärtämään eriarvoisuuden monia muotoja ja läsnäoloa arkisissa kohtaamisissa ja median sisällöissä (ks. Johnston & Baumann 2015, viii). Ruoka on poliittista – pullollaan vallan ja etuoikeuksien kytköksiä ja merkityksiä. 2010-luvun mediasisällöissä ruuan trendit, ilmiöt ja elämäntavat kiinnittyvät siten yhteiskunnallisessa keskustelussa osiksi niin kovia kuin pehmeitäkin aiheita koskevia kulttuurisia neuvotte-luita ja määrittäviä sitä, miten ruokaa arvotamme ja minkälaisen ruuan yhteisöihin itsemme paikannamme.

Aineisto

Artikkelin aineisto koostuu Helsingin Sanomissa vuosina 2011–2013 ja 2016–2017³ julkaistuista teksteistä tai tekstikokonaisuuksista, joissa ”luomu” ja/tai ”lähiruoka”⁴ (erilaisine taivutusmuotoineen) mainitaan. Aineiston ulkopuolelle olen jättänyt radion ja television ohjelmatiedot, kulttuurisivujen levy- tai kirja-arvostelut ja ruokareseptit; tekstit, joissa esimerkiksi ”luomu” mainitaan ainoastaan osana tittelä tai ammattinimikettä (luomuviljelijä Nokialta tai Luomuliiton edustaja) ja tekstit, joissa ”luomu” mainitaan jossakin muussa kuin ruokaan liittyvässä kontekstissa (”rastani ovat täysin luomut”). Aineisto on kerätty Helsingin Sanomien digitaalisesta sanoma-lehtiarkistosta sekä osittain lehden verkkosivujen näköislehtien kokoelmasta. Kokonaisuutena aineisto koostuu 414 lehtitekstistä.

Helsingin Sanomat on Suomen laajalevikkisin sanomalehti noin 322 000 kokonaislevikillään⁵. Valtakunnallisena sanomalehtenä Helsingin Sanomat edustaa valtajulkisuutta sekä journalismia, jolla voi katsoa olevan määrittelyvaltaa puhuttaessa nyky-yhteiskuntamme tärkeistä ilmiöistä (Lounasmeri 2006, 3). Periaatelinjassaan lehti korostaa puolustavansa moniarvoista yhteiskuntaa, kansanvaltaisuutta ja yhteiskunnallista oikeudenmukaisuutta⁶.

Helsingin Sanomien aineistossa luomu- ja/tai lähiruoka on useammin kehuttua ja arvostettua kuin ivailtua tai kritisoitua. Kokonaiskuvassa luomun ja lähiruuan myönteiset ominaisuudet ja niiden symboloimat positiiviset elämänarvot nousevat soraäänäniä selkeämmin esiin: luomu- ja/tai lähiruoka on hyvä asia 21 prosentissa teksteistä ja huono tai naureskeltava asia 11 prosentissa jutuista. Tutkimusartikkelin keskittyessä nimenomaan luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoiviin journalistisiin diskursseihin olen rajannut artikkelini analyysin niihin kokonaisaineiston teksteihin, joissa luomulle ja/tai lähiruualle tuotetaan myönteistä julkisuutta.⁷ Myönteisellä julkisuudella tarkoitan tässä yhteydessä sitä, että lehtiteksteissä luomu- ja/tai lähiruokaa kehystetään positiivisin sanavalinnoin, teksteissä hyödynnetään myönteisiä konteksteja ja lukija kutsutaan näkemään tekstin kohteena oleva luomu- ja/tai lähiruoka myönteisessä valossa. Näin kohdistan analyysin teksteihin, joissa luomu- ja/tai lähiruoka määritellään *hyväksi* ja arvostusta ansaitsevaksi, legitimiiksi. Myönteisiä tekstejä on kokonaisaineistossa 89 kappaletta, ja artikkelin analyysi pohjautuu näihin teksteihin.

Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi

Aineiston myönteisten luomu- ja lähiruokatekstien analyysi perustuu kielellisesti rakentuneen todellisuuden analysoimiseen ja kriittisen kulttuurintutkimuksen käsitkseen merkitysten tuottamisen laajoista historiallisista ja poliittisista konteksteista. Analyysin pääasiallinen metodi on kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, joka on pelkän kielenkäytön pintatason sijaan kiinnostunut sosiaalisten ja kulttuuristen erottautumisen prosessien saamista kielellisistä muodoista (Machin & Mayr 2012, 4). Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi olettaa, että kulttuurista valtaa jaetaan ja käytetään diskurssien kautta (emt.). Diskurssianalyysi on usein nähty hedelmälliseksi mediatekstien tulkinnan tavaksi (esim. Fairclough 1999; Valtonen 1998), sillä median hyödyntämät diskurssit vaikuttavat merkittävin tavoin yhteiskunnan asenteisiin ja puhe-kulttuuriin. Aineiston diskurssianalyysi ja analyysin tulokset perustuvat myönteisten lehtitekstien lähilukuun. Analyysin tulokset on tuotettu aineiston lähiluvun ja diskursiivisten aineiden analyysin kehämäisessä prosessissa siten, että aineiston teksteihin on palattu tutkimusprosessissa useita kertoja mahdollisimman yksityiskohtaisen kuvan muodostamiseksi.

Kiinnitän analyysissäni huomiota lehtitekstien olettamiin ja hyväksikäyttämiin kulttuurisiin konteksteihin (minkälaisiin arvoihin ja elämäntapaan luomu- ja lähiruoka liitetään?), kielellisiin valintoihin (mitä sanoja luomu- ja lähiruosta kirjoitettaessa käytetään?) sekä tekstin mahdollistamiin identifikaation paikkoihin (minkälaiselle lukijalle tekstin voi ajatella olevan kirjoitettu?). Artikkelin analyysi ei rajaudu ainoastaan

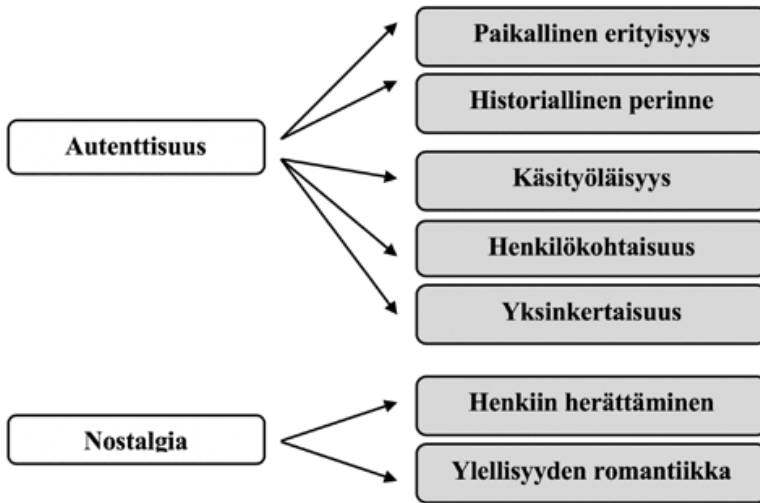
aineiston tekstien luomu- ja lähiruokamainintoihin vaan tutkin artikkeleita kokonaisuuksina: osa aineiston teksteistä keskittyy nimenomaisesti luomu- ja/tai lähiruokaan artikkelin aiheena, osassa jutuista luomu- ja lähiruokamaininnat näyttelevät sivuroolia. Luomuruoka ja lähiruoka toimivat siis enemmän aineiston kokoamisen välineinä – ikään kuin ikkunana tiettyyn ruokakulttuurin tekstien ulottuvuuteen – kuin tarkoina tekstuaalisten löydösten rajaajina.

Luomua ja lähiruokaa myönteisestä näkökulmasta käsittelevät tekstit perustuvat kokemuksiin, arvoihin ja mielipiteisiin ”kovien” uutisten tai kylmien faktojen sijasta (ja sijoittuvat siten pääosin osaksi edellä mainittua lifestyle-journalismin perinnettä). Huomattava osa luomua ja lähiruokaa myönteisesti käsittelevistä artikkeleista sijoittuu Helsingin Sanomien juttuluokituksessa ruoka-, matkailu- tai esimerkiksi Elämäsoioihin sekä kolumneihin. Esimerkiksi matkailureportaaseissa lukija kuljetetaan kuvailevan kirjoitustyylin avulla ikään kuin ”paikan päälle”, ja hyödyllisen informaation (missä on parasta yöpyä, mikä on ruuan hintataso) sijaan keskitytään tunnelmien ja aistinautintojen välittämiseen lukijalle.

Luomu- ja lähiruuan legitimointi kulttuurisen pääoman ja kaikkiruokaisen kuluttamisen piirissä nojaa aineistossa neljään puhetapaan. Luomu- ja lähiruokaa myönteisin tavoin käsittelevät tekstit hyödyntävät 1) *trendikkyiden* diskurssia, jossa käsitellyn aiheen suhteellinen uutuusarvo oikeuttaa myönteisen näkökulman. Helsingin Sanomien luomuartikkeleissa trendikkyys artikuloituu erikoisuuden, kosmopoliittisuuden ja uusien makujen nopean omaksumisen teemojen kautta. Trendikkyytteen kytkeytyvää, luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoivaa puhetapaa hyödynnetään 20 prosentissa aineiston myönteisistä teksteistä. Lisäksi ruuan oletettu 2) *puhtaus* – luonnollisuus ja turmeltumattomuus – näkyy myönteisten tekstien puhetapana ja luomu- ja lähiruuan arvostuksen oikeuttamisen kriteerinä, tosin trendikkyyttä vähäisemmässä määrin (9 prosenttia myönteisistä teksteistä).

Tämän artikkelin analyysin kohteena ovat 3) autenttisuuden ja 4) nostalgian diskurssit, jotka esiintyvät 58 prosentissa myönteisistä teksteistä, ja ne muodostavat siten luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoivien tekstien sisällä määrällisesti merkittävimmän diskursiivisen ulottuvuuden. Autenttisuus ja nostalgia toimivat saman – luontoon, aitouteen ja menneisyyteen kytkeytyvän – diskursiivisen merkitysulottuvuuden puitteissa, ja yhdessä ne muodostavat loogisen kokonaisuuden luomu- ja lähiruokaan liittyvien merkitysten tulkinnassa. Olen rajannut tämän tutkimusartikkelin ulkopuolelle trendikkyiden ja puhtauden puhetavat. Syitä tähän on kolme. Ensinnäkin pyrkimyksenäni on liittää artikkeli viime vuosien ruokakulttuurin tutkimuksen keskusteluihin (esim. Paddock 2014; Johnston & Baumann 2015; Phillipov 2016), joissa painopiste on ennen kaikkea autenttisuuden ja perinteen merkityksissä. Toiseksi autenttisuuden ja nostalgian puhetapojen prosentuaalisesti merkittävä osuus kohottaa ne aineistossa diskursiiviseen valta-asemaan. Kolmanneksi tutkimusartikkelin laajuuden puitteissa kaikkien diskurssien kokonaisvaltainen käsittely ei ole mielekäästä. Analyysini polttopisteessä ovat siten autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskurssit, joiden kautta lehtiartikkeleissa legitimoidaan luonnonmukaista ruokaa sekä kehystetään luomu- ja lähiruuan suomaa elämystä ja hyvää elämää.

Kuvio 1. Autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskurssit Helsingin Sanomissa (aladiskursseineen).



Autenttisuuden diskurssi

Autenttisuus rinnastetaan usein aitouden, lahjomattomuuden, todenmukaisuuden tai uskottavuuden kaltaisiin termeihin. Autenttisuus viittaa ”koskemattomiin” ja ”oikeisiin” asioihin tai objekteihin, ja ainakin teoreetikot ja tieteilijät ennen postmodernia aikakautta ovat ajatelleet autenttisuuden olevan todellinen ja mitattavissa oleva kriteeri, jonka avulla esimerkiksi kulttuurisia artefakteja on mahdollista arvioida (Reisinger & Steiner 2006, 68). Nykykäsityksen mukaan autenttisuus on pikemminkin sosiaalisesti rakentunut arvottamisen keino kuin johonkin objektiin sisältyvä ominaisuus (Peterson 2005, 1086). Kenties suhteellisuutensa vuoksi autenttisuudesta on viime aikoina tullut määre, jolla viitataan alkuperän sijasta *tyyliin* (ks. Zukin 2010, 2), ja käsite on liukunut ihmisten ja esineiden arvottamisesta myös kokemusten arvottamisen apuvälineeksi (emt., 21).

Kulttuurintutkimuksessa autenttisuuden kiinnostavuus perustuu sen rooliin kulttuurisen vallankäytön välineenä. Yhteiskunnassa symbolista valtaa pitää käsissään useimmiten se ihmisjoukko, joka on onnistunut vakuuttamaan muut omien makukäsitystensä autenttisuudesta. (Zukin 2010, 2–3.) Vanninin ja Williamsin (2009, 3) mukaan autenttisuus on ennemminkin tiettyjen representaatiokäytäntöjen symbolista vahvistamista kuin jokin pysyvä olemisen tila – toisin sanoen, autenttisuus viittaa sellaiseen ominaisuuksien kokonaisuuteen, jonka tietyn aikakauden ihmiset ovat hyväksyneet *ideaalia* tai *esimerkillistä* kuvaavaksi. Postmodernin ajan autenttisuus on esteettinen määre, jonka avulla arvioimme, onko jokin tarpeeksi kiinnostavaa tai hiomatonta (Zukin 2010, 20).

Ruokakulttuurin kohdalla autenttisuus määrittyy kohteensa ulkopuolelta, ja käsite kytkeytyy useimmiten maaseudun ruokakulttuurien urbaaneihin määriksi ja arvos-

telmiin (Weiss 2011, 74–76). Ruokajournalistit vetoavat autenttisuuteen esittäessään tiettyjä ruokia legitimeiksi ruokakulttuurin osiksi. Josée Johnston ja Shyon Baumann toteavat teoksessaan *Foodies – Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (2015), että yksittäisen ja kaikkeen soveltuvan määritelmän sijaan ruokajournalismissa viitataan useampiin keskeisiin autenttisuuden ulottuvuuksiin, jotka kokonaisuutena muodostavat autenttisen ruuan merkityskimpun. Helsingin Sanomien teksteissä hyödynnetyt autenttisuuden ulottuvuudet olen jaotellut kahteen analyttiseen kategoriaan. Ensimmäinen kategoria käsittää ne luomu- ja lähiruuan puhettavat, joissa alkuperäisyys kytkeytyy 1) perinteisiin ja historiaan, ja toiseen kategoriaan kuuluvat puhettavat, jotka hyödyntävät 2) käsityön, henkilökohtaisuuden ja yksinkertaisuuden esiin tuomisen kautta vilpittömyyteen ja yhteisöllisyyteen viittaavia aitouden ulottuvuuksia.

1) Autenttisuus ajassa ja tilassa – paikallinen erityisyys ja historiallinen perinne

Miten määritellä artefakti tai kulttuurinen tapa aidoksi ja alkuperäiseksi? Yksi objektiivisuutta henkivä keino on todistaa artefaktin tai tavan olevan *kotoisin jostakin*: pohjautuvan tarkasti määriteltyyn maaperään⁸, tietyn suvun tapoihin tai vuosisatoja vanhoihin perinteisiin. Allen Weissin mukaan gastronominen autenttisuus on ajallisesti synonyymi perinteisyydelle ja tilallisesti maantieteelliselle ja kulttuuriselle alkuperäisyydelle (Weiss 2011, 74–76). Autenttisella ruualla on määriteltävissä olevat, ajalliset ja/ tai paikalliset juuret, jotka ovat säilyneet mahdollisimman muuttumattomina ympäröivän yhteiskunnan liikkeistä huolimatta.

Johnstonin ja Baumannin mukaan sekä ruokaharrastajat että ruokajournalistit arvostavat ruokia, jotka valmistetaan ja kulutetaan tietyissä, *erityisissä paikoissa* (2015, 65). Helsingin Sanomien Porvoon-matkailujutussa (12.7.2012) kaupungin ”tasokkaimman ravintolan”, Bistro Sinnen, lähiruokaan panostavalla ruokalistalla on ”Bosgårdin tilan lihaa, monia Malmgårdin herkkuja” sekä ”Pellingin kalastajien siikaa”. Ruuan tai raaka-aineen alkuperän nimeäminen toimii todisteena ruuan autenttisuudesta. Koska vähiten statusarvoa myönnetään ”paikattomille” ruuille (emt., 66), autenttinen ruoka erotetaan niistä tarkkuuden ja merkkietoisuuden keinoin: Käpylän koulutetun keskiluokan ruokailutapoja esittelevässä artikkelissa (22.1.2012) toimittaja mainitsee esimerkiksi leivän olevan ”Pyymäen kakkoa” ja ”Aallon ruisleipää” eikä ”mitään muovipussiviipaleita”, kaupasta ostetaan ”Patros-fetaa”, pöytäsuolana suositaan ”harmaata merisuolaa Biskajanlahdelta”, ja kahvi on ”tummaa Löfbergs lilaa”. Maantieteellisen sijainnin argumentin voi siten laajentaa koskemaan sellaisia ruokia, jotka yleisemminkin määritetään vastakohtiksi nimettömille ja mistä tahansa ostettavissa oleville syötäville.

Eryteisesti aineiston matkailujutuissa paikalliset, vuosikymmeniä tai -satoja muuttumattomina säilyneet ruuanlaiton tavat toimivat hyvin vahvoina legitimitietin takajina. Ruoka määritetään autenttiseksi kiinnittämällä se johonkin *historialliseen perinteeseen*. Esimerkiksi Italian-matkailujutussa (8.10.2016) perinteet menevät nykyhetken villitysten edelle, ja historiallisuus on trendikkyyttä voimakkaampi matkailuvaltti: Marchen alueella ”raaka-aineiden tuoreus on itsestäänselvyys, ja luomua ja lähiruokaa on tarjottu vuosisatoja ennen kuin niistä tuli muotia”. Ranskan Calvadosissa (16.7.2016)

puolestaan ”siideriperinne ulottuu keskiajalle”, ja Lyonissa (23.3.2012) viinitilan Beaujolais Nouveau’ta ”on tehty jo renessanssin ajoilta”. Aineiston suomalaisissa konteksteissa historia tuodaan esiin muun muassa korostamalla vanhojen vehnäajikkeiden ylivertaisuutta uusiin verrattuna (*Himoleipuri hakee jauhot ja hiivan Tanskasta*, 28.2.2013) ja mainitsemalla, miten ristiinalaista 1700-luvun sukutilaa pyöritetään nyt jo kymmenennessä sukupolvessa (*360 kilometriä Saimaan rannoilla*, 23.7.2016). Ruuan ja perinteen yhteys todistaa sekä ruuan ajattomuutta että sen kykyä pysyä uskollisena omille juurilleen (Johnston & Baumann 2015, 78), ja jonkin käytännön toteaminen perinteiseksi osoittaa sen ajallisen jatkuvuuden ja siten moraalisen ja esteettisen ylivertaisuuden (Warde 1997, 64). Historiallisuus on sinnikkyyttä, ihmisyyden ja olemassaolon jatkuvuuden todiste.

Autenttisuuden subjektiivisten kokemusten on usein todettu olevan monivivahteisia sekä vahvasti kontekstistaan riippuvaisia (Vannini & Williams 2009, 6–7). Helsingin Sanomissa ajalliseksi autenttisuudeksi ja historiallisuudeksi kelpaavat sekä Keski-Euroopan keskiaikaiset perinteet että Ruotsin Jämtlandin 1950-luvulla rakennettu hirsihuvila (16.2.2013). Se, mikä on aineiston artikkeleissa kulloinkin tarpeeksi paikallista, vaihtelee niin ikään suuresti kulloisenkin aiheen ja kontekstin mukaan. Lähiruuksi määritellään sekä takapihan vihannekset, kattopuutarhan chilit, lähitilojen liha että jopa ylipäättään suomalainen tuotanto – samaan aikaan myös italialaiselta torilta voi saada aitoa lähiruokaa, ja hunaja-aiheisessa ruokakolumnissa tuliaisina tuotu eteläossetialainen hunaja on ”täydellistä lähiruokaa”, jonka vuoksi matkakohteeseen tulee hankkiutua uudelleen vielä ennen lumia (20.9.2012). Lähiruoka voi viitata artikkelien konteksteissa tuotanto-paikoihin hyvinkin laveasti, ja usein tuotantopaikan ja kulutuspaikan lyhyen välimatkan vaade (tai ruuan ekologinen tarkoituksenmukaisuus) väistyy mielikuvien luomisen tieltä valittuja diskursiivisia strategioita hyödynnettäessä.

2) Pieni on kaunista – käsityö, henkilökohtaisuus ja yksinkertaisuus

Paikallisen erityisyyden ja historiallisen jatkuvuuden lisäksi autenttisuus määrittäytyy teksteissä *vilpittömyyden* muotoina: käsityön, henkilökohtaisuuden ja yksinkertaisuuden teemojen kautta. Autenttisuus todistetaan tekemällä selkeä ero ylikansallisten ja teollisten tuotteiden sekä artikkeleissa kulloinkin esiin tuotujen, jollain lailla ”rakkaudella valmistettujen” ja arvostettujen ruokien välillä. Autenttisissa ruuissa ja ruuanlaiton tavoissa teollisten tuotteiden monimutkaisuus korvautuu yksinkertaisuudella ja määrä laadulla.

Aineiston teksteissä luomuun ja lähiruokaan liittyy ruuan kerääminen ja valmistaminen itse sekä erityinen vaivannäkö. Esimerkiksi edellä mainitun Porvoon-matkailujutun Bistro Sinnessä jälkiruokien ”sadat vadelma- ja ahomansikkalitrat [ravintoloitsija Kai] Kallio on poiminut omin kätösinsä appensa kesäpaikan lähistöltä”, kun taas ”ketunleipiä, maitohorsmia ja kuusenkerkkiä ravintolaan on kerännyt Kallion isä”. Autenttisuus *käsityöläisyytenä* viittaa artesaaniruokiin ja konstailemattomaan ateriaan, joka muovautuu ainutlaatuisiksi tekijänsä käsissä (Johnston & Baumann 2007, 182).

Massatuotantoon ja varsinkin ”kauppoihin” suhtaudutaan autenttisuuden diskursissa hyvin usein epäluuloisesti: kaupan tuotteet turmelevat syntymättömiä vauvoja

(*Luomun ystävä arvostaa itse tehtyä*, 10.5.2012) tai niiden valikoimat koostuvat aidon englantilaissiiderin sijaan ”hiilihapolla ja vedellä jatketusta litkusta”, jota siiderinä kaupitellaan (kolumni *Kuplajuoman kuusi vuosikertaa*, 13.9.2012). Kaupunkiviljelyä harrastavista perheistä kertovassa jutussa myös lapset pohtivat kaupassa käydessään, että ”missähän tuokin on tuotettu” (4.8.2013). Käsityö merkitsee aineistossa työn ja tuotannon läpinäkyvyyttä: tuotteen identiteettiä ei ole ainoastaan painettu etikettiin, vaan se tulee ilmi valmistamisen prosessissa sekä tuottajan arvomaailmassa. Mikäli ”kaupaksi” määritelty taho haluaa hyödyntää käsin tekemisen myönteistä kehystä, tulee sen nähdä erityistä vaivaa: esimerkiksi Altian tuotteista kertovassa jutussa yrityksen toimitusjohtaja korostaa, miten uutuusluomulikööriin ”kelpaavat vain Kainuun metsämustikat ja luomuohra” (5.3.2016). Kauppa ja markkinavoimat asettuvat symbolisesti aidon välittämisen ja rehellisen moraalien vastapariksi, ja luomu- ja lähiruuan avulla asemoidutaan kaupan oletettuja kierouden ja hyväksikäytön normeja vastaan (ks. Shugart 2014).

Ruokavalintojen *henkilökohtaisuutta* korostetaan ruokajournalismissa linkittämällä ruoka tiettyihin yksilöihin ja sukuihin tai luoviin persoonallisuuksiin (Johnston & Baumann 2007, 184). Jutussa *Hiihtäen halki piirakkamaan* (16.12.2011) yksilöllisyys liittyy yhteen maalaismaisen tuttavallisuuden kanssa, kun ”kulinaarisen hiihtovaelluksen” taustajoukot tuodaan artikkelin valokeilaan. Tekstissä ”emäntä Anni Korhonen kantaa pöytänsä kuhan”, kun puolestaan ”nuori emäntä Henna Nevalainen paimentaa meidät saunaan” ja viimeisessä kohteessa ”emännöi Minna Murtonen, jolla on keittiössä jo hiivaleipätaikina kohonnut”. Artikkelissa *Moskova on uusi Brooklyn* (4.8.2013) lähiruokaa määrittää se, että asiakas saa netissä tilausta tehdessään tietää viljelijän nimen.

Myös ”autenttisia lomakokemuksia” tarjoavasta Gidsy-palvelusta kertovassa artikkelissa (26.10.2012) autenttisuus rakentuu henkilökohtaisen suhteen myötä. Amsterdamin kanaaliajelussa aitous vertautuu epäaitoon juuri yksilöllisyyden ja kasvotomuuden vastinparin avulla.

Ohitamme lasikattoisia turistipaatteja, joissa selostus tulee nelikielisenä nauhalta. Olen varma, että Stromin veneessä on parempi tunnelma.

Tässä istuu kaksi ihmistä, ei etäinen opas ja maksava yleisö.

Sitten Strom kurvaa laituriin. Hän haluaa tarjota luomuoluen paikallispanimon terassilla.

Autenttisuus on siis paikallisuuden, historiallisuuden ja käsityöläisyyden lisäksi inhimillisyyttä: yhteisöllisyyttä etäisyyden sijasta. Autenttinen ruoka on symbolisesti koskematon ja ikuista – ja kuitenkin aitoa myös juuri sen vuoksi, että elävät ihmiset ja ympäristö ovat aikojen saatossa jättäneet siihen jälkensä. Journalismin yhteyksissä henkilökohtaisuus on välittömyyttä ja sympatiaa tuntemattomien kesken. Koska toimittajan ja muukalaisen vuorovaikutussuhteen voi lähtökohtaisesti tulkita etäiseksi ja muodolliseksi, tätä seikkaa pyritään teksteissä häivyttämään esimerkiksi emännän kaltaisin termein tai tuttavallisuutta muutoin vakuutteleamalla.

*Yksinkertaisen ja "selkeän ruuan" tai "perinteisen Suomi-ruuan" filosofia yhdistää monia aineiston tekstejä. Yksinkertainen ruoka on edellä mainittujen kehysten tapaan autenttista viestittämänsä vilpittömyyden vuoksi. Yksinkertaisuuden kehyydessä ruuan tai sen puitteiden nuhjuisuus ei välttämättä ole epätoivottavaa vaan merkki autenttisuudesta (Zukin 2008, 727): esimerkiksi keski-suomalaisen luomukaupan kahvituvassa "kupit on kerätty kirpputoreilta ja saatu lahjoituksina" (6.7.2012), ja Turun saariston illallisravintolassa "annokset tarjoillaan keramiikkalautasilta, jotka [ravintolan isäntä] Smeds on näperrellyt pihapajassaan" (*Majatalot valvovat Nauvossa talvellakin*, 21.12.2012).*

Yksinkertaisuus voi näkyä ruuassa itsessään, ruuan valmistamisen prosessissa, ruuan tekijöiden elämäntavoissa ja käytännöissä, ruuan esillepanossa sekä ruokailukokemuksen miljöössä (Johnston & Baumann 2015, 68). Usein rustiikkisuus tai valkoisten pöytäliinojen poissaolo antaa kullekin ravintolalle aidomman identiteetin. Yksinkertainen estetiikka muistuttaa "vanhan ajan" tavernoista, joihin saavuttiin kuluttamisen tai ostamisen sijasta jutustelemaan tuntemattomien kanssa tai kuulemaan kaukomatkalaisten tuomia uutisia maailmalta (ks. myös Friedman 2012, 17). Edellä mainittuja Turun saariston itse tehtyjä keramiikkalautasia voi ihastella ravintola L'Escalessa, joka on saanut inspiraationsa lähiruokaa suosivista "ranskalaisista nurkkapatriottisista ravintoloista".

Yksinkertaisuuden pinnan alla

Pelkkä yksinkertaisuus vaatii rinnalleen jotakin, jonka avulla ero hyvällä tavalla kansanomaisen sekä tavallisuudessaan tympeän ruuan välillä tehdään. Jessica Paddockin mukaan muutamien strategioiden avulla yksinkertaiset ruuat siirtyvät tavanomaisuuden alueelta distinktion piiriin. Maalaismaiseksi ja mutkattomaksi ristitty ruoka on samalla sekä "perinteistä kotiruokaa" että osa eksklusiivista ruokakulttuuria. (2014, 37.) Konstailemattomuuden ja erikoisuuden yhdistely näkyy Helsingin Sanomien aineistossa selvästi. Pelkkä "tavallinen ruoka" nostetaan jutuissa usein suureen arvoon, vaikka lopulta se harvoin kelpaa sellaisenaan ravintoloitsijoille tai edes kotikokeille. Jutussa *Ruokabloggari rakastaa kermaa* (22.7.2012) bloggari Jaakko Kujanpää kertoo oman lapsiperheensä ruokarutiineista. Kaikkiruokaisen maun (ks. yllä) yhtäaikaan autenttisuus ja trendikkyys, yksinkertaisuus ja erikoisuus sekä demokraattisuus ja distinktiot liittyvät bloggarin kommentteissa saumattomasti yhteen. Autenttisuus tuodaan näkyvästi esille aitojen makujen, luonnollisuuden ja nostalgian kautta: "Kujanpään perheessä suositaan luomua ja perinteistä kotiruokaa", ja "kevyttuotteita ei heidän jääkaapistaan löydy, vaan leipä voidellaan voilla ja jäätelö tehdään kermasta".

Jutussa yksinkertainen ja rehellinen suomalainen ruoka ("näin kesäaikaan pöytää koristaa usein kala, salaatti ja uudet perunat") tarvitsee vastinparikseen erikoisen ja trendikkään ruuan: luomun, toffeejäätelön, gin tonic -sorbetin, lammastikkaarit ja myslikeksit. Lisäksi artikkelin asiantuntijakommenttien kautta ero legitiimin yksinkertaisuuden ja *vain tavallisen* ruuan välillä ei jää epäselväksi:

Kotitalousopettajien liiton puheenjohtaja Anneli Rantamäki kertoo, että makaronilaa-tikko ja lihapullat perunamuusilla pitävät edelleen pintansa suomalaisissa perheissä.

”Olen huomannut kaksi kulttuuria. Toiset harrastavat luomu- ja lähiruokaa ja toisille on yhdentekevää mitä lautasella on, kunhan se on ruokaa”.

Yksinkertainen muuttuu legitiimiksi joko edellä kuvattujen trendiruokien parina tai yhdistettynä korkealuokkaisuuden vakuutteluihin. Italian-matkailujutussa yksinkertaisuus kietoutuu laatuun: ”ulkoapäin ei arvaisi, että vaatimattomassa rantaparakissa sijaitsee yksi seudun parhaista kalaravintoloista”. Johnstonin ja Baumannin mukaan yksinkertaisuus tuodaan usein esille silloinkin, kun itse ruoka vaikuttaa hyvinkin monimutkaiselta tavallisen kuluttajan tai lukijan näkökulmasta (2015, 68). Lyonin-matkailujutun perinteisen paikallisen ravintolan keittiössä ”voita ei ole säästely”, ja ruoka ”maistuu konstailemattomalta, niin kuin bouchonissa kuuluukin”. Toimittajan näkemys bouchonin ruuan – ”Quenelle eli kämmenen kokoinen haukipyörykkä béchamel-kastikkeessaan höyryää vuoassa” ja ”menun kruunaa nougatjäädäyke vadelmakastikkeella” – konstailemattomuudesta osoittaa, miten yksinkertaisuus on ruuasta puhuttaessa hyvinkin liukuva käsite.

Sosiologisessa kirjallisuudessa käsitykset autenttisuuden luomisen, ”autenttisuustyön”, tärkeydestä ja funktiosta vaihtelevat. Richard Petersonin (2005, 1083) mukaan autenttisuuden määrittelymisen kysymykset ja tarkoituksellinen autenttisuustyö tulevat kulttuurin diskursseissa ajankohtaisiksi vasta silloin, kun kohteen autenttisuus on asetettu kyseenalaiseksi. Jaber Gumbiumin ja James Holsteinin (2009, 123) mukaan autenttisuustyö taas on ennen kaikkea tarkoituksellista ja käsityönomaista: se nojaa viestintätyökalujen taidokkaaseen hyödyntämiseen, ja esitettyjen kyseenalaistusten torjumisen sijaan se on alituista autenttisuuden kehyksen luomista ja ylläpitämistä erilaisin diskursiivisin keinoin.

Helsingin Sanomien aineistossa autenttisuuden aladiskursseja käytetään teksteissä aktiivisesti hyväksi ruokia, ravintoloita, ihmisiä ja kokemuksia arvioitaessa. Ruuan tai kokemuksen toteaminen vain ”autenttiseksi” ei useinkaan riitä, vaan aitous luodaan edellä mainittujen paikallisuuden, historiallisuuden, käsityön, henkilökohtaisuuden ja yksinkertaisuuden merkityksiä hyödyntämällä. Autenttisuus syntyy aineistossa elävien narratiivien ja tarkkojen yksityiskohtien kuvauksen kautta, tunteita esiin tuoden sekä toimittajan todistajalausunnon aitouteen luottaen.

Nostalgian diskurssi

Helsingin Sanomien puhetavoissa autenttisuuden ja nostalgian vivahteet limittyvät helposti keskenään, ja molempia hyödynnetään luomu- ja lähiruokaa käsittelevissä teksteissä. Merkittävin autenttisuuden ja nostalgian välinen ero liittyy kulloisenkin kohteen olemassaoloon – autenttisuuden puhetavoissa ensisijaista on perinteiden jatkuminen sekä luonnollisuuden säilyminen, nostalgian kehyksissä keskitytään kadon-

neen luonnon ja menetettyjen vanhojen hyvien aikojen teemoihin. Helsingin Sanomien ruoka-artikkeleissa maaseutunostalgia liittyy 1) menneisyyden henkiin herättämiseen sekä 2) talonpoikaisidyllin ihanuuksiin ja ikaikaisiin maaseudun harrastuksiin.

Kirjallisuuden tutkimuksen käsitteenä nostalgia on kaipuuta, joka suuntautuu joko menetettyyn ihmiseen tai kadotettuun paikkaan (Santesso 2006, 39–40). Ruokajournalismin diskursseissa *pastoraali*, nostalginen ja idealisoitu kaipuu jo kadonneen paikan viattomuuteen ja onneen, kehystää luonnollisen ruuan tekstejä (ks. emt.). Kutsun tässä artikkelissa osittain kirjallisuuden tutkimuksen pastoraaliin rinnastuvia puhetapoja maaseutunostalgiksi tai talonpoikaisnostalgiksi.

Laura Kolben mukaan suomalaisia yhdistää edelleen emotionaalinen suhtautuminen maahan, maisemaan sekä maaseutuun. Modernin ja urbaanin elämän rinnalla maaseutu tai mökkimaisema on turvallisuuden, pysyvyyden, rauhoittumisen ja yhdessäolon paikka. (ks. 2007, 110.) Maaseutunostalgia on yleinen länsimainen reaktio modernin maailman hektisyyteen, ja talonpoikaiselämä tai paluu luontoon kytee syvällä monen kansakunnan kulttuurisessa mielikuvituksessa. Banet-Weiserin (2012) mukaan nostalgiaa tulee usein normatiivinen strategia silloin, kun muutoksen aiheuttama levottomuus halutaan naamioida joksikin muuksi. Nostalgia on kaipuuta aikaan, jolloin muuttuvaa maailmaa oli helpompi tulkita – aikaan, joka tuskin koskaan on ollut olemassakaan. (128.)

O’Grady (2003) mukaan luonnonmukaisuuden ja kestävän elämäntavan unelman voi ajatella ”tulevaisuuden nostalgisoinniksi”. Sen keskeinen kaipuu kohdistuu juuri siihen, mitä nostalgikko halajaa – vakaa ja pysyvä maailma, joka on vapaa menetyksistä ja ajan kulusta. (O’Grady 2003, 264.) Nostalgian puhetapoja käytetään artikkeleissa hyväksi vapaa-aikaan liittyvissä tarinoissa, joissa idealisoitu ja kuviteltu ”vanha hyvä aika” joutilaisuuksineen ja hemmotteluineen tekee esimerkiksi matkailukohteesta uutisen arvoisen.

1) Henkiin herätetyt perinteet

Kun autenttisuuden diskurssissa perinteiden jatkuvuus määrittää nykyisen tuotteen tai kokemuksen legitimitetin, nostalgiaa historian jatkumo on jossain vaiheessa päässyt katkeamaan. Runouden klassisten elegian tai pastoraalin – joissa kuolleen rakastajan tai lapsuuden maisemien ei ole tarkoituskaan milloinkaan palata (ks. Santesso 2006, 27, 39) – sijaan maaseutunostalgian kehyksissä kadotetun henkiin herättäminen tekee jutun aiheesta uutisoinnin arvoisen. Artikkelissa *Saaristokauppa on kylän Facebook* (26.6.2012) pääasiallisena puhetapana hyödynnetään edellä mainittua teemaa:

Suvisaariston mutkaisen tien varrella ollut Sjöbergin kauppa on herännyt henkiin.

”Meidän on pidettävä huoli, että tämä pysyy hengissä ja kauppiaan on pidettävä huoli, että sortimentti on kunnossa.”

Jutussa kyläkauppa määritellään kylän keskukseksi (”Tämä on meidän kylän Facebook”), tunnelmalliseksi sopukaksi isoissa marketeissa asioimisen ”tekniseen suorituk-

seen” verrattuna. Nostalgian lajityypille tavanomaisen makean melankolian sijaan Facebookia edeltänyt kyläkauppa kaivetaan haudastaan sosiaalisen kanssakäymisen keskipisteeksi. Myös jämtlandilaisessa ravintolassa (16.2.2013) hirvistä valmistettujen makkaroiden kyytipoikana tarjoillaan itse tislattua viinaa, sillä myös ”entisaikaan monet ravintolat tuottivat omat viinansa”. Vanhat, kerran kadonneet tavat otetaan uuden yhteisöllisyyden ja käsityön vanavedessä innolla käyttöön. Passiivisen kaipuun sijaan Helsingin Sanomien nostalgiadiskurssiin liittyy näin aika ajoin aktiivisten ja innovatiivisten käytäntöjen myönteisiä kuvauksia.

2) Pää pähkinälehdossa – nostalgian romanttisuus ja ylellisyys

Kulttuurintutkija Michael Mikulakin mukaan länsimaisella kulttuurilla on pitkä ”maalle pakenemisen” historia. Maaseudun ja talonpoikaiselämän ihannoinnissa on pidetty arvossa viljeltyä, maalaismaista ja rauhanomaista ”puolivälin maisemaa” – paikkaa villin erämaan ja kaupungin sivilisaation välimaastossa. (2013, 98.) Helsingin Sanomien matkailujutun *Majatalot valvovat Nauvossa talvellakin* (21.12.2012) päällimmäisin teema on nostalginen kuvaus saaristosta karun mutta romanttisen elämän paikkana, luonnon ja kaupungin väliin jäävänä alueena. Artikkelin on pullollaan runollisia kuvauksia saariston talvisista maisemista: Saaristossa ”meri velloo leutona, ja kesä elää suolamarjoissa”, ”vesi väreilee kuin rypistynyt kiiltopaperi” ja lumisessa satamassa ”eläviä sieluja ei näy missään”.

Saaren reheviä laitumia pitää kasvukaudella auki lauma takkuisia Ylämaan lehmii. Muutoin luonto on lunastamassa saaren takaisin.

Saaristolaisidyylissä karu ja villi luonto on mahdollista kokea ylellisesti ja mukavasti, kuunnellen sileiden lakanoiden välistä, ”kuinka saari kitisee ja kolisee kääntäessään kylkeä routapeiton alla”. Sharon Zukinin mukaan autenttisuuden – ja tässä yhteydessä nostalgian – viehätyksen perustuu lupaukseen ”vaarattomasta vaarasta”, turvallisesta paikasta jännityksen ja ylellisyyden välissä (2010, 4).

Maaseudun ilot toimivat usein urbaanin arjen tasapainottajina. Oopperalaulaja Jyrki Anttilan vapaa-ajasta kertovassa artikkelissa *Pitkäkorvaa pataan* (29.11.2012) metsästys talonpoikaisena herrasmiesten askareena toimii keinona pitää kiireen keskellä yllä yhteyttä luontoon ja päästä tekemään jotakin omin käsin. Talonpoikaiselämä tuntuu kulttuurissamme houkuttelevalta erityisesti silloin, kun maaseutu nähdään nimenomaan herrasmiesten temmelyskenttänä ja varsinainen maataloustyö pyyhkiytyy yhtälöstä pois (Mikulak 2013, 105). Luonnollisen ruuan harrastaminen liittyy muutinkin esiteollisen ruuan kaipuuseen ja puhtaan maaseudun utopiaan, jossa ruuan hankinnan aktiviteetit kehystetään työhön kodinhoidon sijaan miellyttäväksi ja moraalisesti hyväksi valinnoiksi (Phillipov 2016, 112). Edellä mainitussa artikkelissa metsästys kuuluu oopperalaulajan arkeen yhtäältä ”yhtä luonnollisena osana elämää[ni] kuin kalastus”, toisaalta harrastus perustuu nimenomaan vapaaehtoisuuteen ja satunnaisuuteen:

Nykyään metsästys on suurta juhlaa, koska pääsen harrastamaan sitä harvemmin työkiireitteni ja pienten lasteni tähden.

Harrastamisen lisäksi maalaisidylli yhdistyy matkailuun ja ylelliseen hemmotteluun. Viron-matkailujutussa *Hyvää lahden takana* (7.6.2012) keskiluokkainen suomalainenkin pääsee maistamaan maaseutuidyllin romantiikkaa ja ylellisyyksiä yläluokkaisessa hengessä:

Suurin osa matkoistani suuntautuu kuitenkin maaseudulle, Muhun saarelle ratsastamaan. Siellä asutaan majataloissa, jonka emännät laittavat kotiruokaa. Kun on ollut koko päivän ulkona maastossa, merituulella ja pähkinälehdossa, ruoka maistuu.

Talonoikaiselämän nostalgian viehätysvoima tuntuukin teksteissä olevan nimenomaan ”vanhan hyvän ajan” yhteiskunnallisissa hierarkioissa, joiden kautta hyväosaiset turistit voivat leikinomaisesti hivuttautua lähemmäksi joutilasta aatelistuokkaa ja irtaantua arkisista vaatimuksista. Historioitsija Massimo Montanari (2006) toteaa, miten historiassa sivistynyt ihminen asetti itsensä luonnon ulkopuolelle, mutta luonnosta tuli samalla valveutuneiden ajattelijoiden hoivaama kuva, älyllinen kiinnostuksen ja teoretisoinnin kohde. Menneiden aikojen lisäksi tämä ajattelun tapa on voimissaan yhä edelleen. (Montanari 2006, 21.) Nostalgiasa luonto on neitseellistä, ja ihminen siitä erillään – ihminen ihanoi luontoa ja kuljeskelee sen ympäristöissä, olematta itse osa sitä.

Artikkelissa *Hippinä ja herrana Suomen suvessa* (6.7.2012) maaseutumatkailun ylellisyys ja ”vaaraton vaara” saavat kevyempiä sävyjä, kun ne yhdistetään laadukkaan luomuruuan ylellisyyteen ja aatelistelämän perinteisiin. Mustion linnassa ”jos jossain voi syödä herroiksi” luomuhärän, rapsakaksi paistetun kuhan ja oman puutarhan raparperien ansiosta. Erään kivikartanon alkuyössä ”joku liikkuu käytävällä”, ja aamulla ruokasaliin on ilmestynyt kaksi ylellisesti katettua paikkaa:

Keitetyt munat, erilaiset leikkeleet, kalalajit ja voisarvet tuovat mieleen entisajan loiston.

Kummitus osaa ainakin kokata.

Mikulakin (2013) mukaan harmonisen talonoikaisidyllin romantisointiin liittyy usein myös yhteiskunnallisen tasa-arvon kannalta kyseenalaisia piirteitä. Maaseutunostalgian kuviteltujen maisemien ja kapitalistisen maatalouden todellisten olosuhteiden välinen ilmeinen ristiriita korvataan tarkoin valituilla mielikuvilla vapaasta talonoikaiselämästä ja puhtaasta luonnosta. (Mikulak 2013, 100; 115.) Nostalgisissa diskursseissa epätasa-arvon ja yhteiskuntaluokan ongelmat on tapana sivuuttaa korostamalla juuri aitoutta ja luonnollisuutta – arvoja ja ominaisuuksia, jotka ovat näppärästi ikään kuin historian ulkopuolella. Luokkaetuoikeudet, maaperän hyödyntämisen mahdollisuudet sekä omistajuuden ja palkkatyön epätasapaino piiloutuvat puhtaaksi ja neitseelliseksi määritellyn luonnon taakse. (emt., 99.)

Yksi tutkijoiden (esim. Lynch & Giles 2013; Zimmerman 2015) kritiikin kohde on amerikkalainen ruokakirjailija ja mielipidevaikuttaja Michael Pollan, jonka vaatimukset siirtymisestä puhtaaseen ruokaan perustuvat kapeaan näkemykseen ruuantuotannon ja -kulutuksen todellisuuksista. Helsingin Sanomien artikkelissa *Se maukkain ateria* (23.2.2012) toimittaja päätyy Pollanin kanssa samoille linjoille mahdollisimman puhtaan ja omin käsin kasvatetun ruuan moraaliseen paremmuudesta ja yliveritaisuudesta mausta:

Pollan valmistaa aterian suoraan luonnosta: kasvattamalla, metsästämällä, kalastamalla, keräämällä. Hän kuivattaa suolaa merestä ja tekee jopa hiivaa!

Avaan pakastimeni: itse poimittuja mansikoita ja mustikoita, vihanneksia omalta maalta, kymenlaaksolaista hirvää ja Suomenlahden villikalaa. Jälleen kerran olen tyytyväinen siitä, että monet modernista maailmasta kadonneet asiat ovat meillä yhä mahdollisia, totta ja arkipäivää.

Sekä Pollanin puhutteleva ”me amerikkalaiset” että artikkelin ”me” sulkevat ulkopuolelleen suuren osan kuluttajista. Artikkelissa omavaraisuus liitetään osaksi luonnonmukaisuutta ja maanläheistä menneisyyttä vastakohtana ”modernille maailmalle”. Ruuan valinnoissa – ja välttämättömyyksissä – mahdollisuus, totuus ja arkipäiväisyys määrittyvät usein kuitenkin ensisijaisesti pääoman ja taloudellisten resurssien kautta. Luonnollinen ja autenttinen limittyvät usein vanhoihin erottautumisen tapoihin ja historiallisesti maskuliinisiin, valkoiisiin ja keskiluokkaisiin makukäsityksiin (Zimmerman 2015, 46). Samaten ruokajournalismi voi samaan aikaan sekä kritisoida vallalla olevia ruokatuotannon tapoja että toimia syrjivien uusliberaalien ajatusmallien mukaisesti (Phillipov 2016, 112).

Rahan näkymättömyys

Arkinen ruuan valinta sekä heijastaa että luo uudelleen yhteiskunnan kulttuurisia valtarakenteita. Johnstonin ja Baumannin mukaan luonnollisen ja eettisen syömisen merkityskenttää määrittää jännite kuluttajuuden, yksilöllisen valinnan ja mielihyvän sekä kansalaisuuden ja ekologisen vastuun ideologioiden välillä, ja jännitteen esiin tuomisen sijaan ruuan journalistisissa diskursseissa ristiriitaa pyritään vähentämään hyödyntämällä *win-win* -näkökulmaa (2015, 113), jossa kakku on mahdollista sekä säästää että syödä – luonnonmukainen kuluttaja voi sekä pelastaa puhtaan luonnon että nautiskella herkullisen ruuan tuomasta täyttymyksestä. Jännite minimoidaan usein myös Helsingin Sanomien aineistossa, jossa luomu- ja/tai lähiruuan tärkein kriteeri on maukkaus, ei välttämättä eettisyys tai ekologisuus (esim. HS 15.8.2016 ja 23.2.2012).

Laadun, käsityön, aitouden ja talonpoikaisnostalgian idyllien vastavoima – autenttisen ruuan eksklusiivisuuden tai todellisten ruokavalintojen epätasa-arvoisuuden esille tuominen – pitkälti puuttuu myönteisen kategorian teksteistä. Autenttisuus-

desta puhuttaessa puhutaan perinteistä, konstailemattomuudesta, laadusta, mausta, historiasta ja käsityöstä – ei koskaan rahasta.

Esimerkiksi eräässä talousartikkelissa (12.5.2016) kymmenien McDonald's -pikaruokaketjun ravintoloiden omistajasta Hannu Siitarisesta kerrotaan, kuinka hänen ravintolansa takovat miljoonia ja kuinka "Siitarinen näyttää silmiinpistävän siistissä puvussaan ja tyylikkäästi harmaantuneissa hiuksissaan liikemieheltä, mitä hän todella onkin". Vertailukohtana pikaruokahampurilaisille ja bisnekselle artikkelissa mainitaan gourmet-hampurilaiset sekä niihin liittyvä pihvien paistopinta, "pöhinä", pientuottajat, "charolais-rotukarjan liha" sekä julkkiskokit, joista esimerkiksi Henri Alénin kerrotaan komeilevan "uusimman Image-lehden kannessa sinappihodarin välissä nakina". Gourmet-hampurilaisista puhuttaessa raha muuttuu epäolennaiseksi seikaksi, ja rahan näkymättömyys alleviivaa kehyksessä luotua esteettisyyden ja kulinaarisen intohimon legitimizeettiä. Autenttisuus todistetaan yksinkertaisuuden, rentouden ja taiteellisen luovuuden välisessä dialogissa, ja se tulee esiin nimenomaan länsimaisissa kulinaarisen eliitin yhteyksissä (Paddock 2014, 22; Johnston & Baumann 2007, 187).

Nostalgian diskurssissa rahasta, distinktioista tai statuksesta puhutaan vieläkin vähemmän, eikä tasa-arvoisuus tai saavutettavuus yllä teksteissä edes rivien väliin. Kenties artikkeleiden tyylin elämyksellisyys tai idyllinen satumaisuus liittyy jutun aiheen viktoriaanisen nostalgian (ks. Joyce 2007) kaanoniin, jossa "kansa" tai "raha" vain pilaisivat illuusion romanttisesta kohteesta ja sotkisivat luodun narratiivin yhtenäisyyden. Nostalgia-diskurssin analyysissa esiin tuomani esimerkit metsästyksestä, ratsastuksesta, pähkinälehdosta tai gourmet-kummituksista liittävät nostalgian leikkisiin kartanoseikkailuihin ja ilahduttaviin metsäretkiin, jotka toimivat ikään kuin eri tekstuaalisella tasolla kuin elämän realiteetit.

Menneisyyden ihannoiti ruokajournalismin näkökulmien rajaajana

Luomu- ja lähiruuan journalistisia diskursseja on mahdollista eritellä monin eri tavoin: analyttisissa näkökulmissa voi korostaa esimerkiksi terveellisyttä, moraalila, huolenpitoa tai yksilöllisyyttä. Tässä artikkelissa olen kiinnittänyt huomioni niihin tapoihin, joiden avulla luonnonmukainen ruoka legitimoidaan – oikeutetaan ja määritellään hyväksi – Helsingin Sanomien artikkeleissa. Olen pureutunut luomu- ja lähiruuan teksteihin, joissa luonnonmukaista ruokaa legitimoidaan erityisesti autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskursseja hyväksi käyttäen. Sekä luonnonmukaisesti tuotetun ruuan valvottu sertifikaatti että luomu- ja lähiruokaan kytkeytyvät laajemmat, puhtauteen ja luonnollisuuteen viittaavat näkökulmat liittyvät aitouden, epäteollisen, perinteiden ja maaseudun merkitysulottuvuuksiin.

Autenttisuuteen viittaavien puhetapojen (perinteiden, historian, käsityön, henkilökohtauksuuden ja yksinkertaisuuden) avulla tekstit perustelevat lukijalleen kerta kerralta uudelleen, miksi kulloinkin artikkelin valokeilaan otettu ruoka, henkilö tai perinne määrittyy autenttiseksi ja ansaitsee siten sekä lukijoiden että kulttuurin por-

tinvartioiden arvostuksen ja huomion. Autenttisuuden puhetapojen hyödyntämisen tarkoituksena on osoittaa, ettei kuvattu ruoka ole *mitä tahansa*, vaan juuri *jotakin tiettyä*.

Monet autenttisuuteen liitetyt merkitykset – paikallisuus, historiallisuus ja alkuperäisyys – kytkeytyvät mediateksteissä ja globaalissa kulttuurissa erityisesti matkailuun ja turismiin. Autenttisuuden kokemuksen tärkeyttä turismissa ja matkailuliiketoiminnassa on tutkittu runsaasti (esim. Reisinger & Steiner 2006; Knudsen & Waade 2010). Helsingin Sanomien aineistossakin autenttisuuden ja myös nostalgian diskursit painottuvat jossain määrin matkailuartikkeleihin.⁹ Matkakohteiden autenttisuutta todistelevissa teksteissä legitimoitujen luomu- ja lähiruoka toimivat sekä matkailuartikkelien pääasiallisina aiheina että kohteesta kerrottavan tarinan ja ”aitouden” kuvituselementteinä. Autenttisuus on *paikan tuntua*: Esimerkiksi autenttiseksi määritellyistä ravintoloista kertovien tekstien rivien välistä voi aistia sanoman siitä, kuinka ”tällaisia ei löydy enää mistään”. Näin autenttisuus on kaikessa yksinkertaisuudessaan ja inhimillisyydessään myös harvinaisuutta, ja siten kulttuurisesti vahva legitimitietin osoittaja.

Nostalgian diskurssissa vanha on aina parempi kuin uusi, uurastus poissaolevaa ja oletetun menneisyyden kehystykset idyllisyydessään valikoivia. Luonnonmukaisen ruuan liike ja siinä hyödynnetyt diskurssit ovat vuosien varrella joutuneet regressiivisen nostalgiansa vuoksi arvostelun kohteiksi, usein aiheesta (esim. Ladino 2014, 5). Menneisyyteen pälyileminen muuttaa näyn väistämättä vääristymäksi, osin ymmärrettäväksikin yksinkertaistukseksi monimutkaisesta historiasta (Joyce 2007, 4).

Miksi puhua ruokakulttuurin nyansseista vakavampien ongelmien, kuten epävaakaan globaalin politiikan ja taloudellisten kriisien aikakaudella? Monestakin syystä. Johnstonin ja Baumannin mukaan ruokapuhe ei ole tutkimusnäkökulmana ainoastaan tärkeä, vaan myös välttämätön. Globaalin finanssikriisin mainingeissa ruokakeskustelu ja laaja kiinnostus ruuan ilmiöitä kohtaan eivät ole kadonneet minnekään – päinvastoin, monet kuluttajat näkevät ruuan verrattain edullisena luksushyödykkeenä, josta nauttiminen on mahdollista, vaikka esimerkiksi hintavat autot tai kiinteistöt olisivat liukuneet maksukyvyyn ulkopuolelle. (2015, vii.) Kulinarismin diskurssit ja ruokatrendit kulttuurisina ilmiöinä ovat keskeisempiä kuin koskaan ennen, ja ne myös koskettavat entisajan *gourmandeihin* (ks. esim. Chiaro & Rossato 2015, 240) verrattuna hyvin suurta osaa kuluttajista.

Helsingin Sanomissa luonnonmukainen ruoka ja siihen kytkeytyvä elämäntyyli legitimoidaan merkittävässä määrin sellaisten diskurssien avulla, jotka perustuvat – vaikkapa monimuotoisuuden sijasta – perinteisiin, historian ihannointiin ja aitouteen viittaaviin ominaisuuksiin. Valitut diskursiiviset strategiat kaventavat niitä tapoja, joilla ruuasta ja legitiimistä mausta on julkisessa keskustelussa sopivaa puhua. Esteettisinä määreinä autenttisuus ja nostalgia ohjaavat tulkintoja kulttuurintuotteiden kiinnostavuudesta ja suuntaavat kulttuurista (ja moraalista) valtaa esimerkillisinä pidettyjen ominaisuuksien perusteella. Autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskursseja analysoimalla on mahdollista tuoda näkyviksi niitä kriteereitä, joita hyödyntämällä ruokia, ihmisiä ja kokemuksia arvotetaan.

Autenttisuuden ja nostalgian puhetapoja hyödyntävä ruokajournalismi toimii näkökulmiltaan luomu- ja lähiruokaan viittaavien elämäntyylien esittelyn ja ihailun epäpoliittisella tasolla, jossa urbaani hyväosaisuus näyttäytyy normina ja yhteiskunnallisen eriarvoisuuden käsittely jää diskurssin ulkopuolelle. Tämän artikkelin aineiston lisäksi Helsingin Sanomien 414 tekstin kokonaisaineistoon kuuluu kuitenkin juttuja, jotka osoittavat, miten suomalaisen journalismin diskursiivisiin ulottuvuuksiin mahtuu hyvin monenlaisia näkökulmia – myös yksittäisen lehden sisällä. Vuosien 2011–2013 ja 2016–2017 (erityisesti näkökulmiltaan ironisissa tai kriittisissä) teksteissä viitataan hämmästyttävän usein sosiaalisen epätasa-arvon kysymyksiin: luokkiin, köyhyyteen ja leipäjonoihin, sekä vastaavasti kritisoidaan ”ruokaelitismiä” ja määritetään luomu- ja lähiruuan kuluttaminen osaksi symbolisen pääoman ja statuksen korostamisen perinnettä. Aineistossa siis sekä noudatetaan hegemonisia legitimiin ruuan diskursseja että kommentoidaan näiden puhetapojen mahdollisia epätasa-arvoisuuksia sisältäpäin. Ainoastaan luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoiviin lehtiteksteihin keskittyminen valaisee Helsingin Sanomien hyödyntämiä diskursiivisista strategioista vain yhdestä näkökulmasta.

Helsingin Sanomien luomu- ja lähiruoka-artikkelien sisällöt vaikuttavat eroavan siten tässä suhteessa *kokonaisuutena* merkittävästi esimerkiksi amerikkalaisten ruokadiskurssien (ks. Johnston & Baumann 2015) näkökulmista. Syy, miksi näin on tai miten epätasa-arvon näkökulmat käytännössä tulevat artikuloituiksi, vaatii jatkotutkimusta luomu- ja lähiruokatekstien ristiriitaisista näkökulmista. Autenttisuuden ja nostalgian operoidessa pääosin yhteiskunnallisten kysymysten ulkopuolisessa diskursiivisessa todellisuudessa luonnonmukaisen ruuan moraalin, politiikkojen, valta-asetelmien ja ideologisten taustarakennelmien saama kriittinen huomio kertoo ruuan diskurssien monipuolisuudesta ja ristiriitaisuudesta – siitäkin huolimatta, että autenttisuuden, elämäntyylin ja distinktion puhetavat ovat kritiikkejään normatiivisempia ja istuvat huomiota herättämättä paikallaan ruokajournalismin elämäntyylien ja vapaan valinnan ideologiassa.

Viitteet

- 1 *Luomu* viittaa ruuantuotannon, viljelyn ja tuotantoeläinten hoidon luonnonmukaisuuteen. Luomusertifikaatti perustuu tavallista perusteellisempaan viranomaistarkkailuun ja tuotantomenetelmien valvontaan (Elintarvikevirasto Evira, 2018. Viitattu 1.12.2018. <http://www.evira.fi/portal/fi/tietoa+evirasta/asiakokonaisuudet/luomu/>). Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön mukaan *lähiruualla* tarkoitetaan erityisesti paikallisuutta, joka edistää oman alueen paikallistaloutta, työllisyyttä ja ruokakulttuuria, joka on tuotettu ja jalostettu oman alueen raaka-aineista ja joka markkinoidaan ja kulutetaan omalla alueella (Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö. Viitattu 1.12.2018. <https://mmm.fi/lahiruoka>).
- 2 Aineiston lifestyle-artikkeleissa ero a) luomusertifikaatin ja b) luonnonmukaisuuden välillä hämärtyy usein, ja luomua tai lähiruokaa käytetään adjektiivina, kohteen kuvailun apuvälineenä: ”Mikä on pelkkää luomua, sisältää ohraa, kauraa ja voita? Kulinaristinen hiihtovaellus Pohjois-Karjalassa tietenkin” (16.12.2011); ”Ylitsepuosuvan omenasadon kanssa tuskailejoita kannustan oitis lähiluomufennovegaanisen nautintoaineen tekoon” (13.9.2012).
- 3 Aineisto koostuu kahdesta yhtenäisestä lehtiartikkelien julkaisu vuosien jaksosta (2011–2013 sekä 2016–2017) kahden erillisen aineistonkeruuprosessin vuoksi: aineiston ensimmäinen osa on kerätty vuosina 2013–2015 opinnäytteen analyysia varten, ja jälkimmäinen osa lisänä edelliseen, vuonna 2017.

- 4 Aineistohaun hakusanoiksi valittiin sekä ”luomu” että ”lähiruoka” niiden yhteisen, ruokakulttuurin trendeihin liittyvän diskursiivisen ulottuvuuden vuoksi. Luomun ja lähiruuan analysoiminen yhdessä mahdollistaa ympäristöystävällisen ja luonnollisen syömisen ilmiön diskurssien monipuolisen tarkastelun.
- 5 *Levikkitilasto 2016*. Media Audit Finland, 2017. Viitattu 24.10.2017.
<http://mediaauditfinland.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Levikkitilasto-2016.pdf>
- 6 *Helsingin Sanomien periaatelinja*. Helsingin Sanomat, 2013. Viitattu 25.10.2017.
<https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-200002604272.html>
- 7 Olen jaotellut kokonaisaineistossa käytetyt kehystämisen tavat kategorioihin neutraali (54% aineiston teksteistä), myönteinen (21%), kehottava (9,5%), kriittinen (6%), ironinen (5%) ja ambivalentti (2,5%). Kriittinen ja ironinen kategoria muodostavat mainitsemani 11% osuuden, jossa luomu- ja/tai lähiruoka määrittävät huonoiksi tai ivan kohteiksi. Luokitukset perustuvat aineiston sisällön erittelyyn, ja lehtitekstit luokituvat eri kategorioihin sen perusteella, minkälaista julkisuutta ne pääasiassa luomu- ja lähiruualle tekstissä tuottavat.
- 8 ransk. *terroir*: perinteen ja paikallisen mikroilmaston yhdistävä käsite (Mayhew 2015).
- 9 Kaikista luomu- ja lähiruokaa legitimoivista myönteisistä lehtiteksteistä 33 prosenttia keskittyi kotimaan- tai ulkomaanmatkailuun. Olettaessa huomioon ainoastaan autenttisuuden ja nostalgian diskursseja hyödyntävät lehtitekstit, matkailujuttujen osuus nousee aineistossa 42 prosenttiin.

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PUBLICATION
II

**Ruokakulttuuria keskiluokan armosta: Yhteiskuntaluokkaan kytkeytyvät
diskurssit Helsingin Sanomien luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä**

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Ruokakulttuuria keskiluokan armosta

Kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja luokka Helsingin Sanomien luomuruokateksteissä



Kaisa Tiusanen

Mediavälitteinen ruokakulttuuri on ikkuna kulttuurisiin hierarkioihin. Tarkastelen artikkelissani sitä, miten kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja luokkakulttuurit näkyvät luonnonmukaista ruokaa käsittelevissä sanomalehtiteksteissä. Luomu- ja lähiruokaan kytkeytyvää kulttuurista erottautumista sekä tuotetaan uudelleen että kritisoidaan Helsingin Sanomien diskursseissa. Moniäänisyydestä huolimatta luonnonmukainen ruoka määrittyy teksteissä keskiluokkaisten kulttuuristen ideaalien kautta, eikä keskiluokkaisen ruokakulttuurin hegemonia tule teksteissä kyseenalaistetuksi.

Julkinen keskustelu kulttuurisista hierarkioista ja yhteiskuntaluokista on vinnut Suomessa varsinaisesti vasta 2000-luvulla, jolloin yleisiä käsityksiä luokkapuheen sopimattomuudesta sekä suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta olemattomien luokkaerojen ihmemaana on alettu purkaa (esim. Kolbe & Järvinen 2007; Kahma 2011). Tälle keskustelulle on ollut ominaista kulttuuristen hierarkioiden käsittely nimenomaan elämäntyyli-

en, yksilöllisyyden, luokkakulttuurien ja hyvän maun tai legitiimien kulutustottumusten kautta. Kulttuurisista eronetoista puhutaan entistä suuremmin, ja erot makumieltymyksissä tai kuluttamisessa jäljitetään tyyppillisesti eriytyneisiin luokkakulttuureihin.

Päivittäisjournalismissakin luokkien elämäntyyllisistä eroavaisuuksista uutisoidaan tasaiseen tahtiin ja erityisesti lukijoiden mahdollisuus oman ma-

kunsa ”mittaamiseen” enemmän tai vähemmän leikkimielisten testien avulla on tullut tutuksi viime vuosina. *Helsingin Sanomissa* omaa paikkaansa yhteiskunnan hierarkiassa voi tutkailla muun muassa vertaamalla itseään kyselyiden tuottamiin tuloksiin (”Kysely paljastaa, miten Suomessa saa elitistin leiman – jopa kahvin väri vaikuttaa” 25.6.2017), erilaisilla testeillä (”Testaa, syötkö kuin keskiverto suomalainen”

2.10.2017), *Kuukausliitteen* Luokkakoneella (4.11.2016) tai testaamalla, onko itsellä mahdollisesti hyvä maku (7.9.2014). Kuten edellä mainituissa testeissä myös kyselyiden tuolle puolen ulottuvissa median sisällöissä ruoka valikoituu yhä useammin kulttuurisen erottautumisen mittariksi.

Tarkastelen tässä artikkelissa sitä, miten kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja yhteiskuntaluokka näkyvät luomu- ja lähiruokaa käsittelevissä sanomalehti-artikkeleissa. Ruoan kulttuurintutkimus avaa yhteiskunnallisen ja kulttuurisen eriarvoisuuden monisyisyyttä sekä sitä, miten eriarvoisuus tuotetaan jatkuvasti uudelleen arjen diskursseissa (Johnston & Baumann 2015, viii). Ruoka on näppärä symbolisten erontekojen kenttä, sillä syöminen on kuluttamista johon jokaisen on otettava osaa hengissä pysyäkseen, ja erot ruokavalinnoissa näkyvät päivittäisessä elämässä (esim. Bourdieu 1984). Lisäksi snobbailevan kerskakulutuksen muuttuessa epämuodikkaaksi ruoalla – jota ostetaan ”joka tapauksessa” esimerkiksi uusiin autoihin tai turkiksiin verrattuna – voi tuoda esiin omaa identiteettiä, erottautua muista ja samalla kiertää yltiöpäiseen kuluttamiseen liittyvät moraalittomuuden syytökset (ks. De Solier 2013).

Journalistisissa teksteissä ruoan arjen käytännöt tiivistyvät vaivihkaa

elämäntavoiksi ja -politiikoiksi, jotka lopulta vaikuttavat käsityksiimme arvokkaasta tai arvottomasta kansalaisuudesta ja kuluttajuudesta. Kamppailu ruoan diskursseista nivoutuu käsityksiin muun muassa hyvästä elämästä, luokasta ja eettisyydestä (ks. Mikulak 2013, 85). Ruoka-aiheiden kyllästävässä maailmassa median ruokatekstien kautta on mahdollista tarkastella yhteiskunnan keskeisiä suuria kysymyksiä (van der Meulen & Wiesel 2017, 22), ja ruokaan kytkeytyvät diskurssit toimivat ikkunoina yhteiskunnallisiin ja kulttuurisiin hierarkioihin.

Pyrin tässä artikkelissa selvittämään, minkälaisia kulttuurisia erontekoja luomu- ja lähiruokateksteissä tuotetaan, millaisiin luokkakulttuureihin eettisen ruoan kuluttaminen diskursseissa kiinnittyy ja minkälaisiin diskurssiivisiin keinoihin nämä käytännöt nojaavat. Artikkelini etenee kulttuurisen erottautumisen ja luonnonmukaisen ruoan aiemman tutkimuksen esitellystä aineiston kuvailuun ja edelleen diskursianalyysiin. Analyysissä käsitelen ruokaan kietoutuvaa eriarvoisuutta esiin tuovaa yhteiskuntakriittistä diskurssia, keskiluokan kulttuuriseen erottautumiseen nojaavaa diskurssia sekä eettisen ruokakulttuurin tasa-arvoisuutta alleviivaavaa diskurssia. Lopuksi kokoan yhteen aineiston puhetaivoista nousseita

yhtenäisyyksiä ja ristiriitaisuuksia.

Kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja luonnonmukainen ruoka

Kulttuurisen erottautumisen yhteys ruoan kuluttamiseen kiinnittyy nykypäivän kulttuurintutkimuksessa erityisesti keskiluokkaan, luonnonmukaisuuteen sekä kaikkiruokaisen maun teoretisointeihin. Keskiluokan sekä erityisesti koulutetun, kaupunkilaisen keskiluokan hegemoninen asema näkyy ruokapöydässä ja ruoan diskursseissa. Laura Kolben (2007, 140–141) mukaan ei ole sattumaa, että juuri ruoka ja ruokakulttuuri ovat nousseet aikamme suosikkiaiheiksi: ruoan avulla tehdään sosiaalisia ja kulttuurisia asemointeja sekä erottautuessa kulttuurisesti etäisistä ihmisryhmistä että piirretessä hiuksenhienoja makueroja toistensa kaltaisten luokkien välille.

Käsitys elämäntyyleistä, mausta ja kulutuksesta hierarkkisesti järjestyneinä ja yhteiskuntaluokkien välistä hierarkiaa vastaavina pohjautuu sosiologi Pierre Bourdieun tutkimuksiin *distinktioista* (1984). Se, mitä pidetään arvokkaana ja hyvänä kulttuurina liittyy taisteluihin sosiaalisesta arvovallasta. Tätä statuskamppailua käydään nimenomaan kulttuurin piirissä tapahtuvan erottautumisen avulla. (Purhonen ym.

2014.) Kulttuurista erottautumista voi tutkimuksellisesti lähestyä maun ja habituksen käsitteiden kautta.¹ Maku on yksi tärkeimmistä panoksista luokkien taistelussa kulttuurisesta määrittelyvalasta ja keskeinen symbolisen vallan väline: maun avulla luokittelemme ihmisiä ja esineitä sekä tulemme muiden luokittelemiksi (Purhonen ym. 2014, 16; Bourdieu 1984, 11).

Habitus määrittää sitä, miten yksilö luokittelee omaa todellisuuttaan ja niitä kulutustuotteita, joille tämä todellisuus hänet altistaa. Habitus manifestoituu makuina ja kulutuskäyttäytymisenä, mikä puolestaan johtaa distinktiivisten ja eriytyneiden kulutusmallien – elämäntyylien – muodostumiseen. Kulutuksen kentällä maut ja niiden ilmentämät elämäntyyliyt ovat kerrostuneita sosiaalisten erojen mukaisesti, ja kuluttamisen kenttä on siten jäsentynyt luokka-aseman määrittämien elämäntyylien pohjalta. (Holt 1998, 4.) Habitus on ruumiillistunut toimintatapumusten kokonaisuus, joka yksilön sosiaaliseen asemaan ja aiempaan kokemuspohjaan perustuvana asettaa rakenteelliset rajat toiminnalle ja mahdollistaa tietynlaisia havaitsemisen ja toiminnan käytäntöjä (Purhonen ym. 2014). Tällä tavoin sisäistynyt maku toimii lopulta sekä ikään kuin perittyinä ja legitimiiksi tiivistyneenä kulttuuripääomana että ylempien luokkien he-

gemoniaa neutralisoivana ja diskursiivisesti näkymättömäksi tekevästä mekanismina. Maut ovat ennen kaikkea luokkamakua, ja legitimi maku määrittyy yhteiskunnan kulttuurisesti valtaa pitävän luokan maun mukaiseksi (Gronow 2002, 28).

Valtamedian diskursseissa elämäntapoihin ja kulttuuriseen erottautumiseen kiinnittyvät näkökulmat muodostuvat keskiluokkaisten käsitteellistysten kautta, ja tästä syystä keskiluokkaa koskevat teoretisoinnit ovat artikkelin teoreettisessa kehystämässä keskeisiä. Artikkelin näkökulma pohjautuu yhdysvaltalaisen ja brittiläisen kulttuurintutkimuksen (esim. Skeggs 2004; Lawler 2005; Shugart 2014) ymmärryksen keskiluokasta, jossa keskiluokka viittaa hegemoniseen valtakulttuuriin ja sen sanelempiin arvoihin varsinaisten olemassa olevien keskiluokkaisten yksilöiden sijasta. Keskiluokan käsite ei kulttuurintutkimuksessa kuvaa myöskään ensisijaisesti keskituloisuutta, vaan käsitteellä viitataan keskiluokkaan identiteettinä, jolla on valta siirtää muita, vähemmän legitimiin luokkakulttuuriin kytkeytyviä elämäntyyliä kulttuurin keskiöstä marginaaleihin.

Lauri Lahikaisen ja Katariina Mäkinen mukaan keskiluokkaa on kiinnostavaa tarkastella nimenomaan poliittisena tekijänä, jolloin päästään käsiksi nii-

hin ideologisiin merkityksiin, joita keskiluokkaiseen elämään on ladattu (2012, 8). Keskiluokkainen elämäntapa – yritteliäisyys, kohtuus, kunniallisuus ja hyvä maku – näyttäytyy kulttuurissamme samanaikaisesti sekä tavallisuutena että hyvän elämän mallina. Keskiluokkaisuuden ja siihen kietoutuvien hegemonisten kulttuuristen tapojen avulla häivytetään niitä materiaalisia eroja ja ristiiriitoja, jotka väistämättä vaikuttavat siihen, minkälaisista lähtökohdista ja millaisilla panoksilla keskiluokkaisen ”hyvän elämän” ideaalia yhteiskunnassa tavoitellaan. (Mt.) Keskiluokka määrittelee itsensä erojen kautta, ja myös käsillä olevassa analyysissä erot muihin määrittelevät keskiluokkaisen normin olemassaolon ja paikan yhteiskunnassa.

Keskiluokkaisuus joko sosiologisen empirisenä luokitteluna tai kulttuurintutkimuksellisenä ymmärryksenä legitimoimista, normatiivisesta elämäntyylistä ei kuitenkaan täysin tavoita niitä eron-tekkoja, joita tehdään jatkuvasti keskiluokan sisällä. Koska keskiluokan olemassaolo määrittyy ensi sijassa eroissa ja symbolisissa etäisyyksissä, tämän legitimiuden paikka liikkuu sen mukaan, kenen silmin maailmaa milloinkin katsotaan. Siinä missä keskiluokka hakee etäisyyttä työväenluokkaan, ylempi keskiluokka pyrkii erottautumaan ”tavallisesta” keskiluokkaisuudesta entistä

distinktiivisempiä makuja ja elämäntyyliä ilmentämällä (esim. Johnston & Baumann 2007; Kaplan 2013; Cappellini ym. 2012). Ylempään keskiluokkaan viitataan tutkimuskirjallisuudessa vaihtelevin termein. Kulttuurisen erottautumisen yleisessä luokittelussa uusi keskiluokka (esim. Giddens 1981; Lange & Meier 2009), korkean kulttuuripääoman perusteella määrittyvä ihmisryhmä (esim. Holt 1998; Carfagna ym. 2014), liberaali koulutettu keskiluokka (Zimmerman 2015) ja ruoankulutuksen saralla *foodiet* (Johnston & Baumann 2015) kuvaavat kaikki sitä länsimaisen hierarkian joukkoa, jolla on kulutuskulttuurin saralla eniten määrittelyvaltaa.

Luonnonmukaisen ruoan konteksteissa identifioutuminen esimerkiksi koulutetun keskiluokan jäseneksi tai foodieksi palautuu lähes aina kaikkiruokaisuuteen maun ja kuluttamisen saralla. Kaikkiruokaisuudella (esim. Peterson & Kern 1996) viitataan viime vuosikymmeninä tapahtuneeseen korkeakulttuurin ja massakulttuurin välisten jyrkkien rajanvetojen murtumiseen. Ruoan kohdalla kaikkiruokaisuuden ihanne näkyy tasa-arvoisuuden korostamisessa sekä hyvän ja huonon maun muuttuneissa määritelmissä. Tasa-arvoisuus (esim. Johnston & Baumann 2015) puolestaan viittaa kulttuuriseen vastaiskuun snobistiselle ruokakulttuurille, jossa hyvän

ja huonon maun rajat ovat noudattaneet korkean ja matalan jakolinjoja. Tasa-arvoisuuden ideaalissa korostuvat konservatiivisen laatuikäilyksen ja muodollisen illallistamisen sijaan ruokakulttuurin solidaarisuus, globaalius sekä erilaisen etnisyyksien ja identiteettien arvostaminen.

Kaikkiruokaisuuden kulttuurissa legitiimin ja epälegitiimin ruokakulttuurin välille vedetään rajoja aiempaa monimutkaisemmin keinoin, pyrkimyksenä tasapainottaa erottautumisen tarve tasa-arvoisuuden ideaalin kanssa (Leer 2016, 3). Kaikkiruokaisuutta korostavassa ruokakulttuurissa tasa-arvoisuuden ideaali kietoutuu yhteen ”perinteisen” distinktiivisen syömisen kanssa (esim. Johnston & Baumann 2015). Arvostettuina ruokina pidetään autenttisia, eksoottisia, korkealaatuisia, luovuutta korostavia, terveellisiä ja eettisiä ruokia (mt.; Tiisanen 2018). Edellä mainitut ominaisuudet viestivät ruoan eettisyydestä välttämättömyyden aiheuttamiin kuluttamisen realiteetteihin – ne viittaavat samanaikaisesti korkeaan moraaliin, asiantuntijuuteen, kulttuuriseen pääomaan sekä siihen, että ruoan tyyllisiin ominaisuuksiin on mahdollisuus käyttää rahaa.

Nykyajan ruokakulttuurissa keskeisen kehityksen mukainen kuluttaminen toimii erityisen hedelmällisenä

kulttuurisen erottautumisen ja kaikkiruokaisuuden eetosanalyysin kenttänä. Ruokamarkkinoilla ja niiden analyysissä vihreät arvot nimetään usein luonnonmukaisuudeksi, luonnollisuudeksi, ekologisuudeksi tai eettisyydeksi – kontekstista ja painopisteestä (ja alkuperäiskielestä) riippuen. Eettisen kuluttamisen voi määritellä kuluttamiseksi, jossa tuotteita ostetaan ja käytetään henkilökohtaisten mieltymysten lisäksi niihin kiinnittyneiden, oikeaan ja hyvään viittaavien moraalisten ominaisuuksien vuoksi (Johnston ym. 2011, 295). Useissa tutkimuksissa on havaittu korrelaatio korkean koulutuksen, tulojen ja kulttuurisen pääoman sekä luonnonmukaista ruokaa kohtaan esiin tuotujen myönteisten asenteiden välillä (esim. Carfagna ym. 2014; Niva ym. 2014). Eettisen syömisen diskurssiin (esim. Johnston ym. 2012) kuuluvat sekä henkilökohtaisten kulutusvalintojen korostaminen että yhteisen hyvän edistäminen, ja diskurssi rakentaa kuluttajista muutosta aikaan saavia toimijoita.

Heidi Zimmermannin (2015) mukaan eettisen kuluttamisen eetos tarjoaa tilaisuuden uudelle yhteiskuntaluokkaan kiinnittyvälle elämäntyyliille, joka lupaa lievittää kapitalistiseen keskiluokkaiseen elämäntapaan liittyvää ahdistusta. Monia eettisen syömisen ja kuluttamisen näkökulmia ja toteutuksia voi

Zimmermanin mukaan pitää elitistisinä: ruoanlaitto, puutarhanhoito, ruokapiirit ja luomuvihannesten yhteisöpalstat vaativat kaikki huomattavaa vapaa-aikaa, fyysistä ja maantieteellistä liikkuvuutta sekä taloudellisia resursseja. Eettisen syömisen realiteetit johtavat moraaliseen hierarkiaan, kun ainoastaan tiettyihin aktiviteetteihin kykenevät ihmiset voivat toteuttaa itseään hyvinä kansalaisina. (Mt., 33–34.) Ruoan valinnasta kertovat merkit ovat keskeisessä asemassa muodostaessamme käsityksiä yhteiskunnallisesti hyväksyttävistä kansalaisista tai kuluttajista (Cairns ym. 2010, 596).

Aineisto ja tutkimusmetodi

Artikkeli pohjautuu laajaan lehtiartikkeliaineistoon, joka koostuu *Helsingin Sanomissa* vuosina 2011–2013 ja 2016–2017² julkaistusta teksteistä tai tekstikokonaisuuksista, joissa ”luomu” ja/tai ”lähiruoka” mainitaan. Analyysi rajautuu lehtiartikkeleihin, joissa ruoka mainitaan yhteydessä luokkaan (mm. työväenluokka, keskiluokka), elintason (mm. pienituloinen, hyvätuloinen, huono-osainen, köyhät, rikkaat) tai muihin taloudellisiin tekijöihin (mm. hinta, edullisuus, kalleus, palkka, tasa-arvo, eri-arvoisuus) sekä kulttuuriseen ja yhteiskunnalliseen statukseen (mm. massat,

porvaristo, eliitti, luksus). Lisäksi tekstien sisältöjen tuli liittyä ihmisiin tai ihmisryhmiin, ja käsittelyn tuli viitata eroihin syömisessä, varallisuudessa tai kuluttamisessa. Näiden aineistolähtöisten rajausten kautta kohdistan huomioni ihmisiin merkityksenantoihin ja eroteluiden muodostamiseen sekä luokan saamiin merkityksiin. Artikkelin analyysi pohjautuu 40 lehtiartikkelin kriittiseen diskurssianalyysiin.

Käsitän diskurssin tässä artikkelissa puhettavaksi, joka representoi sosiaalista todellisuutta tietyistä näkökulmasta ja mahdollistaa todellisuuden näkemisen jollakin tietyllä tavalla, samalla rajoittaen muita tapoja, joilla aihe voitaisiin esittää (Foucault 1981; Hall 1999). Kriittisessä diskurssianalysissä diskurssien ajatellaan osallistuvan kamppailuun yhteiskunnan valta-asemista tiettyjen hierarkioiden ja ymmärrysten luomisen, ylläpitämisen ja vastustamisen kautta. Diskurssianalyysin avulla pyritään ennen kaikkea tuomaan esiin sitä, miten sosiaalinen epätasa-arvo esiintyy, rakentuu ja saa oikeutuksen kielessä ja sen diskursseissa (ks. Wodak 2002, 2). Tämän analyysin tarkoituksena on hahmottaa sitä, millaisin eri tavoin kulttuurinen erottautuminen ja ”luokkapuhe” merkityksellistyvät luonnonmukaisen ruoan konteksteissa. Sovellan David Machinin ja Andrea Mayrin (2012) kriittisen dis-

kurssianalyysin työkalupakkia (mm. leksikaaliset kentät ja retoriikka) sekä Teun van Dijkin (2015) huomioita diskurssien ideologisesta rakentumisesta (arvot, normit ja identifikaatio).

Kiinnitän huomiota tekstien oletta- miin ja hyödyntämiin kulttuuriin konteksteihin, sanavalintoihin, tekstin mahdollisiksi tekemiin identifikaation paikkoihin sekä aineistossa toistuviin kulttuuriin jännitteisiin esittäessäni aineistolle seuraavanlaisia kysymyksiä: Minkälaiset ihmiset tai ryhmät määrittävät teksteissä yksilöllisyyden kautta tai sitä vasten? Minkälaisia yhteisöllisiä symboleja ja kulttuurisia stereotyyppejä tekstin hyödyntävät ja vaikuttavatko nämä symbolit siihen, miten niiden konteksti on ymmärrettävissä? Millaisiin lausumattomiin taustaoletuksiin eronteosta, ruoasta ja ympäröivästä maailmasta tekstien lausumat ja positiot nojautuvat? Minkälaisista teemoista teksteissä ylipäätään vaikuttaa olevan mahdollista puhua, eli minne piirtyvät tekstien ja mahdollisten lausumien diskurssiiviset rajat? Artikkelin analyysi ei rajaudu ainoastaan tekstien luomu- ja lähiruokamainintoihin vaan tutkin artikkeleita kokonaisuuksina. Luonnonmukaisen ruoan keskusteluihin osaa ottavat tekstit toimivat siten ikään kuin ikkunoina tiettyyn kulttuurin osa-alueeseen ja niihin diskursseihin, jotka muodostavat

ymmärryksiä ruoasta nykyhetken urbaanissa, eettisyyttä ja kaikkiruokaisuutta painottavassa kontekstissa.

Analyysissa tunnistetut kolme diskursssia eroavat toisistaan niiden tavoissa käsitellä erottautumisen strategioita, luokkaetuoikeuksia ja näiden etuoikeuksien oikeuttamista. Diskursseissa luokkamakujen ja luokkakulttuurien välisiä hierarkioita sekä kritisoidaan että pidetään yllä ja sekä häivytetään että oikeutetaan: kaikilla kolmella diskursilla on oma tehtävänsä, jota ne kuitenkin toteuttavat usein myös sisäisesti ristiriitaisiin strategioihin ja oletuksiin nojaten. Olen nimennyt diskurssit *eriarvoisuuden kritiikin*, *keskiluokan kulttuurisen erottautumisen* sekä *tasa-arvoisuuden ideaalien* diskursseiksi.

Valtakunnallisena ja Suomen laajalevikkisimpänä sanomalehtenä³ *Helsingin Sanomat* edustaa valtajulkisuutta sekä journalismia, jolla voi katsoa olevan huomattavasti määrittelyvaltaa puhuttaessa yhteiskuntamme tärkeistä ilmiöistä (Lounasmeri 2006, 3), kenties erityisesti juuri kulttuurin näkökulmasta katsottuna (ks. Hellman & Jaakkola 2009, 26). Valtakunnallisesta asemastaan huolimatta *Helsingin Sanomat* kiinnittyy kaupunkilaisiin arvoihin, mikä ruokakulttuurin osalta johtaa elämäntyylien ja kulutustrendien korostumiseen esimerkiksi maatalouden uutisaiheiden kus-

tannuksella. *Helsingin Sanomien* lukijakunnan voi määritellä osin korkeammin koulutettuihin painottuneeksi (Purhonen ym. 2014). Urbaaneista painotuksistaan huolimatta *Helsingin Sanomat* on suhteellisen moniääninen sanomalehti, ja sen sivuilla luonnonmukaiseen ruokaan ja erotteluihin kiinnittyvät, keskenään ristiriitaisetkin puhetaavat pääsevät esiin.

Ruokaa käsittelevillä mediasisällöillä on kaksi päällekkäistä roolia: yhtäältä ne tuovat esiin ruokaan liittyviä yhteiskunnallisia ongelmia, toisaalta synnyttävät ja kierrättävät kulinaarisia trendejä ja määrittelevät sitä, mitkä ruoat ovat kulttuurisen arvostuksen arvoisia (ks. Wells & Caraher 2014, 1428; Johnston & Baumann 2007, 170). Edellä mainittu jaottelu kuvaa hyvin myös *Helsingin Sanomien* aineistoa, jossa luomu- ja lähiruoka saavat kulttuurisia merkityksiä toisaalta yhteiskunnallisen eriarvoisuuden osoittajina, toisaalta legitiimien, etuoikeuksiin kietoutuneiden maku-arvostelmien oikeuttajina.

Eriarvoisuuden kritiikki

Eriarvoisuuden kritiikin diskursseissa sosiaaliset ja kulttuuriset erot eivät ole elämäntyyllisiä valintoja vaan taloudellisia ja sosiaalisia realiteetteja, jotka määrittävät ihmisten mahdollisuuk-

sia mielekkääseen elämään ja ruokaan. *Helsingin Sanomien* aineistossa käsitellään ajoittain hyvinkin kriittisin äänenpainoin sosiaalista eriarvoisuutta muun muassa luokkahierarkioiden, köyhyyden ja leipäjonojen näkökulmista.

Helsingin Sanomien aineistossa köyhyyttä, ruoan hintaa ja eriarvoisuutta kommentoidaan usein asiantuntijapositioneista. Näkökulmat perustuvat mitattavissa oleviin tosiasioihin, ja eriarvoisuus näyttyy todellisena, joskin etäisenä, ongelmana. Monissa aineiston teksteissä luomusta ja lähiruoasta puhuttaessa mainittiin niiden tavallista korkeampi hinta – se, ”ettei kaikilla välttämättä ole varaa” luonnonmukaiseen kuluttamiseen. Kolumnissa ”Kotoilu haisee jätteilä” (8.12.2011) kirjoittaja suhtautuu epäillen luomutuotteiden ekologiseen muutosvoimaan luomun korkeiden hintojen ja poissulkevuuden vuoksi:

Ostin luomukaupasta evääksi omenan, päärynän ja pari kourallista kirsikkatomaatteja. Ne maksoivat enemmän kuin täysipainoinen kasvislounas vie-reisessä ravintolassa.

On selvää, mikseivät suurperheiden ostosvastaavat parveile kauppahallin suloisessa pikkupuodissa, vaan keskellä jotain susirumaa risteystä kököttävässä automarketissa. Helppo täältä on hyvätuloisen hipin huudella ja heilutella mansikoita maksavaa tomaattia.

Kirjoitus asettuu osaksi luonnonmukaisen kuluttamisen kritiikkiä, jossa ”ekokuluttaminen” nähdään statusorientoituneeksi keinoksi vähentää hyväosaisten ihmisen suuresta hiilijalanjäljestä juontuvaa syyllisyyttä. ”Vihreä kuluttaminen” sulkee suuren osan kuluttajia elämäntyylin ulkopuolelle (Paddock 2014) ja korostaa paikallista pientoimintaa sen sijaan, että kansalaisia rohkaistaisiin kyseenalaistamaan ruoan järjestelmiä ja niiden rakenteita systemaattisemmin (Mares & Alkon 2011, 68).

Asiantuntijavetoisten ja luonnonmukaisen ruoan eksklusiivisuutta kritisoivien artikkelien lisäksi diskurssein teksteissä käsitellään yhteiskunnan rakenteissa piilevää eriarvoisuutta. Artikkelin ”Perintönä syrjäytyminen” (11.4.2012) peräänkuuluttaa empatiaa yhteiskunnan huono-osaisia kohtaan. Juttu käsittelee Yleisradion dokumenttia *Perintönä köyhyys*, ja toimittaja kertoo, miten dokumentissa esiintyneiden huono-osaisen kotia, ulkonäköä ja ruokailutottumuksia kritisoidaan verkkokeskusteluissa heidän kyvyttömyydestään ”ottaa itseä niskasta kiinni”.

Dokumentissa esiintyneestä perheestä tekevät monen silmissä ”vääränlaisia” tismalleen samat asiat, jotka tekevät heistä tämän yhteiskunnan huono-osaisia.

Artikkeli kritisoi näkemystä yksilön vastuusta perimmäisenä moraalisenä mitattikkuna tilanteessa, jossa yksilöiden sosioekonominen asema määrittää merkittävästi heidän mahdollisuuksiaan vaikuttaa omaan elämäänsä ja tulevaisuuteensa. Luonnonmukainen kuluttaminen määrittyy tekstissä ”osattomuuden kokemuksen” vastakohtaksi ja merkiksi sosiaalisten maailmojen erojen repeämisestä.

Ehkä siksi suomalainen yhteiskunnallinen keskustelu on juuri nyt täynnä puhetta yksilöstä. Ympäristöongelmat, luokkaerot ja päivähoidon laatu kilpistyivät väittelyksi yksilön valinnoista. Luomua vai tehoviljeltyä? Kotiäiti vai uraäiti? Laiska vai ahkera?

Dokumentissa pieni poika katselee tuttu suussa edessään kiemurteleva leipäjonoa. Toteammeko myös hänelle, että kaikki on vain itsestä kiinni?

Leipäjonot ovat eriarvoisuuden kritiikin diskurssissa se konkreettinen paikka, johon huono-osaisuus ja huono ruoka kulminoituvat. Kenties leipäjonon sekä fyysiset että metaforiset ominaisuudet auttavat paikantamaan epämääräisen rakenteellisen eriarvoisuuden johonkin silmin havaittavissa olevaan kohteeseen. Taloudellisesti huonommassa asemassa olevien ihmisten omakohtaisia näkökulmia aineisto sisältää hyvin vähän, ja sii-

nä suhteessa *Helsingin Sanomien* aineisto muistuttaa kansainvälisiä mediasisältöjä (ks. McKendrick ym. 2008, 31). Köyhyys tulee aineistossa määritellyksi lähes aina ulkopuolelta, toimittajan näkökulmasta, josta käsin kuvaillut ja kuvitellut huono-osaiset ihmiset muodostuvat ikään kuin sosiaaliluokkansa tyyppi-esimerkeiksi.

Yksi aineiston puhetapoja selittävä tekijä on köyhyden määritelmään jo lähtökohtaisesti kuuluva puute. Aktiivinen toimijuus sopii huonosti yhteen tekemättä jättämisen kanssa – sen kanssa, että ei ole varaa, ei tule toimeen, ei syö luomua (8.2.2012), ei ole kotia tai keittiötä (”Syövä luokka”, 28.4.2013). Köyhät tai työväenluokka määrittävät hegemonisissa diskursseissa puutteen, kasvottomuuden ja liikkumattomuuden kautta, vastakohtana keskiluokkaiselle toimijuudelle, yksilöllisyydelle ja liikkuvuudelle (Skeggs 2004, 94, 98). Huono-osaisen kulttuurin määrittelemisen pelkän puutteen kautta rajaa kuitenkin myös hegemonisia rakenteita kyseenalaistavan diskurssin kykyä käsitellä ja käsitteellistää köyhyyttä.

Aineistoon sisältyy yksi (oletettavasti) köyhän ihmisen kirjoittama mielipidekirjoitus sekä erään toimittajan reportaasi omasta, kuukauden mittaisesta köyhyyskokeilustaan. Mielipidekirjoituksessa ”Syrjäytyminen alkaa

köyhästä kodista” (8.2.2012) kirjoittaja toteaa, että köyhässä kodissa on puutetta kaikesta: ”siellä ei syödä luomua eikä pihviä tai kalaa”. Tällaisia oletuksia köyhyyshyökköä tekemään lähtevä toimittaja haluaa omassa reportaasissaan ”Riittääkö 70 euroa viikossa terveelliseen ruokaan?” (14.1.2016) koetella.

Asettelen rahat pöydälle, 283 euroa. Se ei ole paljon. Silti sadat tuhannet suomalaiset ruokkivat itsensä kuukausittain tällä ja pienemmälläkin rahamäärällä.

Mutta kuinka laadukkaasti tällä rahalla voi syödä? Onko pakko syödä vähäravinteisinta huttua, eineksiä ja ulkomaisia halpiselintarvikkeita? Onko terveellinen ruoka oikeasti kallista?

Toimittaja tuo esiin, kuinka tavallista pienempi ruokabudjetti aiheutti jo yhden kuukauden kokeilun aikana henkistä ja sosiaalista epämukavuutta. Epäoikeudenmukaisuuden ja häpeän tunteiden pohdinnasta huolimatta artikkeli kuvaa hyväosaisten ihmisen resursseja, jotka muodostuvat muun muassa ruoka-toimittajan ennestään erinomaisista ruoanlaiton kyvyistä ja laajasta makupaletista, luomuruokapiiriin kuulumisesta sekä suunnittelun ja ennakoinnin taidoista:

Teen punajuuri-ohra-tofuvuonan, keittoa paahdetuista porkkanoista ja kur-

pitsamuffineja. Kaiken kukkuraksi otan vielä kurpitsan siemenet talteen ja paahdan ne – kuin suoraan Marttojen oppikirjasta!

Kokonaisuutena artikkeli käy kattavasti läpi pienestä ruokabudjetistä johtuvia arjen ongelmia, vaikka lopulta toimittaja toteaaakin käsityksen terveellisen ruoan kalleudesta harhaluuloksi ja nojautuu ikaikäiseen neuvon köyhien valittaessa terveellisen syömisen vaikeudesta:

Mistä harhaluulot terveellisen ruoan kalleudesta johtuvat? Pitkälti siitä, että monet ”terveyttä edistävinä” markkinoituidut elintarvikkeet maksavat enemmän. Itse tehty, terveellinen, kasvispainotteinen ruoka ei ole kallista, sen valmistaminen vain vie aikaa.

Vilpitöntä halua kokeilla edullisen syömisen mahdollisuuksia varjostaa tekstin nojautuminen ruokakeskustelun hegemoniseen diskurssiin, jossa edullinen syöminen on pienellä vaivannäöllä helppoa, sillä juurekset ovat edullisia ja metsän marjat ja sienet ilmaisia. Erään tutkimuksen mukaan yhteys yksilöiden ja terveysviranomaisten – miksei myös toimittajien – välillä näyttää katkenneen neuvon perustuessa oletukseen siitä, että ihmiset sekä osaavat että haluavat laittaa ruokaa (LeGreco, Greene & Shaw 2014, 248).

Eriarvoisuuden kritiikin diskurssi

tuottaa useampia positioita siinä puhuville tai kuvatuille ihmisille, joihin kuuluvat muun muassa automarkettien suurperheiden ostosvastaavat, syrjäytyneet ja huono-osaiset, toimentulotuella elävät köyhät, ”hyvätuloiset hipit” ja freelance-toimittajat. Luonnonmukainen ruoka paikantaa diskurssissa subjekti-asemia siten, että yksilön asema elämäntyylien ja luokkien hierarkiassa voidaan mitata hänen etäisyydestään luomuun: mitä suurempi etäisyys, sitä huonompi asema ja mitä pienempi etäisyys, sitä lähempänä kulttuurista legitimitettiin ja hyväosaaisuutta ollaan. Näin ollen samalla kun diskurssissa tuodaan esiin ruoan kuluttamisen eriarvoisuutta ja silloin tällöin myös penätään jonkinlaista muutosta, diskurssi myös vahvistaa ruokaan liittyvää kulttuurista erottautumista pönkittäen eettistä kuluttamista tavoiteltavana elämäntyylinä.

Keskiluokan kulttuurinen erottautuminen

Keskiluokan kulttuurisen erottautumisen diskurssissa luokkaeroihin viitataan rakenteiden ja eriarvoisuuden sijaan käyttämällä hyväksi luokkamakuihin kiinnittyviä elämäntyyllillisiä valintoja, joissa luokat erotetaan toisistaan kulttuuristen merkkien avulla. *Helsingin Sanomien* aineistossa eroja tehdään vil-

jelemällä esimerkkejä distinktiivisestä syömisestä sekä korostamalla eri luokkien edustajien elämäntyylien vastakohitaisuutta ja stereotyyppisiä luokkahabituksia. Diskurssissa erityisesti kaupunkilaisen, koulutetun keskiluokan arvostama ruokakulttuuri on keskeisessä asemassa, ja toisenlaiset maut ja elämäntyyli määrittyvät suhteessa tähän normiin. Luomuruoka toimii diskurssissa suorana keskiluokkaisuuden symbolina ja koulutetun keskiluokan elämäntavan paikantajana. Malmön-matkailujutun (4.5.2013) kohdalla lukijan ei tarvitse tehdä salapoliisintyötä löytääkseen vihjeitä asuinalueiden statuksesta luokkahierarkiassa:

Aivan Turning Torson vieressä on Green-supermarket. Luomu tekee kauppansa. Se ei ole yllätys, sillä vieressä on nykyajan Melukylää muistettava kirjava Bo01-alue. Siellä asuu boheemeja porvareita.

Artikkelissa ”Oi ihana Amerikka” (30.6.2013) Michelle Obama ja Judy Oreck nimetään esimerkeiksi ”uudesta ylemmästä keskiluokasta, joka viljelee luomuporkkanoita ja kasvattaa mehiläisiä kuin mikäkin kalliolainen downshiftari”. Berliinin-matkailujutussa (29.10.2016) urbaanin keskiluokkaisuuden alalaji hipsteriys (ks. Cronin ym. 2014) yhdistyy luomuruokaan, ja ”seu-

raavan hipsterisaarekkeen” löydyttyä saattaa olla vaikeaa määritellä, kumpi tuli ensin, hipsteri vai luomukauppa. Eettisen kuluttamisen vetovoima hyväosaisten kuluttajien keskuudessa on hyvin dokumentoitu (esim. Carfagna ym. 2014; Niva ym. 2014), ja luomu- ja lähiruoka kelpaavat myös journalistisissa teksteissä korkean kulttuuripääoman merkeiksi ilman sen kummempia perusteluja.

Artikkelissa ”Ilmavalokuvaaja Sami Kurikka heittäytyi kyläkauppiaaksi” (14.4.2016) luokkaerot tehdään näkyviksi hienovaraisen vertailun avulla. Långvikin kylä, jossa ”kaupungista tihkuva vauraus kohtaa puuhakkaan maaseudun”, koostuu artikkelissa paikallisista duunareista ja kaupunkilaisista mökkeilijöistä. Luokkaerojen läsnäolosta vihjaillaan luokkasymbolien esiin tuomisen kautta: työväenluokkaisuus Ferrari-lippiksineen, Saabeineen ja tupakka-askeineen vertautuu vauraiden kaupunkilaisten punaviiniin ja korkeakirjallisuuteen. Samat arkkityypit ja kaantuvat jutussa työvoimansa myyjiksi ja työn ostajiksi:

”Meidän auton ratissa on jokin vika, kun auto kääntyy aina tänne”, sanoo Westlin-Latoomaa ja tilaa kuin ohimennen Stjernbergiltä laiturirakan.

Diskurssissa erottelut pannaan käytäntöön luokkakulttuurien ja -erojen sym-

boleiksi muunnettujen ominaisuuksien ja artefaktien avulla. Vaikka kyläkaupan ilmoitustaululla mainostettavat italialaiset puulämmitteiset uunit ja tuotevalikoimaan kuuluvat lihapiirakat ja kahdeksan tölkin Karhu-pakkaukset tuntuvat elävän sulassa sovussa, tekevät artikkelissa hyödynnetyt luokkasymbolit selväksi, että Långvikissä asustaa kahden kerroksen väkeä. Lisäksi jutun mökkeiläiset eivät välttämättä käy kyläkaupassa ensisijaisesti tarpeesta vaan osoitukseksi korkeasta moraalista tai autenttisuudesta mausta ja siten luomu- ja lähiruokadiskurssille tyypillisestä paikalliskulttuurin elvyttämisen ajatuksesta (ks. Tiusanen 2018). Esimerkiksi eräällä mökkeilevällä opettajalla on perheineen ”periaate, että jos jotain pientä puuttuu, se ostetaan täältä”.

Se, kuinka selkeästi kulutuskuulttuurien erot ylemmän keskiluokan, hipstereiden tai koulutetun keskiluokan ja ”muiden” välillä tulevat kirjoitetuksi auki, vaihtelee diskurssin sisällä. Siinä missä monissa lehtiteksteissä esimerkiksi luomun kuluttamisen mainitsemisen itsessään ”kertoo jo tarpeeksi” kuvattun elämäntyylin legitimiudesta, muutamissa artikkeleissa toimittaja tai kolumnisti itse asemoituu osaksi ylemmää keskiluokkaa korostaen kulttuurista ja moraalista kuilua, joka erottaa koulutetun keskiluokan alempiin luokkien

lisäksi myös tavallisesta keskiluokkaisuudesta. Stephanie Lawlerin mukaan keskiluokkainen yksilöllisyys tuotetaan vastakohtana alempien luokkien massoille, ja keskiluokkaisissa diskursseissa hyvä maku heijastaa ”todellista ihmisyttä” ja viestii yksilöllisyydestä (2005, 429–431). Yksilöllisyys vastaan massakulttuuri -erottelu nostetaan seuraavaksi käsittelemissäni lehtiteksteissä pöydälle, ja pelkkään luokkakulttuurien vihjailuun tyytymisen sijaan massojen ja koulutetun keskiluokan todellisuuksien erilaisuutta pohdiskellaan kirjoittajien henkilökohtaisten huomioiden kautta.

Kolumnissa ”Coca Cola mittaa vaurautta: toisille se on luksusta, toisille roskaa” (29.2.2016) kirjoittaja kertoo katso-neensa hiljattain sarjan valokuvia, joissa esiteltiin eri maiden keskivertoperheiden viikon ruokaostoksia:

Coca Cola tuntuu mittaan omalla tavallaan vaurautta. Toisille sen juominen on luksusta.

Toinen ääripää pitää puolestaan limsaa lähes roskaväen juomana. Miksi ostaa Coca Colaa, kun voi siemailla kymmenen euron vihersmoothieta.

Kirjoittaja jää pohtimaan suomalaista luksuksen ja ”roskaväen” ruoan määritelmää seuraavasti:

Suomalaista perhettä ei kyseisestä valokuvasarjasta löytynyt, mutta Facebook-virtani maalaa terveellistä kuvaa – –.

Ystäväni ovat tiedostavaa sakkia, jolle ruoka ei ole vain polttoainetta. – – Yhä useampi tarttuu vegaanihaasteeseen, suosii luomuruokaa ja keittää vauvoilleen soseet itse. Eilen eräs ystäväni postasi kuvan maukkaan näköisestä sashimi-lounaasta Singaporen kalamarkkinoilta, toinen oli käynyt testaamassa huippuravintolan gluteenittoman menun.

Mutta mitä löytyisi keskivertoperheen kuvasta? Lihamakaronilaatikka vai thaimaalaista? Ruisleipää vai hampurilaisia? Olisi ollut kiinnostavaa nähdä omaa kuplaansa pidemmälle.

Näennäisen objektiivisesta ja pohdiskelevasta sävystään huolimatta kirjoitus on elämäntyyllinen ja ennen kaikkea moraalinen kannanotto siihen, minkälainen ruoka on hyvää ruokaa ja minkälaiset syöjät hyviä ihmisiä. Kolumni positiivisesti kirjoittajansa roskaväen tai keskivertoperheen sijaan osaksi ”tiedostavaa sakkia”, jolle ruoka ei ole vain polttoainetta vaan keskeinen osa elämäntapaa. Teksti alleviivaa kaupunkilaisen keskiluokan etäisyyttä makaronilaatikkaa syö-vistä keskivertosuomalaisista, sillä keskiverrot ihmiset elävät jossakin kirjoittajan ”oman kuplan” ulkopuolella. Ainoastaan toinen vastaavanlainen sarja valo-

kuvia muiden ruokaostoksista vaikuttaisi paljastavan kaupunkilaiselle keskiluokalle tavallisten suomalaisten ruokakulttuurin saloja.

Artikkelissa ”Käpylästä oli loppua kampassimpukka” (22.1.2012) urbaanit, koulutetut keskiluokkaiset yksilöt määrittävät – toimittaja mukaan lukien – ihmisiksi, joiden arjessa ruoka näyttelee suurta osaa.

Helsingin Käpylässä on lauantai-ilta-päivä, ja koulutettu keskiluokka koh-taa K-market Mustassa Pekassa.

Käpylän K-Marketissa toimittaja moikkailee niin *Helsingin Sanomien* kulttuuriosaston pomoa, kokoomuksen valtuustoryhmän pomoa, Yle Kulttuurin tuottajaa, valokuvaajaa kuin teatterinjohtajaakin.

Täällä tapaa aina tuttuja: media-alan ja vapaitten ammattien ihmisiä, sivistyneistöä, puutaloalueitten koulutettua väkeä.

Artikkelin loppukaneettina koulutetun keskiluokan vastapainoksi kärrätään esiin muut suomalaiset:

Mutta markettien mainoksissa ovat samat tarjousjauhelihat, koipireidet, kalapuikot. Niitä ostaa asiakasmassa. Suomen siwojen, alepojen ja prismojen kassajonoissa näkee kärryjä täyn-

nä sipsisäkkejä, jättipulloja limsaa, olutmäyräkoiria, valmispizzoja, makaraa, karkkia ja maitoa.

Vahvin vastakkainasettelu muodostetaan yllä olevissa teksteissä juuri yksilöllisyyden ja massojen välille – monipuolisuuden ja monotonisuuden, hyvän ja huonon moraalien välille. Kiinnostavaa on sekin, miten välinpitämättömyys, jämähtäneisyys ja tietämättömyys – joiden kautta työväenluokka usein keskiluokkaisissa näkökulmissa asemoidaan (ks. Skeggs 2004) – määrittyy teksteissä nimenomaan suomalaisten piirteeksi. Suomalaisuus muodostuu vastakohtaksi toisaalta koulutetun keskiluokan kosmopoliittiselle elämäntyyli-
le, toisaalta erojen tekeminen suomalaisia kohtaan paljastaa koulutetun keskiluokan näkemyksen omasta paikastaan kulttuurimme huipulla.

Tasa-arvoisuuden vakuuttelu

Kaikkiruokaisen ruokakulttuurin puhe-
tavoissa teorialuvussa käsittelemäni
tasa-arvoisuuden ideaali vaikuttaa hyvän
maun määrityksiin. Tasa-arvoisuuden
vakuuttelun diskurssissa tasa-arvoisuu-
den ideaalia käytetään hyväksi ”oikean-
laisen” ruokakulttuurin legitimiiden to-
disteluissa. Diskurssissa tasa-arvoisuu-
den korostamisen tehtävä on taloudelli-
sen eriarvoisuuden verhoaminen erilai-

suuden arvostamisen viittaa: varattomuus ja varallisuus asetetaan tasa-arvoiseksi asiantiloiksi ja elämäntyyleiksi, jotka perustuvat ennen kaikkea kuluttajan valintoihin ja mieltymyksiin.

Artikkelissa ”Pröystäilyn uusi aika” (15.8.2012) käsitellään asiantuntijalause-
suntojen kautta luksuksen käsitteen mer-
kityksen muuntumista eksklusiivisesta
tasa-arvoiseen luksukseen:

Toisaalta on myös paljon luksusta, joka on todella monen ulottuvilla. Seitsemän euron luomuruisleivän voi ostaa melkein kuka tahansa. Kun tarpeeksi säästää, voi silloin tällöin käydä syömässä huippuravintolassa. Jos säästää vuosikymmenen, voi hankkia vaikka kalliin designruokapöydän.

Keitä ovat nämä ”todella monet” ja ”melkein ketkä tahansa”, joita entistä tasa-arvoisempi ruokakulttuuri koskee? Käytännön elämän tasolla ei ole sama asia, pitääkö designruokapöytää varten säästää vaikkapa kolme kuukautta vai kokonainen vuosikymmen. Etuoikeudet näkökulmat esitetään usein ruokapuheessa normaaleina ja luokattomina – siitä huolimatta, että rakenteellinen eriarvoisuus tekee distinktiivisestä kuluttamisesta ja syömisestä hyvin vaikeaa marginalisoiduille ihmisryhmille (ks. Johnston ym. 2011, 296). Tasa-arvoisuuden vakuuttelun diskurssi luonnollistaa taloudellisia

eroja määrittämällä rikkauden ja köyhyyden kulttuurisesti vertaisiksi asiantiloiksi ja taloudellisen hyväosaisuuden ikään kuin merkityksettömäksi seikaksi, yhdeksi vaihtoehdoksi lukuisista tasaveroisista vaihtoehdoista.

Tasa-arvoisuuden korostaminen näkyy artikkeleissa lisäksi arkiruoan käsitteen uudelleenmäärittelynä sekä elitistin leiman torjumisena. Artikkelissa ”Aktivisti hankkii ruokaa ohi systeemin” (13.9.2011) haastateltu Olli Repo perusti oman ruokapiirin ”hyvän suomalaisen perusruoan” saannin turvaimiseksi perheelleen:

Marketien mauttomat vihannekset ja marinoidut lihat eivät innostaneet, parempaa pitää saada, perhe tuumi.

Tavallista paremman ruoan määrittely vain tavalliseksi ruoaksi saa tekstissä vetoapua Revon henkilökohtaisen rentouden korostamisesta. Revossa ”ei ole pioneerin paloa eikä kansanjohtajan kiihkoa”, hän ”istuu lippis päässä” ja ”ottaa lunkisti”. Tavalliset ruoat muuttuvat tietyillä tavoin kontekstoituina erikoiseksi ruuiksi, ja esimerkiksi ”hyvä suomalainen perusruoka” saa eksklusiivisia ulottuvuuksia. Tavallisuus on sosiaalinen rakennelma eikä siten luontaisesti läsnä ”ruuassa itsessään” (Kaplan 2013, 246). Maun tavallisuuden ja yksin-

kertaisuuden korostaminen tekee mahdolliseksi turvallisen navigoimisen kahden ristiriitaisen kulttuurisen strategian – erottautumisen ja tasa-arvoisuuden – välillä (mt.).

Monissa tasa-arvoisuutta korostavissa teksteissä elitismi torjutaan ponnekaasti. Esimerkiksi mielipidekirjoituksessa ”Suomalaisen ruokakulttuurin kehitys ei ole elitismää” (30.10.2016) elitistisyys kielletään sekä taloudellisten että moraalisten näkökantojen kautta. Moraalittoman köyhyyden ja niin ikään moraalittoman elitismin väliin jää moraalisen toiminnan kaistale, jossa hyvä moraalilla viittaa vaivannäköön, tietotaitoon ja kiinnostukseen:

Marjat ja sienet ovat ilmaisia. Reko-ryhmien kautta pääsee helposti käsiksi huippuluokan tuotteisiin.

Ihminen, joka välittää siitä mitä syö, osaa usein myös valmistaa ruokansa itse.

Keskiluokan hegemoniaa ylläpitävissä ruokateksteissä luonnonmukaisen syö-
misen materiaalisia kuluja tuodaan esiin harvoin. Meghan Lynchin ja Audrey Gilesin mukaan luomuruoan saatetaan todeta ”maksavan tavallista enemmän” mutta olevan ”laadultaan parempaa”, tai terveellisessä syömisessä ei ajatella olevan ”kysymys rahasta” (2013, 488).

Helsingin Sanomissa elitistisyyden kiel-
tävien mielipidekirjoitusten (edellä mainitun lisäksi ”Köyhällekin ruoan alkuperällä voi olla merkitystä”, 30.10.2016) taloudellisuuteen nojautuvat argumentit jäävät jokseenkin monitulkintaisiksi – lähi- ja luomuruoka näyttää kirjoittajien mukaan olevan sekä edullisempaa, samanhintaista että kalliimpaa kuin tavanomainen ruoka. Korkeaa hintaa ei kuitenkaan sinällään pidetä ongelmana, kunhan ruoka periaatteessa on epäelitististä ja siten ikään kuin kaikkien saatavilla. Kirjoittajat haluavat erottaa ”pröystäilevän elämäntyylin” laadukkaiden raaka-aineiden suosimisesta – varakkaat elitistit niistä, jotka vain käyttävät ruokaan hieman enemmän rahaa.

Tasa-arvoisuuden vakuuttelun diskursseissa edullisuus, kalleus, tasa-arvoisuus ja luksus määrittyvät hyvin erilaisiksi valitusta näkökulmasta riippuen: toisaalta luomuruoaisleipä määritellään luksukseksi, toisaalta 72 euron hintaisen ravintolaillallisen kerrotaan syntyneen halusta ”tehdä hyvää ruokaa, johon ihmisillä on varaa” (4.1.2017). Diskursseissa näkyvät kaikkiruokaiseen kulttuuriin kuuluva matalan ja korkean sekoittuminen sekä näiden välisten erojen hämärtyminen – luksus on mitä tahansa, mikä luksukseksi nimetään, ja eksklusiivinen on kaikkien saatavilla, kunhan tarpeeksi säästää. Elitistisen torjuminen

tai tasa-arvoisuuden idean vaaliminen riippuu siten valitusta näkökulmasta ja on sellaisenaan helposti ulkokultaista – diskurssin puhutteleva kuluttaja saa (ttaa) olla laatu-tietoinen muttei snobi, pihimuttei köyhä.

Kenen ruoka kelpaa ruokakulttuuriksi?

Helsingin Sanomien luomu- ja lähiruokatekstien tarkastelu kulttuurisen erottautumisen, eriarvoisuuden ja luokkapuheen näkökulmista muodostaa kuvan luonnonmukaisen ruoan diskurssiivisesta kentästä, jossa eettinen kuluttaminen osallistuu kulttuuristen hierarkioiden ylläpitämiseen. Aineistossa havaittavista eriarvoisen yhteiskunnan kyseenalaistamisen tavoista huolimatta analyysi osoittaa, että luonnonmukaisuutta painottavassa ruokakulttuurissa hyvä ruoka ja haluttava elämäntyyli muodostuvat keskiluokkaisten merkitystenantojen ja ideaalien kautta.

Analysoiduissa diskursseissa suhtautuminen erontekoihin vaihtelee sen mukaan, määritelläänkö yhteiskuntaluokka teksteissä eriarvoisuudeksi vai kulttuuriksi: luokka eriarvoisuutena tulee aineistossa aina kritisoiduksi, kun taas luokka kulttuurina häilyy joko näkymättömänä esioletuksena kriittisten näkökulmien taustalla tai sitä uusinnetaan

kulttuurisissa erotteluissa ja symbolisissa etäännyttämisissä. Yhtenäinen oikeanlaisen ruoan määritelmä ei tule kyseenalaistetuksi edes aineiston kriittisissä puheenvuoroissa. Hyvä ruoka on luonnonmukaista, laadukasta ja yksilöllistä. Eri-laisten äänien välisessä kamppailussa ei siten ole kysymys siitä, kenen kulinaarinen maku on muita parempi, vaan siitä, onko pääsy tietyn maun mukaiseen ruokapöytään tasa-arvoista (ja mikäli ei ole, onko se väärin). *Helsingin Sanomien* luomu- ja lähiruokatekstien luokkakuvauksissa ruokakulttuuri viittaa nimenomaan keskiluokkaan, ja muita yhteiskunnallisia tai symbolisia ryhmiä (köyhiä, massoja, yksinhuoltajaäitejä) kuvaa taloudellisten resurssien puutteen ohella ruokakulttuurin puute.

Toisaalta myös keskiluokkaisuus ”tavallisena suomalaisuutena” päättyi aineistossa aika ajoin etäännyttämistoimien kohteeksi. Osassa teksteistä tavanomaista keskiluokkaisuutta ilmentää jos ei suoranaisesti puute niin ainakin jonkinlainen keskihakaisuus tai jämähtäneisyys verrattaessa urbaaniin koulutettuun keskiluokkaan ja sen tiedostaviin ruokailutapoihin. *Helsingin Sanomien* aineistossa hegemonisen luokkakulttuurin määritelmä kiikkuu siten jossakin keskiluokan ja kulttuurieliitin välimaastossa, korostaen joko meitä keskiluokkana tai muita joinain muina kuin

kaupunkilaisen ”sivistyneistön” jäsenenä. Yhteistä näille asemoinneille on ruokien tai ruokailutapojen – kuten luomu, vihersmoothiet, liha-makaronilaatiko ja sipsisäkit – muuntaminen luokkasymboleiksi, jotka positioivat (oletetut) ruokailijat eri tasoille syömisen kulttuurisessa hierarkiassa.

Yhteistä aineiston diskursseille on lisäksi moraalien korostuminen. Ruokaa ja syömistä ohjaavat moraalikäsitteet ovat nykypäivän itsereflektiota korostavassa modernissa maailmassa yhä merkityksellisempiä, eikä syömisessä ole kyse ainoastaan ravinnosta tai nautinnosta vaan myös arkisista mahdollisuuksista moraaliseen toimintaan (ks. Lynch & Giles 2013, 489). Snobbailevaa kerskakulutusta karsastavassa kulttuurisessa ruoka on mitä sopivin kulutuksen kohde, sillä ruoan kuluttaminen ei linkity materiaalisuuden syntiin samalla tavoin kuin tavaroiden ostaminen. Erottautuminen muodostuu vanhojen statussymbolien sijaan entistä vahvemmin tekojen ja arvojen ilmaisemisen kautta – toimijuutta, korkeaa moraalialia ja kulttuurisia herkkyyksiä korostamalla (ks. Garson 2007, 8).

Helsingin Sanomien diskursseja erottaa toisistaan se, miten moraalit niissä ymmärretään ja minkälainen toiminta määrittyy moraalisesti hyväksi. Moraali näkyy sekä luokkienvälisen soli-

daarisuuden vaatimuksena että morali-soivoina opetuksina terveellisen ja eettisen syömisen edullisuudesta tai hyvän keskiluokkaisen moraalien ja moraalittoman puutteen vastakkainasetteluna. Siinä missä kaupunkilaiseen keskiluokkaisuuteen paikantuva määritelmä ruokakulttuurista rajaa läpi aineiston sitä, miten luonnonmukaisesta ruoasta on ylipäätään mahdollista puhua, kamppailua keskiluokkaisten arvojen ja hyvän moraalien määritelmistä käydään diskurssien välillä.

VIITTEET

1. Bourdieulaista makujen ja habitusten hierarkioihin perustuvaa mallia on sosiologiassa myös kritisoitu liian kankeana ja deterministisenä (esim. Lahire 2008), mutta analysoitaessa diskursiivisesti ilmentyvää kulttuurista legitimitettä todellisten ihmisryhmien makuvostelmien sijaan Bourdieun teorian toimivat hyvin kulttuuristen kenttien hierarkisuuden tarkastelussa.
2. Aineisto koostuu kahdesta yhtenäisestä lehtiartikkelien julkaisuvuosien jaksosta (2011–2013 sekä 2016–2017) kahden erillisen aineistonkeruuprosessin vuoksi: aineiston ensimmäinen osa on kerätty vuosina 2013–2015 ja jälkimmäinen osa lisänä edelliseen, vuonna 2017. Julkaisuvuosien jaksot on valittu siten, että ne keruujankohdat huomioon ottaen edustaisivat *Helsingin Sanomien* luomu- ja lähiruokakirjoittelua mahdollisimman laajalta aikaväliltä. Aineiston ulkopuolelle olen jättänyt radion ja television ohjelmatedot, kulttuurisuvien levy- tai kirja-arvostelut ja ruokareseptit; tekstit, joissa esimerkiksi ”luomu” mainitaan ainoastaan osana ammattinimikettä ja teksti, joissa ”luomu” mainitaan jossakin muussa kuin ruokaan liittyvässä kontekstissa. Aineisto on kerätty *Helsingin Sanomien* digitaalisesta sanomalehtiarkistosta sekä osittain lehden verkkosuvien näköislehtien kokoelmasta.

3. Levikkitalasto 2016. Media Audit Finland, 2017. <http://mediaauditfinland.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Levikkitalasto-2016.pdf>

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- 28.4.2013, Anna-Liina Kauhanen. Syövä luokka. Sunnuntai.
- 4.5.2013, Annukka Oksanen. Euroviisuuhuma leviää Malmössä estoitta. Matka.
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- 14.1.2016, Pauliina Siniauer. Riittääkö 70 euroa viikossa terveelliseen ruokaan? Ruoka.
- 29.2.2016, Emmi-Liia Sjöholm. Coca Cola mittaa vaurautta: toisille se on luksusta, toisille roskaa. Ruoka.
- 14.4.2016, Kaisa Hakkarainen. Ilmavalokuvaaja Sami Kurikka heittäytyi kyläkauppiaksi. Kaupunki.
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YTM Kaisa Tiusanen työskentelee vaitöskirjatutkijana Tampereen yliopiston informaatioteknologian ja viestinnän tiedekunnassa. Hän tutkii vaitöskirjassaan ruuan merkityksellistämistä ja ruokaan kytkeytyviä kulttuurisen erottautumisen tapoja mediassa.

**PUBLICATION
III**

**Fulfilling the self through food in wellness blogs: Governing the healthy
subject**

Kaisa Tiusanen

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Abstract

In the world of wellness, food and eating are fundamentally important to one's subjectivity: the self in this sphere is created and maintained through food consumption along a plant-based, 'wholesome' and healthy personal journey to well-being. This article focuses on the analysis of wellness food blogs run by women, aiming to map out the *technologies of the self* through which the 'ideal wellness subject' is created. The analysis examines technologies of subjectivity as they aspire towards (1) balance, (2) healing and (3) narrativization of the self. The article suggests that the subjectivities related to wellness culture draw from postfeminist and healthist ideologies and are based on a neoliberal discourse of individuality and self-control. The sociocultural indifference of wellness culture and its prerogative to police the self through culturally hegemonic pursuits based on (the right kind of) consumption makes the language of wellness a prominent neoliberal discourse.

Keywords

Blogs, food, healthism, postfeminism, subjectivity, wellness

Introduction

Food is a universal medium that illuminates a wide range of cultural practices (Singer, 2014). People's culinary preferences speak about more than just food, since food is, now more than ever, a cultural sphere that enables individuals to express themselves through cooking, farming, consuming and forming all sorts of culinary collectives. And still, considering 'food as a hobby' or even 'food as a lifestyle' does not really compare or give

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the appropriate credit to the wellness food culture of the 21st century – where food is more than a lifestyle but is rather life itself; food is you, and you are, essentially, food brought into being.

In the world of wellness food, food and eating are fundamentally important to one's subjectivity: the self in this sphere is created, perfected and maintained through food consumption, as the actors narrate their daily lives in terms of a plant-based, 'clean', 'wholesome' and healthy personal journey. The wellness lifestyle evokes an ideal of optimal health that is achievable through the correct diet (Braun and Carruthers, 2020: 83). Wellness food is, for example, plant-based, raw, 'almost entirely organic', '99% vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds', dairy-free, gluten-free, sugar-free and additive-free. And yet, wellness bloggers themselves claim to enjoy 'diets free from labels', stating that 'eating is about feeling good, not following rules' (excerpts from *My New Roots*, *Minimalist Baker* and *Green Kitchen Stories*).

Wellness food blogs can be categorized as personal journal weblogs that contain 'descriptions of and anecdotes from the blogger's personal, daily life' (e.g. Limatius, 2020: 24). Since the birth of the weblog in the mid-1990s, the blogosphere and the personal journals within it have evolved drastically, and the contemporary blog scene is more professionally driven than ever before. In these feminine blog communities, self-branding is crucial, and often bloggers' 'entire existence is built around work' (Duffy and Hund, 2015).

Compared with traditional cookbook authors, food bloggers create and sell more than just dishes: they promote lifestyles and values through rigorous self-branding and the commercialization of diet-related philosophies. Instead of being solely skilled home cooks or food journalists, food bloggers often are (and aspire to be) lifestyle influencers, brands, life coaches, nutritionists and personal trainers. Contemporary food trends are significantly influenced by recipes and diets circulating in the food blogosphere, and many of the dishes that gain wider media popularity originate from the kitchens of food bloggers.¹ Successful individual bloggers gain additional media exposure through cookbook deals and media coverage (Rodney et al., 2017: 686). Despite their popularity and global influence, research on food blogs is scarce. So far, a few studies (e.g. Cesiri, 2020; Dejmanee, 2016; Dickinson et al., 2018; Lynch, 2010; Rodney et al., 2017) have focused on food blogs. Nevertheless, Cultural Studies' perspectives are limited in the existing research. The objective of this study is to broaden the theoretical scope of food blog research by extending the focus to healthism and governmentality.

This article delves into the world of wellness through an analysis of wellness food blogs run by Finnish women. The aim of this investigation is to map out the techniques through which wellness subjectivity is formed in the blog texts and to examine how these techniques appear to be shaped by the postfeminist, neoliberal and healthist sensibilities and sociocultural characteristics of contemporary culture. After providing background on the central concepts of postfeminism and healthism, the article presents the data and method for this analysis. The article then moves on to three analysis sections that examine technologies of subjectivity (Foucault, 1988; Rose, 1999 (1989)) as they aspire towards (1) 'balance' between indulgence and (potentially pathological) self-control, (2) 'healing' one's (already healthy) body and soul through nourishment and (3) 'narrativization of the self' through the metaphor of a personal wellness journey. Finally, the

discussion examines aspects of ‘wellness subjectivity’ within a broader neoliberal, classed and gendered (blog) culture.

Deciphering wellness blogs

The feminine world of food blogs: domesticity and postfeminism

Lifestyle blogs in general (Nielsen, 2014) and food blogs in particular are written and read predominantly by women (see Norén, 2011). Scholarly investigations of the feminine (food, DIY and lifestyle) blogosphere have been largely shaped by the dominance of postfeminist ideology or sensibilities in the discourses of women’s lifestyle blogs (e.g. Duffy and Hund, 2015; Jäntti et al., 2018). According to Gill (2007: 162), postfeminism is an articulation between feminist and anti-feminist ideas, which is expressed through a (neoliberalist) grammar of individualism. Contemporary food pleasures are understood as being constituted within a postfeminist climate in which gender equality is commonly framed around choice and empowerment (Cairns and Johnston, 2015b) and where femininity is performed through celebrating feminine stereotypes, as the collective roots of feminism as a social movement fade into the background (see McRobbie, 2009: 371).

In the feminine blogosphere, ‘entrepreneurial femininity’ is formed through the characteristics of valuable skills, informal knowledges and flexibility (and thus obscured labour) as well as modes of self-fashioning rooted in the consumer marketplace, where women are encouraged to work *through* and *for* consumption (Duffy and Hund, 2015: 2). Incorporating a postfeminist sensibility and becoming a postfeminist subject require constant work on oneself and utilizing various technologies of the self where subjectivity is not regulated by the State or by others but emerges from within, as a form of governing the self in aspiring for optimal selfhood. Although this analysis utilizes the concept of postfeminism, it is worthwhile to note that postfeminism is related to (as well as differentiates from) two other concepts highly relevant in scholarly discussions on contemporary femininity: *neoliberal feminism* (Rottenberg, 2017) and *popular feminism* (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Neoliberal feminism emphasizes neoliberalism’s entanglement with – and not necessarily dismissal of – feminism, whereas popular feminism refers to the wide acceptance and circulation of feminism tied to media visibility (see Banet-Weiser et al., 2020).

One of the key sites of postfeminist analyses is the sphere of domestic femininity, where women test recipes, prepare food, clean, decorate and care for the well-being of their partners and children. Postfeminist domesticity is often described as a kind of reinvention of 19th-century Victorian feminine domesticity (see Cairns and Johnston, 2015b: 7) and middle-class femininity (see, for example, Hollows, 2003). According to Rodney et al. (2017), influential food blogs present idealized visions of domestic life, complemented with the occasional detail portraying ‘imperfections’ such as food cravings or cooking mishaps. Bloggers provide detailed (and curated) accounts of their culinary, health-related and personal philosophies among recipes and abundant visual presentations. The tremendous popularity of food blogs and thus their cultural impact makes

them a culturally significant site for studying dominant cultural understandings of (feminine) food work (Rodney et al., 2017: 686).

Wellness culture and healthism

The characteristics of the feminine blogosphere are visible in the blog subgenre of wellness food blogging. Despite the prevalence of wellness blogging in particular and wellness culture or wellness industry in general in the 21st century, there exists yet little research pertaining to this field of culture and media. Wellness, from a cultural studies point of view, has been the focus of analysis in a handful of articles over the years (Braun and Carruthers, 2020; Islam, 2014; Kent, 2020; Little, 2012; O'Neill, 2020). Food blogs identified as 'wellness blogs' (compared with lifestyle blogs or fitness blogs, for example), however, do not seem to have been the focus of scholarly investigations.

The wellness industry has 'witnessed a triumphant ascension over the past decade', growing twice as fast as global economic growth (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). Wellness culture includes myriad lifestyles and practices, from meditation retreats, clean eating, detox diets and health-focused wearable devices to comprehensive wellness policies used in schools, hospitals and private companies. These products and programmes promote health and self-improvement strategies while promising to boost productivity and curb health care costs (Blei, 2017). The term 'wellness' was popularized in the late 1950s; 'high-level wellness' was defined as 'a condition of change in which the individual moves forward, climbing toward a higher potential of functioning' (Dunn, 1959: 447), and a distinction was made between the *absence of illness* (objective and passive) and *wellness* (active and subjective).

In the academic world, aspects of wellness culture are most often addressed with the concept of healthism. 'Healthism' stems from theorizations regarding 'medicalization' that date back to the 1960s. Medicalization refers to the expansion of medical interventions into areas of life that were previously considered outside the medical sphere, and according to early critics (e.g., Szasz, 1961), medicalization transforms social behaviours and problems into symptoms of diseases, which allows medical practitioners to manage and govern the lives of individuals (Mayes, 2014: 4). Healthism does not address the expansion of the jurisdiction of medical professionals but rather points to the dissemination of medical perception and ideology among the wider (middle-class) population. Healthism, then, refers to lifestyles that revolve around wellness promotion, where the individual is responsible for his or her own health. Healthism grasps the expansion of medicine beyond and, in some cases, against medical professions and institutions (by criticizing the objectification of patients and the 'clinical gaze' of modern healthcare) (Turrini, 2015: 17).

The ideologies behind wellness date back to the beginning of the 20th century and the rise of European middle classes that wanted individual and holistic medical care – provided in 'life reform' resorts offering respite from the degenerative and unnatural life in industrial societies (Blei, 2017). Today, wellness and healthism still belong to the domain of middle-class experience and are tightly bound with neoliberal, middle-class understandings of lifestyle and individual agency. According to Scott (2020), healthist ideology focuses on lifestyle factors, eclipsing the role of environmental, genetic, social and

structural influences on health. Repetition of healthy behaviours in daily life becomes the duty of a responsible citizen, and those who cannot achieve a certain standard of health are constructed as irresponsible, lazy, uncivilized and morally lacking (Scott, 2020: 69).

The scholarly critiques of wellness culture all underscore the privatization of the struggle for well-being. Contemporary feminist scholars critique wellness culture as ‘a radical turning inward of agency towards the goal of transformation of one’s own body, in contrast to a turning outward to mobilize for collective action’ (Dworkin and Messner, 1994: 352). Finally, postfeminist sensibilities become especially magnified in wellness contexts: healthism has a major link to gender, since the lives and bodies of women are disproportionately medicalized (Mayes, 2014: 6). According to Bartky (1997), the disciplinary power and self-surveillance of our society operate to control women in particular, as the disciplinary techniques (especially – but not limited to – dieting and controlling one’s hunger and weight) through which the ‘docile bodies’ of women are constructed are exhaustive in regulating the body’s size, appetite, posture and general comportment in space (Bartky, 1997: 132–132).

Methodology

Data

The data analysed in this article consist of 170 blog entries from three individual wellness food blogs authored by Finnish women in English for an international audience. Blogs relevant for thorough analysis were identified by selecting a key site or an ‘entry point’ via which the rest of the data were then chosen and gathered for analysis (see Jäntti et al., 2018). The data gathering originated from arguably the most popular and most frequently awarded (SAVEUR Food Blog Awards and Blog Awards Finland) Finnish wellness food blog, *Vanelja*.

Due to the analytics regarding the readership of individual blogs being inaccessible through university channels, the popularity (and the amount of influence in wellness food culture) of each blogger was assessed by relying on the quantity of Instagram followers of the bloggers’ official Instagram accounts. In effect, the Instagram accounts were considered extensions of the main blog sites and thus indicative of the popularity of each blogger and their brand (see an overview by Poell et al., 2019, for ‘platformisation’ and the cross-platform nature of contemporary digital culture).

The objective of the sampling was to identify blogs (in addition to *Vanelja*) to be analysed in detail. An approach based on a single key blog site (or digital media personality/brand) functioning as ‘ground zero’ for further sampling and data gathering was chosen due to an assumption that the wellness blogosphere is a highly reciprocal field where influencers follow each other closely (and ‘who follows who’ has influence on the formations of the field, see ‘economy of visibility’ in Banet-Weiser, 2018). Along these lines, it was presumed that the most popular Finnish wellness food blogger would be likely to follow other notable influencers operating in this field. The sampling originating from the Instagram account *vanelja* (164,000 followers in February 2020) was conducted as described in Figure 1. Finally, two blogs were chosen to be analysed alongside *Vanelja*. These two blogs are *My Berry Forest* (90,200 followers on the *myberryforest* Instagram account) and *Tuulia* (23,800 followers on the *tuuliatalvio* Instagram account).²

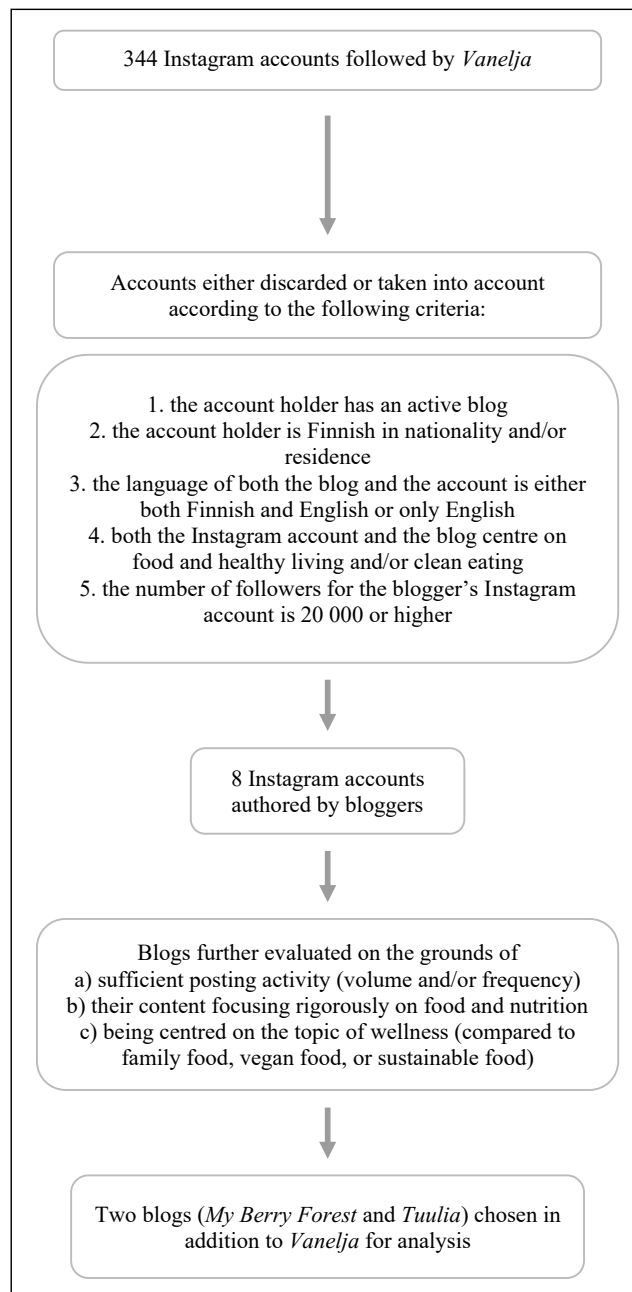


Figure 1. Filtering criteria and data selection process.

As my aim was to focus on self-formation through discourse, the data collection was limited to three blogs, while the blog entries examined were analysed from a relatively lengthy time period (between January 2015 and December 2016). This period appeared

to be the most congruent (similarly active in post regularity and frequency) in the blogs' publishing history. The number of posts was 167 in total (*Vanelja* with 36 posts, *My Berry Forest* with 65 posts and *Tuulia* with 66 posts). In addition, the 'about the author' pages were considered in the analysis as well, since these included autobiographical information important to the bloggers' identity narrative. Thus, the total sample for this study amounted to 170 blog entries.

The three blogs – *Vanelja* (2014–), *My Berry Forest* (2015–) and *Tuulia* (2014–) – are authored by Finnish women. The global world of wellness food content is, instead of emphasizing different national culinary heritages, remarkably homogeneous in its content and aesthetics. In effect, Finnishness was chosen as one of the sampling criteria predominantly in an effort to narrow down the overwhelmingly vast quantity of wellness blogs of the English-speaking blog world. The three blogs analysed here have both a Finnish- and an English-language version – that is, posts are written both in Finnish and in English. Solely the English versions of the blog texts were studied for this article.

The initial analysis relied on an open-coding process (see Rodney et al., 2017) in which all elements of the blog entries (photographs, personal narratives and contextual information) were considered for further analysis. This process provided a general map of blog content and aimed at identifying central tendencies across the blog texts, looking to see how they intersected with previous research into subjectivity and social media. The three wellness food blogs analysed proved immensely rich in themes linking to neoliberal and postfeminist sociocultural values (including pleasure, 'girlboss' discourses, dieting, care work, feminine entrepreneurialism, aesthetics and so on). Partly because of this, I decided to focus the in-depth analysis on the processes of governing the self that infuse all the different topics, cultural tactics and moral stances that make up the wellness food blogosphere and the technologies of self that are formed and performed in it.

The three bloggers each seem to identify as actors amid the wellness food blog culture a bit differently. *Vanelja* – with its slogan 'it's about pure pleasure' – leans a bit more to the hedonistic side of the wellness field, whereas *My Berry Forest* – 'creative plant-based recipes from the forest' – concentrates on family and traditional health-talk. *Tuulia* – 'healthy living + good vibes' – is located somewhere in between, with a focus on health and comfort. Despite small thematic differences, all three blogs populate the same cultural sphere of wellness and perform their subjectivity and their wellness 'journey' in a culturally recognizable way. Finally, the three bloggers are also similar and 'recognizable' in appearance: white, able-bodied and lean. All of the bloggers have (white) male fiancées/husbands, and two of the three have one or more children.

In an attempt to map out the ways in which the self is policed, enhanced and taken care of in the wellness food texts, the following aspects were examined: what are the concrete, verbalized actions taken in order to govern or transform the self – what do the bloggers *do* to themselves or their surroundings to be more in line with the 'ideal self'? How do self-policing practices in the data relate to wider social norms? What kind of styles of existence do the authors aspire towards? What kind of subjectivities are represented as legitimate, and what kind of subject positions are at all discursively possible? The following section introduces theoretical concepts that guide the methodological approach employed in this analysis.

Technologies of the self as a methodological approach

The analysis utilizes Michel Foucault's (1988) concept of technologies of the self as an analytical device. As compared with other possible technologies (of production, sign systems and power) that people use to understand themselves and the world around them, technologies of the self

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988: 18)

Foucault was interested in how humans constituted themselves as subjects and how they sought to gain knowledge of themselves (Hernandez-Ramirez, 2017: 47). Nicholas Rose (1999 (1989): 11) speaks of 'technologies of subjectivity' or 'techniques of the self' that refer to the ways in which we are enabled to 'act upon our bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health, and fulfilment'. These three concepts are used interchangeably in this analysis.

Technologies of the self are linked to a few concepts that approach policing or managing oneself from slightly different viewpoints. Governmentality refers to the contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self (Foucault, 1988: 19), and the governing of one's self and others takes place through an array of techniques and programmes that are usually defined as cultural (see Bratich et al., 2003: 4). Care of the self (Foucault, 1986 (1984)) could be categorized as a dimension of self-governing that has less to do with domination of others and more with the subject looking inward, acting according to individual ethics. Care of the self refers to an active, lifelong process of attending to and 'returning' to oneself, and ultimately bettering oneself through this rigorous self-surveillance (Foucault, 1986 (1984)). Foucault pinpoints the concept and the practices and ideals tied to it to the Hellenistic culture where care of the self was 'a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence' (Foucault, 1986 (1984): 47). In the neoliberal era, self-governing and capability to care for oneself can be considered as being once again universal duties (see Hamann, 2009).

As Hernandez-Ramirez (2017: 48) points out, three decades after Foucault's essay on technologies of the self was published, the circumstances have changed, as most regions of the world have fully embraced the information society, and instruments that enable, accelerate and deepen self-modification have become pervasive. People exercise control over themselves especially through digital technologies to develop more attractive bodies, to follow more healthy lifestyles, to live ethically and to be more productive. Dietary movements, exercise routines and productivity methods, as well as mindfulness and meditation, all fit within Foucault's original concept (Hernandez-Ramirez, 2017: 53). The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society, and the choosing, self-shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life is the central character of our time (see Bakardjieva and Gaden, 2012: 404).

The individualistic and entrepreneurial postfeminist subject of wellness culture adheres to neoliberal forms of citizenship and behaviour and is governed in terms of neoliberal understandings of self-responsibility and maximizing one's human capital (see Repo and Yrjölä, 2015). The neoliberal subject balances between normative, palatable femininity and unapologetic striving for greatness as a woman (see Rottenberg, 2017). In the context of women-run food blogs, the subjectivities and technologies of the self available in this wellness discourse are specific as they are always gendered: tied to conducts, values and bodies deemed suitable for women in our contemporary neoliberal culture. The following sections introduce the strategies of governing the self that compose the 'ideal wellness subject' in these wellness food blogs.

Making the subject of wellness culture

The balancing act: between very healthy and too healthy

The postfeminist sphere of wellness food blogging encloses a preoccupation with finding *balance*: a culturally acceptable way of 'doing wellness' that steers clear of both abstinence and lack of control. Rottenberg (2017: 331) notes that 'finding balance' has become not only feminine, but a feminist ideal in neoliberal society in general. However, in wellness- and food-related contexts, balance has a specific cultural function. According to Cairns and Johnston (2015a: 154–155), hegemonic (food-related) femininity is built on caring about food but not caring too much – on being health- and body-conscious without obsessing over calories, on avoiding foods that make one fat while at the same time avoiding the appearance of dieting and on also knowing when to indulge. Here, the analysed blogs tiptoe on a fine line drawn between hegemonic and pathologized food femininities.

The culturally hegemonic status of positive philosophy that is in many ways at the core of wellness ideologies (see Grénman, 2019; Wright, 2014) and the neoliberal discourse centring on 'good vibes only' have a strong hold of the blog texts. More than concentrating on any negativity (strict rules or self-hate, for example) surrounding food, the bloggers emphasize 'the good' – the 'win-win' of wellness food culture. No food is forbidden or can be eaten to excess (*as long as* it is in line with the chosen plant-based dietary regime). The strategies of steering towards healthiness and distancing from pathological conduct are both constantly part of the wellness food-blog content: instead of concentrating on one or the other at any given time (like 'cheat days' evened out through healthy eating, as described in Kent, 2020), the blog authors enact a balanced, clean and healthy lifestyle simultaneously with – and often *through* – indulgence in desserts or other treats.

Combining healthy with delicious is abundant in the data, and phrases like 'delicious taste and wholesome ingredients' or 'healthy and indulgent at the same time' are used almost in a motto-like way to praise the foods discussed. The handicraft of this win-win approach relies on substituting 'unhealthy' ingredients (white sugar, any conventional flour, dairy products and food additives) with 'healthy', pure and 'wholesome' ingredients without losing any deliciousness:

A combination of coconut sugar, blackstrap molasses and vegan dark chocolate bring just the right sweetness. You'll never miss refined white sugar! (M19/12/16³)

Instead of having your cake – not the proverbial cake but an actual one! – and eating it too, the approach celebrates the possibility (and necessity) of eating both the cake and the vegetables. This subplot puts 'hidden vegetables' on centre stage:

This time I challenged myself to create the yummiest possible brownies with as many hidden vegetables as I could think of. (M12/9/16)

I'm all about secret ingredients . . . If I would tell you that one of the main ingredients in these delicious looking coconut chocolate bars is in fact potato would that spoil your appetite? I hope not, because that is truly the case. (V19/2/15)

Bloggers put a lot of effort into 'healthifying' foods, but they also make sure that this healthifying does not cross the threshold to health-obsessive action. For example, one blogger warns readers of the pitfalls of healthifying foods because 'sometimes you end up creating something that tastes too healthy': '[a] pie has to taste like real pie, not like a healthified version of a pie' (M13/12/16). Another blogger agonizes over creating a pizza dough that has a 'perfect crisp and a flavour that's delicious and not "too healthy"' (T15/6/16). Healthifying regular foods is, in the wellness blogosphere, thus both mandatory and always potentially pathological.

Emphasizing indulgence counteracts the potentially detrimental effects of rigorous healthifying. Bloggers routinely describe their 'uncontrollable cravings', 'obsession' with or 'addiction' to various foods framed as especially satisfying or even sinful (often sweet, energy-dense foods). However, these obsessions are nothing to feel guilty about, since they, too, adhere to the criteria of plant-based, gluten-free and non-additive-laden food. For example, one blogger describes her 'uncontrollable sweet cravings' that, if nothing freshly baked is at hand, can easily be satisfied with homemade nut butter 'just eaten with a spoon . . . straight from the jar' (M13/6/16). Similarly, another blogger gives herself permission to eat healthy almond butter 'straight from the jar with a spoon . . . yum . . .' while 'standing in front of the fridge' (T28/9/16; T28/8/15). According to Braun and Carruthers (2020), the vegan wellness discourse often describes foods through these types of hyperbolic claims to counter a construction of veganism as a deprivation of pleasure. My analysis supports their interpretation, even though, in the wellness context, hyperbole and emphasis on indulgence work to distance the individual from self-inflicted deprivation rather than convincing outsiders of a diet's pleasurableness.

This stress on indulgence occasionally takes on a sensual form as pies get eaten while still standing in front of the kitchen counter with an apron on, the baker 'sucking her fingers in between devouring because the pie is still way too hot, but at the same time way too tempting and delicious for her to keep her fingers away from it' (V25/6/2015). And, as in the quote above, these moments of giving in to temptation often involve a specific, dream-like narrative style that distances the protagonist from the act of 'devouring':

I really love mangos, especially the really ripe and juicy ones, and I don't even want to tell you how many times I've eaten them using only my hands . . . which means there's a lot of that

bright yellow juice dripping on the corners of my mouth . . . and now there's this one very juicy looking mango on my kitchen counter . . . But okay, let's get back to the cake now. (T1/4/2015)

All of these moments of indulgence are an essential part of the wellness food discourse, although the actual food items that are being indulged in cannot be categorized as unhealthy at all (in addition to the foods mentioned above, the authors feed their addictions with homemade granola, salad pizza, fresh dates, dried mulberries, 'pink food' and 'all things yellow', for example). It could also be speculated that the emphasis on indulgence is a strategy of 'hiding the illness', illness here being some sort of orthorexia (disordered eating of foods considered as healthy) – not necessarily the orthorexia of a particular person but the orthorexic reality of wellness culture generally. The pathological behaviour needing to be balanced is not the usual suspect of failing to be a person who eats healthily, but the fear of failing to be a person who is able to enjoy the pleasures of food (and life) *normally*.

Compared with decades of women's magazines circulating the idea that nothing is too healthy and almost anything can be categorized as not healthy enough, wellness food talk emphasizes enjoyment over abstinence. Whereas the ideal woman of past decades (or centuries) needed to restrict herself from eating, the postfeminist subject is *supposed* to self-indulge. According to Cairns and Johnston (2015a: 156), even the healthy and ascetic individual has the imperative to consume, and so the good and healthy citizen cannot be marked solely by restraint. They go on to note that the neoliberal postfeminist performance does not free women of corporeal or aesthetic ideals, but rather repackages these expectations through the language of postfeminist pleasure and consumer choice (Cairns and Johnston, 2015a: 162). The postfeminist, neoliberal femininity is characterized by the mixed messages and contradicting expectations whereupon the technologies of balancing become major discursive, cultural and mental strategies through which the self is governed.

The healthy self in need of healing: boosting the body and comforting the soul

Wellness food talk is thoroughly medicalized, as (the right kind of) food is portrayed as a cure for both current ailments and possible illnesses to come. Individuals following a plant-based and 'clean' diet are bestowed with improved physical abilities and a sense of well-being, nourished by wholesome food (see Scott, 2020: 73). In the data, the self is transformed through food: healed both physically and spiritually with the right kind of nourishment.

Differences between technologies of balancing and healing point to different strategies in the domain of self-governing. In the balancing strategies depicted above, authors govern themselves in ways that comply with contemporary cultural and gendered norms. And, although healing oneself cannot be described as *not* stemming from societal norms, discursively it leans towards a subject zeroing in on itself, disregarding outside distractions. Becoming a 'healed' subject hinges on taking care of oneself: cultivating oneself and making oneself feel better through healthist and therapeutic strategies. In the analysed data, striving towards personal wellness becomes visible as the subjects seek completeness through continuous fulfilling, nurturing, nourishing and energizing.

Technologies of healing the self employ a medicalized language that refers to food and nutrients as medicine. Food is described in terms of a ‘dose’, a ‘fix’ or as being created in a blogger’s ‘laboratory’ (home kitchen). These lexical choices contextualize food as a remedy, and the body consequently as needing to be healed – as always threatened by illness, underperforming, sub-optimal or lacking. According to Foucault (1986 (1984): 57), the self-governing connected to care of the self implies that one should form an image of oneself as ‘in a state of need’, as one ‘who suffers from certain ills and who needs to have them treated’. In the data, the ‘narrative of illness’ and a detailed attention given to dysfunction are channelled through both medicalized talk and a turn to therapeutic discourses preoccupied with healing.

The technique of improving one’s body is associated with traditional nutritional talk, including references to ‘loads of beta-carotene’, ‘intake of healthy fats’, ‘anti-inflammatory properties’ or ‘Vitamin C-rich’ foods, for example. However, more often than not, these scientific or medicalized points of reference are vague (compared with the nutritionist mother-housewives depicted in a study on Australian food magazines; see Schneider and Davis, 2010) and pseudo-medical in nature. Superfoods and other foods with favourable nutritional value are used for their ‘boosting’ properties, be it for gaining energy (‘a bit of boost from those powders to keep me going’, T8/9/16), reducing inflammation or strengthening the immune system (of a body that is constantly under potential threat):

With an antioxidant boost from matcha tea powder, I’ll happily call this green goodness superfood ice cream and eat a cone or two a day. (M29/7/16)

They’re my favorite – turmeric and baobab powder from Organic Burst, quite the perfect boosters during flu season. (M26/9/16)

Another technique of healing relates to consoling and comforting the self that does not feel like her optimal, best self. ‘Comfort food’ has gained cultural significance in the past decade and it has a strong connection with postfeminist, middle-class new domesticity: for example, Salvio (2012) states that comfort food is linked to strong gender roles and ideas of respectable domesticity and it is thus extensively entangled with postfeminist sensibilities. In the data analysed here, comfort food exists in a mixture of gendered therapy culture and medicalized care of the self. ‘Comfort’ can be categorized as a holistic approach to wellness or healing, emphasizing the mental and spiritual aspects of a wellness sensibility. Here, foods are primarily portrayed as ‘nourishing’ and ‘comforting’ and employed as therapeutic tools of introspection and self-love.

Comfort food is used as a device of turning inward, shutting out the outside world that threatens one’s inner peace or balance. Comfort food relates to memories and seasonality, both of which intertwine discursively and emotionally with nostalgia or melancholia. Comfort food is framed as nostalgic, and memories associated with, for example, Christmas cookies, warm summer days, Grandma’s porridge or old bread recipes are depicted as especially consoling. Seasonality, in turn, refers to blog authors’ practice of linking a particular time of the year or the weather (usually winter, autumn, rain, darkness or coldness) to both the need and the ‘permission’ to enjoy comfort food:

And just look at these vibrant green Brussels sprouts – don't they look like the perfect medicine for a little winter blues? (M23/11/16)

[This] recipe here is one of the most relaxed ways to make an apple pie I have ever encountered. I'm glad that it popped into my head somewhere from the cosmos one cloudy day when I really needed a quick comfort food. (V8/3/16)

Along with pulling out my jumpers and jackets from the closet, I've been craving for warming, nourishing meals with plenty of summer vegetables. (T11/8/16)

Finally, 'nourishing food' is used as a common catchphrase associated with the holistic approach of wellness food culture, as nourishment is important both for the body and for the soul, and anything that is undesirable for the body is also unhealthy for the mind. However, in comparison with the 'boosting' foodstuffs mentioned above, 'nourishing' is in many ways a spiritual quality that, in order for it to exist or work, one has to *believe in it*. Nourishing is anything and everything – for example, warming, simple, comforting, grounding, balancing, energizing, easy to prepare, 'creamy' in texture, 'filling yet light' or 'spicy but not too heavy' – that can make its eater 'whole':

Then pay attention to what your body needs: is your body in need of exercise or rest? Think what would be the most nourishing thing for your body today. (T5/2/15)

Preoccupation with food's ability to nourish the eater echoes perceptions of food as both potentially medicinal and healing as well as in constant danger of being *malnourishing*. Nourishment is the threshold between food that balances and heals and food that causes illness and shakes the self off course. Striving for nourishment encapsulates the neoliberal need for continual improvement and self-control that are repetitively recreated in the discourses of wellness food blogs.

Narrating the self: the (never-ending) journey to being whole

Like every great story, this one also starts with a mystery. (V/MY STORY)

In addition to technologies that strive towards a balanced and healed self, narrating one's plant-based life in terms of 'a journey' or 'an adventure' builds a picture of self that has both subjectivity as a unique individual and agency in terms of having control over one's own life (and body). The cultural narrative present in the blogs is constructed in the shape of 'my journey', which is a constant companion for the reader of the blog as well as an important part of the blogger's brand, as outlined on the 'about the author' page. The authors of the blogs tap into and recreate a particular life narrative that 'makes sense' in wellness culture: a life-changing, near-spiritual and, most importantly, *never-ending* journey towards wholeness and wellness.

According to Illouz (2008: 172), narrative has become a key category in understanding how selfhood is constituted through culture, and narratives of self often draw upon

broader, collective scripts – ‘masterplots’ or grand narratives – that imbue these personal stories with socially significant meanings. A particular ‘wellness masterplot’ becomes visible when bloggers look back in time, recalling what their life was like before embarking on a ‘plant-based journey’, or look back on some specific moment in the transition process, and when bloggers declare fragments of their wellness-related philosophy as constituting an important part of who they are.

Techniques of self-narrativization put great emphasis on change, both the before and after stages as well as the transition phase where the bulk of this personal journey is narrated and ‘lived’. The ‘before stage’ paints a picture of both bodily and mental capacities having reached a critical state. The bloggers describe a time when their bodies were lethargic and bloated, they were losing their hair, feeling tired, sick all the time, unable to sleep and having issues with their skin or stomach. In addition to descriptions of bodily problems, issues were described in relation to mental health or coping with life’s challenges in general, or specifically relating to the bloggers’ (bad) relationship with food:

I’ve followed many diets in my life and they’ve all left me feeling miserable. I’ve been starving myself and then felt guilty when I’ve eaten something unhealthy. Before my healthy vegan life, I hardly ever enjoyed eating. (M1/12/15)

When I noticed that I wasn’t really able to laugh anymore and I felt constantly exhausted, I knew I had to do something to change the situation. (T9/4/15)

As in the excerpts above, the transformation begins from a life-altering realization that is portrayed as a key life event. The transition from a bad life to good life is portrayed plentifully in all the bloggers’ personal narratives. This phase specifically describes the administration of the cure – *the food* as an important element in the mental and life-stylistic transformation:

I needed to make sure I wasn’t just ‘going on another restrictive diet’ when changing to a healthy plant based diet. That’s why I wanted to change my attitude towards food. I didn’t want to see food as just good calories or bad calories, I needed to understand the whole picture[.] (M1/12/15)

[The switch] was a huge lifestyle change. But deep down I knew it had to be done. I taught myself to cook and within couple of months I felt reborn. (V/MY STORY)

The narrative technologies of ‘my journey’ differ in one crucial way from more conventional conversion stories. In mapping contemporary storytelling practices of journalism and social media, Mäkelä and her research team (2018) found a typical cultural masterplot: the conversion story of a well-being professional, where, after suffering burnout, the (not-yet) professional is forced to re-evaluate their life goals, experiences a sudden revelation, learns their lesson and becomes a better person – often accompanied by being able to capitalize on this conversion in the form of a book or inspirational speaking business (Mäkelä, 2018: 181). In the wellness blog data, and as seen in the technologies of balancing and healing that require constant effort in order to keep oneself

on a path to wellness, the journey never really ends and the ‘conversion’ never reaches its ‘goal’.

While there is a distinct ‘after’ (or ‘nowadays’) stage in the blog narratives’ chronological order, the healing or improvement of the body – that would arguably be assumed in this context – is hardly mentioned at all by the bloggers: one of the three bloggers mentions some vague ‘positive effects’ (M11/2/16) and ‘a shift in energy levels’ (M23/11/16), and another describes having ‘arrived into a much more peaceful and calmer place’ (V26/8/15). There are no overt mentions of actually getting rid of the troubles with hair loss, stomach issues, skin problems and so on, although it seems almost impossible to assume that these problems are still unresolved in this otherwise glorious ‘after’ stage. And, if the bloggers ever had any issues with their body image, or to put it more bluntly, if they ever wished that they would lose weight with the help of this plant-based, sugar-free and gluten-free diet, it certainly is never uttered in the blog material. This, of course, is in line with the contemporary discourse of the love-your-body and body positivity movements and arguably of the larger postfeminist discourse of the 2010s as well (e.g. Gill and Elias, 2014; Sastre, 2014).

In this light, ‘reaching wellness’ becomes a pseudo-goal that, in spite of being rigorously and time-consumingly strived towards every day, cannot realistically be achieved. Wellness is not understood in the data as some sort of a ‘life hack’ or ‘quick fix’ to monetize, but as a way of life that incorporates various techniques of subjectivity that facilitate subjects coping with (and benefiting from) contemporary society and the sensibilities and values most acceptable in it.

Discussion

From a sociocultural point of view, the extreme individuality and turning to the self of the wellness discourse renders social and political factors nearly invisible. In fact, compared with many food-related discourses that intertwine with cultural capital, privilege, taste and distinction (e.g. Johnston and Baumann, 2015 (2010); Zimmerman, 2015), actors in the wellness food sphere seem to work very hard to obscure any standpoints related to distinction.

Cultural, economic and racial privilege are not only discursive but embodied: the most popular wellness influencers worldwide are young, slim, class-privileged, able-bodied and almost uniformly white (O’Neill, 2020). O’Neill describes the privileged whiteness of wellness as a kind of luminosity as certain women are ‘illuminated – literally and symbolically – as embodiments of idealized femininity’, emitting a healthful radiance that acts as a testament to the virtuous lifestyles they lead (O’Neill, 2020: 629). In wellness culture, media and especially in the context of Finnish wellness, the totality of whiteness appears all-encompassing, as representations of white bodies take up the space of wellness as a whole.

In connection with class and economic privilege, what goes unmentioned in the data are, first, the economic capital necessary to successfully reproduce the wellness food regimen and, second, the educational or entrepreneurial labour that goes into being able to perform everyday duties in ways that fulfil wellness lifestyle standards. The gendered and postfeminist subjectivity of wellness addresses almost exclusively upwardly mobile,

aspirational women and is ‘unapologetically middle-class’, often cut off from any ‘obligation to less privileged women or those who are not “strivers”’ (McRobbie, 2013). Thus, similarly to race, class is invisible in hegemonic discursive spaces of wellness: the neoliberal subjectivity that this cultural field relies on does not really recognize class or even economic inequality as such – as structural, material disparities that have an impact on the stakes with which we try to pursue the ideal of ‘good life’.

Of course, this kind of indifference and impartiality to cultural, political or social stances makes the language of wellness a neoliberal discourse *par excellence*: all that is left visible is the prerogative to police and cultivate the self through culturally hegemonic pursuits that are based on (the right kind of) consumption. Wellness operates on a neoliberal cultural plane that is inherently middle-class – legitimate, normative, white, able-bodied, entrepreneurial, self-controlling and ‘ideal’ – but simultaneously ‘above class’ or beyond class divisions. In the food blog data, even if the discourse does not appear ‘classed’ in itself, the technologies of self are highly class-related, as the educational, cultural, embodied and economic capital required to enact these subjectivities renders wellness food culture inaccessible to many consumers and thus establishes the quest for perfect balance, excellent health and continuous preoccupation with the nourishment of the self as a privileged pursuit.

Finally, steering clear of uncomfortable social and political factors here has to do with the sub-cultural and ideological aspects of dietary regimes. In these data, the bloggers do not identify themselves as vegans or as following the ‘clean eating’ dietary regime. Instead, they refer to the preferred diet as being ‘plant-based’. The choice between ‘vegan’ and ‘plant-based’ is in no way coincidental: Harrington et al. (2018) state that veganism has experienced a cultural shift in recent years, and a holistic, health-centred and individualistic plant-based living has partly displaced the ‘aggressive’, ‘sandal-wearing’ activist identity of being a ‘vegan’. Here, bloggers do not adhere to any distinctive food ideologies that might be off-putting to readers or that might label the bloggers as part of something larger than just their personal preferences, something that could potentially pose a threat to dominant cultural norms (see Scott, 2020). Not ‘choosing a side’ enables actors amid wellness culture to both concentrate fully on their personal journeys towards peak well-being and, as Kanai (2019: 61) suggests, not to transgress the ‘normal’, approachable and pleasing characteristics allocated to women in our contemporary social and media environment.

Conclusion


This article has explored the technologies of self that are created and maintained in the discourses of the wellness food blogosphere. The article argues that the wellness subject persists through employing (discursive, affective and bodily) techniques of balancing, healing and self-narrativization in order to keep on striving towards a self that meets the requirements placed on a neoliberal individual. In a cultural space as highly gendered as the world of wellness food, these techniques morph with culturally feminine and post-feminist sensibilities that demand women strive for a normative, palatable femininity, rigorous self-care and self-love, continuous self-labour as well as bodily perfection.

The subjectivities of the wellness food blogosphere exist amid a postfeminist and neoliberal discourse of individuality, risk and self-control. The technologies aim towards establishing complete control: control over needing to choose and not having to choose, over performing in ways that are legitimate and not too pathological, over safeguarding the body and optimizing the functionality of the mind, over health and risks endangering that health and over the self and over one's surroundings. According to Lupton (1996: 75), control over food is control over subjectivity, as by controlling what one eats, one can control what one is. The technologies of self through which the individual and cultural foodways of the wellness food sphere are governed aim at enabling blog authors to gain complete domination over their own reality.

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Notes

1. In the context of Finnish food, examples of this could be blogger Hanna Gullichsen's *avocado pasta* from 2012 that circulated the traditional media widely and even generated separate 'avocado pasta stalls' (displaying, for example, avocados, spaghetti, pecorino, chilli and coriander) in some supermarkets, as well as Finnish blogger Jenni Häyrinen's *baked feta pasta* from 2019 that found its way on TikTok and finally on more traditional international media outlets.
2. The blogs can be accessed through vanelja.com, myberryforest.com and tuulia.com.
3. The abbreviations stand for the blog title (*Vanelja*, *My Berry Forest* and *Tuulia*) and the date each post was published on the blog.

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PUBLICATION IV

**Feeling grateful, kind, and empowered. Rules of feeling in Instagram's
#womenswellness digital intimate public**

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Feeling grateful, kind, and empowered. Rules of feeling in Instagram's #womenswellness digital intimate public

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ABSTRACT

As one of the largest social media platforms, Instagram has an essential role in shaping emerging cultural values in contemporary culture. Instagram is also home to myriad digital intimate publics—one of which centers on both tackling and celebrating daily experiences of women striving for health and wellness. This paper explores the affective practices of Instagram's wellness culture, drawing from Arlie Hochschild's concept of "feeling rules" and from recent scholarly work on feminist sensibilities in contemporary media. The analysis suggests that, in the #womenswellness intimate public, women are encouraged to 1) *be honest* about their feelings, 2) *be grateful* even in the face of failure, 3) *be kind* towards themselves, and 4) *be empowered* and ready to take down "diet culture." The paper concludes that the enforcement of specific feeling rules makes recent changes in gendered cultural sensibilities visible: the emotions present in #womenswellness manifest a shift from post-feminist rhetoric of confidence and "bouncing back" towards popular feminist affective formations tied to self-love, kindness and vulnerability. Still, even if the rules of feeling in contemporary feminine culture are changing, the rigorous self-governing needed to survive as a woman in neoliberal culture remains apparent in the #womenswellness data.

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Introduction

In the contemporary culture, social media has an essential role in shaping and regenerating both the fast-paced circulation of trends and more lasting phenomena based on emerging lifestyles and values. As one of the largest social media platforms (Statista 2021), Instagram is firmly wrapped in the fast-changing rhythms of what is *most* recent or contemporary at any given time. For this reason, Instagram culture is proficiently apt for studying the changing affective and discursive formations in gendered cultural spaces. This paper explores the affective aspects of wellness culture on Instagram, considering especially the discursive practices connected to *feeling rules* (Arlie Russell Hochschild 1983/2012) recycled in this digital intimate public. The aim of this analysis is to find answers to the questions of, first, what feelings are most visible in the #womenswellness public of Instagram and what

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emotions are celebrated or instigated in this space; and second, how these affective practices intertwine with contemporary configurations of feminism in popular media.

Instagram has an extensive field of communities and content that can be illustrated through the concept of *wellness*. Most things related to health, well-being, nutrition, and fitness fall under the umbrella of wellness, and thousands upon thousands of Instagram content creators urge users to “be inspired” and “get motivated:” to strive for better well-being and “the good life” (see Lauran Berlant 2011) in their personal lives. Instagram wellness brands, influencers, and other content creators offer health-related advice presented in a personalized manner, through visual illustrations and aspirational photos most often depicting beautiful food or beautiful bodies.

Wellness, however, is more widespread in Western culture than mere social media content of the 2010s and 2020s. Wellness as a concept was first popularized in the late 1950s. “High-level wellness” was defined as “a condition of change in which the individual moves forward, climbing toward a higher potential of functioning” (Halbert Dunn 1959), and a distinction was made between *absence of illness* (objective and passive) and *wellness* (active and subjective). Since 2008, the wellness industry has grown twice as fast as the global economic growth (Global Wellness Institute 2018), and today it encapsulates all sorts of lifestyles and practices—from detox diets to educational wellness policies in multinational companies—promoting health and self-improvement strategies while promising to boost productivity (see Daniela Blei 2017).

Wellness can be categorized as a preventative, holistic configuration of healthiness. The wellness lifestyle is especially preoccupied with nutrition, as what you decide to “put in your body” is often thought to directly “cause” both wellness and illness. Foodstuffs in the center of wellness culture are a diverse mixture of clean food (unprocessed food considered to be as close to its natural state as possible; Stephanie Baker and Michael Walsh 2018), “nutraceuticals” (foods that are “more than food” but “less than pharmaceuticals;” Istvan Télessy 2019), and food that simply makes one feel good and nourished. From an analytic point of view, a focus on wellness food brings together various wellness topics (e.g., nutrition, fitness, and mental health are often weaved together in keeping with the holistic ethos of wellness) as well as highlights the continuous “body projects” sustained in this sphere that focus on the deeply embodied nature of wellness culture.

Wellness shares its values with *healthism*, which has been characterized as an ideology grounded upon middle-class life-management aiming to eliminate risks for illness through personal choices (see Ngairé Donaghue and Anne Clemitshaw 2012). Despite the emergence of wellness as a twenty-first century buzzword attached to a wide range of products, services, industries, and lifestyles, there exists yet relatively little research pertaining to this field of culture and media. In cultural studies, wellness has been the focus of analysis in a few articles over the years (Virginia Braun and Sophie Carruthers 2020; Bridget Conor 2021; Nazrul Islam 2014; Rachel O’Neill 2020; Kaisa Tiusanen 2021). Healthism’s cornerstones—personalized self-care regimes of carefully curated food fads, fitness routines, and spiritual practices (see Cristina Hanganu-Bresch 2019, 7)—are the foundations of wellness culture that inhabit the feminine spaces of Instagram.

As contemporary wellness culture in social media is produced and consumed predominantly by women (see O’Neill 2020), studying wellness calls for a feminist studies perspective, as the feeling rules circulated on these sites evolve concomitantly with wider “sensibilities” of postfeminism and popular feminism. This analysis suggests that popular feminist emotional

schemas are undoubtedly present in the discourses and feeling rules of Instagram's wellness content. A tension between compliant and resistant feminism remains unresolved here, as the feeling rules in this seemingly *ethical* (see Akane Kanai 2019) digital intimate public appear, above all, ambivalent in the face of exhaustive neoliberal modes of self-governing, bodily surveillance, and structural inequalities in contemporary society.

The emotional life of contemporary feminisms in digital media

Striving for optimal well-being fits nicely with the gendered reality of both healthism and neoliberalism. According to Christina Scharff (2016), the ideal neoliberal subject is often female: a (young) woman amidst continuous self-improvement or a "project of the self" to fulfil the ideal of a responsible individual preventing ill health and striving toward an acceptable size and shape of one's body (see Chelsea Cinquegrani and David H.K. Brown 2018, 586). Contemporary modes of self-governing have been widely analyzed from gendered viewpoints, and especially, the negotiations between neoliberal and feminist ideas have been an influential field in feminist scholarly work (see, e.g., Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill, and Catherine Rottenberg 2020).

Postfeminism (Rosalind Gill 2007; Angela McRobbie 2009) and *popular feminism* (Sarah Banet-Weiser 2018) are interrelated concepts both used in investigating the ways in which current notions of femininity and feminism incorporate, revise, and possibly attack (see Rosalind Gill 2007) the feminist ideas of previous decades. Postfeminism is often described as a "sensibility" that emphasizes choice, "being oneself," and "pleasing oneself" as central prerogatives to an active, self-reinventing subject (ibid.). Banet-Weiser's, Gill, and Rottenberg (2020) concept of popular feminism refers to practices related to women's rights accessible to a broad public (e.g., commodities and hashtag activism addressing, e.g., self-confidence and body positivity) that are highly visible on social media platforms.

Popular feminism distinctly differs from postfeminism's "disavowal of feminist politics" as it "takes up the mantle of traditional feminist issues" (Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg 2020, 20). In fact, Laura Savolainen, Justus Uitermark and John Boy note that we are currently witnessing a reinvigorated insistence on the continued relevance of feminism, especially on social media, where affordances and practices have been adopted for feminist expression (Laura Savolainen, Justus Uitermark & John D. Boy 2020). In #womenswellness, popular feminism circulates as a manner of expression that prioritizes some discursive, affective, and aesthetic dispositions over others. The *manner* of displaying feminism seems inseparable from the feminist issues scrutinized, as digital media affordances reward certain styles of depiction by granting visibility to them.

Social media spaces that circulate "women's culture" are often characterized as *intimate publics* (Lauren Berlant 2008). According to Berlant, an intimate public is a culture of circulation of texts and things that profess to express participants' core interests, thus producing a sense of commonality and shared history with the (assumed) participants in that space (Berlant 2008, 5). In her research, Kanai considers feminine Tumblr spaces as *digital* intimate publics: as digital spaces "operating on a fantasy of fitting into a feminine generality, offering a sense of ongoing attachment through the expression of emotional likeness" (Kanai 2019, 5). The affective and cultural practices of the quasi-communities devoted to women's wellness on Instagram operate via a similar logic: the intimate public provides material that encourages "enduring,

resisting, overcoming, and enjoying being an *x*" (Berlant 2008, viii), the *x* here being a woman striving for wellness.

According to Kanai, the circulation of texts in digital spaces constructs (and builds *on*) a common imaginary and on common conceptual worlds (Kanai 2019, 62) of real and imagined others: the reader in a digital intimate public "understands that the post articulates a feeling experienced by someone else, while also putting in the work of relating to a vaguely similar feeling on a personal level." (61–62.) Finally, Berlant's characterizations of an intimate public as (a) elaborating themselves through commodity culture, as well as (b) being organized by fantasies of transcending the obstacles that shape the participants' historical condition (Berlant 2008, 8), are fundamental aspects of the "psychic life" of the intimate public analyzed here.

The #womenswellness digital intimate public enforces specific feeling rules that participants are encouraged to abide by. According to Hochschild, feeling rules are "standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly owed in the currency of feeling" and, through them, "we tell what is 'due' in each relation, each role" (Hochschild 1983/2012, 27). Feeling rules relate to "emotional labor" (ibid.), which refers to being required to feel the "right feeling" for a situation or a job. As a concept, "feeling rules" especially applies to digital intimate publics because of the *conformity* and *sameness* it implies: the rules of feeling guide the practices and discursive dimensions of online wellness culture I analyze here.

Finally, theorizations on contemporary feminisms are particularly interested in what is considered to be a "psychological turn" (e.g., Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad 2018) in neoliberal (post)feminist culture. This turn and analyses concerning therapy culture both deal with the emergence of psychology as a deep cultural structure (Eva Illouz 2008) in contemporary Western societies. According to Illouz, therapeutic culture is a deeply internalized cultural schema organizing the perception of the self and others, in which "mental or emotional health is the primary commodity circulated" through specific language, rules, and boundaries (Illouz 2008, 170–171). A culture tuned to therapeutic pursuits puts emphasis on self-reflexivity and positions the subject as always "lacking" in some way and thus in need of (therapeutic) relief (Jean Collingsworth 2014).

Illouz notes that the therapeutic narrative makes emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, anger, and insecurity) into public objects to be exposed, and subjects participate in the public sphere through the construction and exposure of "private" emotions (Illouz 2007, 52). Confessional culture is considered as deeply gendered as well—as a culture that compels the private worlds of women into the public sphere (Anita Harris 2003). Feeling rules for Instagram's wellness content extract behavioral and affective ideals from wider societal currents relating to therapy and feminism.

Data

The analysis began by combing through a large amount of Instagram's health-related content to select a single hashtag (and thus a topic) as a "ground zero" for data gathering that represented Instagram's scattered field of health-related content. The hashtag *womenswellness* was chosen on the grounds that it brought together various topics related to health and nutrition that are abundant in the spaces populated by women on this medium. Linnea Laestadius (2017) notes that as Instagram's affordances promote visual rather than textual communication, its hashtags are less likely to indicate posts as

being part of a continuing text-based conversation, as on Twitter, and are more likely to indicate participation in a community or provide context for an image. The hashtag *womenswellness* was often used together with other popular hashtags (for example, *holisticnutrition*, *hormonebalance*, *selflove*, *functionalfnutrition*, and *healingyourself*), which indicates that it is connected to various clusters of health and nutrition content on Instagram. It is worth mentioning that Instagram users within this quasi-community often attach multiple tags to posts, and many of the selected posts simultaneously remain part of other (albeit often very similar) publics not examined in this analysis.

The dataset comprises 300 publicly available Instagram posts obtained by tracking the hashtag *womenswellness* via Instagram's Most Recent feature that exhibits all posts using #womenswellness in a reverse chronological order. While it would be impractical to scroll through these posts all the way to their "beginning" (the count of #womenswellness used in posts by March 2021 was over 223,000), the feature facilitates browsing posts that have been published in recent days or weeks. Three hundred was selected as the desired dataset size to produce a manageable sample consistent with a qualitative approach to understanding online meaning-making (see Kim Toffoletti and Holly Thorpe 2020). Posts were collected over a two-week period in seven separate instances (from August 6 to 20, 2020) until the total count of posts reached 305 (five posts were extracted as back-up).

These posts were not extracted indiscriminately. Instead, the sample was narrowed down by adhering the following criteria: (1) the language used in the post was English, and (2) the post included some reference to food (food ingredients, beverage, diet, nutrition, meals, or eating) in the post's caption or image content. By focusing on food and nutrition, the data constitute a diverse constellation of wellness content grasping the embodied, affective, holistic, consumption-related, and aesthetics well as healthiest aspects of the #womenswellness discourse. Posts in the dataset discuss food or eating alongside a wide range of topics, including self-care, mindfulness, beauty, fitness, body size, and reproductive health.

The public nature of Instagram makes it fitting for cultural analysis. Instagram is one of the most popular platforms for self-presentation online and, as other online spaces, it encourages and discourages certain forms of social exchange, identity presentation, and affective display (Baker and Walsh 2018). The affordances of social media platforms play a role in how digital publics are formed. Many of Instagram's key characteristics have to do with the interplay between intimacy and marketing: The dominance of commercial displays on Instagram has resulted in a shift from "networked intimacy" towards a "networked public" wherein users are not only sharing content for groups of friends, but instead publishing content in the persona of a public figure for an imagined, unseen audience (Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin 2020). Further, Instagram content appears to be both highly scripted and "authentic" as significant effort goes into emphasizing authenticity through content design (see e.g., Josie Reade 2021). The intimate public of #womenswellness weaves these aspects together in a manner typical for Instagram: through advertising and selling commodities and services while heavily utilizing realness and emotional connectivity.

Marketing and influencing are important in relation to #womenswellness content and the "agenda" of a typical poster, as a significant share of the dataset's posts try to influence potential consumers to buy something specific (vitamin supplements, health coaching services, or feminine products, for example) or something in general (healthy vegetables or plastic-free kitchen utensils).

However, despite displaying varying motivations such as selling services, displaying one's identity or connecting with a network of like-minded women, what binds these posts under a unified theme is the *aspirational* nature of #womenswellness content, as all forms of interaction and display within this public revolve around some kind of self-betterment.

Ethical considerations relating to user-generated data and republishing images shared on social media are an ongoing challenge (Toffoletti and Thorpe 2020). In the case of #womenswellness content, the public and especially the commercial nature of these posts has influenced how rigorously user privacy has been pursued (see Leanne Townsend and Claire Wallace 2016 on expectation of privacy and on vulnerability online). However, as a way of ensuring ethical procedure, user identifiers have been excluded from cited data excerpts, and screenshots containing visual material have been altered to conceal identifiers in an effort to lessen the likelihood of used material being traced back to a specific account.

Analyzing the affective-discursive media

Despite academic differences in the understandings of emotion, affect, and materiality and the adequacy of the discourse-centrality of previous poststructuralist scholarly work (e.g., Margaret Wetherell 2012), what is widely accepted in the study of affect is that affect is emotion in the midst of some sort of *in-between-ness* (Melissa Seigworth and Gregory Gregg 2010). According to Lauren Berlant (2011, 16), affect has the potential to “move across persons and worlds, play out in lived time, and energize attachments,” whereas Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis (2018) suggest that affect is emotion “on the move.” Additionally, feelings are *social*: they arise and are negotiated in an inter-subjective moment (Wetherell 2012). Hence, cultural studies' approaches to emotion understand affects as deeply embedded in the public sphere (Anna Berg et al. 2019).

Finally, affect is *structured*, positioning us in relationships of control, attachment, or commonality in relation to others (Kanai 2019, 13), and this structure is often what makes affect powerful (Wetherell 2012, 19): even though affect is often described as dynamic and mobile, it displays strong pushes for pattern, as particular kinds of emotional subjects are repetitively materialized, and “affective machines” emerge in social life (ibid., 13, 14). For the purposes of this study, I use the terms *affect*, *feeling*, and *emotion* interchangeably (similarly to Sara Ahmed 2004; Wetherell 2012; Kanai 2019), as their subtle differences are of minor consequence in the analysis of feeling rules on social media.

This analysis utilizes both Wetherell's notion of *affective practice* (Wetherell 2012) and Hochschild's concept of *feeling rules* (Hochschild 1983/2012), which is used here both as a theoretical concept and a methodological device. The concept of affective practice focuses on the emotional as it appears in social life, and it tries to follow what participants *do* by avoiding too-rigid or “neat” figurations of emotional categories (Wetherell 2012). As in Hochschild's notion of feeling rules, affective practice emphasizes that feelings are not “inside” us as private emotions, but rather, feeling is a communicative practice that determines the rules and limits of sociability. Affective-discursive practice (Wetherell 2012) relies on repeating and solidifying specific affective responses and feeling rules to specific circumstances. According to Kanai (2019, 14), conceptualizing affect as entangled within discursive meaning offers a pragmatic approach to analyzing textual artefacts that are created within digital social spaces.

The initial analysis of wellness content on Instagram relied on an open-coding process in which all elements of the #womenswellness posts (images, captions, contextual information, and comments) were considered for further analysis. This process provided a general feel for the dataset and aimed at identifying central patterns across the material, looking to see how these tendencies (affective intensities, aesthetic practices, tropes) intersected with previous research into social media and affect.

Next, the data were more purposefully coded by creating an emotion-bound vocabulary (see Ahmed 2004) in a data-driven manner (i.e., creating a vocabulary within this specific dataset). This was done in order to map the affective dynamics at play. Instagram posts were coded depending on the emotion words they contained (e.g., individual words like *anxiety*, *beloved*, *confidence*, *disconnection*, *exhausted*, and *gratitude*; phrases such as *feeling out of control* and *learn to love yourself*; and idioms such as *be present in the moment* and *protect your boundaries*). The phrases were then cross-categorized in thematic groups depending on their affective-discursive tone. These thematic groups (named *self*; *relationship*; *emotional competence*; *restrictive feeling*; *untamed emotions*; *endurance*; *evolving*; *getting there*; and *in a good place*) functioned as a structuring technique in ascertaining what kind of relationships between subjectivity and emotion were at play in #womenswellness data.

The final in-depth analysis aimed at recognizing distinct feeling rules (i.e., affective-discursive constellations of what emotion is encouraged or rejected in any given context), how these feeling rules relate to each other, and how they interconnect with wider cultural tendencies. These “bodies” of affective-discursive practice are introduced in the sections that follow.

Feeling honest

The #womenswellness intimate public both enables and requires *sharing*, as maintaining a digital affective space is founded upon open divulgement of feelings. Feeling is the essential fuel that enables these publics to operate, and in #womenswellness data, the content creators lead the way into this affective atmosphere: they themselves practice sharing and confessing so that others can ease into this mindset as well. Content creators open up a space for openness by stating, for example, that they “have a little confession to make,” or that they are “not gonna lie.” There exists a wide variety of *what* exactly can be confessed: content creators confess, for example, gaining weight, not caring about gaining weight, caring too much about gaining weight, or not exercising self-care, and readers are urged to confess (to themselves) that they hate their bodies, that they are not “doing the work,” or that they are not listening to their bodies well enough.

Here, sharing is a powerful tool for establishing and guarding feeling rules, as confession and the repenting that often follows strengthens the hold a particular practice has over a community. Honesty, especially, is an effective device for sociability, as confessing some less-than-ideal traits caters to relatability. A content creator emphasizing rest and recovery encourages readers to abide by an explicit affective rule:

BE HONEST. How many hours of sleep do you get a night?¹

With the value put on honesty, negative emotions are being unmasked, as being honest about positive feelings can hardly be considered authentic in the same sense as sharing feelings of anger, despair, sadness or, most often, failure, like these two content creators (a wellness coach and a fashion stylist) confess in their posts:

I had let the busyness of life stop me from looking after myself the way I wanted.
I wasn't exercising as much as I wanted or used to.
I wasn't eating as well as I wanted or used to.

I've been struggling during quarantine too. [. . .]
I've gained a few pounds. [. . .]
I'm not gonna lie: my mind tells me to get in high gear to diet and go back to my past weight.
But I can't fight myself anymore. I'm tired.

The failures shared in #womenswellness are commonly associated with situations where a desired self-improvement does not align with the realities of life and thus leads to feelings of inadequacy. As well as being honest about poor lifestyle choices and relapses, an important part of this confessional behavior is being honest about *feelings*. Often the hardest thing to "admit" is *not feeling good about yourself*, or not loving yourself enough, as in this excerpt from a poster wearing a "self-love" shirt in her photo:

See those words on my shirt? I strive to grow into unconditional self love every day, which is something that I have struggled with a lot of my life, especially through my anxiety and depression journey. ♡

Disappointment with oneself is directed both at one's ability to do the right things and to feel the right feelings, be happy enough, be grateful enough, and be merciful enough to oneself. These tendencies seem happily mixed together, and disappointment is often attested to *both* failing to live well and failing to feel the right feelings:

I know what it's like to feel NO motivation to work out 😞 [. . .]

Once again you beat yourself up telling yourself, I'll never have that confidence in my own body 😞 [. . .]

And on days where I didn't feel motivated I'd blame MYSELF. 🗑️

Ugh [name] you just can't STAY motivated, you're FAILING 😞

Studies on postfeminism, popular feminism, and the culture of confidence (e.g., Banet-Weiser 2018; Gill 2007; Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad 2015) emphasize how contemporary positive attention economies have no room for negativity: in these environments, negative affect is rebuffed, and positivity is established as the preferred emotional tone. However, (Rachel Berryman and Kavka 2018, 87, 90) analysis on crying vlogs on YouTube indicates that affective flows on social media are becoming qualitatively variable, and that negative affect as well can generate authenticity and thus desirable attention in social media (see also Mari Lehto (2020) on mommy bloggers displaying negative feelings in order to combat the exhausting realities of contemporary parenting). Negative affect is both emancipated and policed in #womenswellness content, as certain emotions are simultaneously strongly encouraged (e.g., it is okay to feel sad) and their validity is questioned (your feelings are not authentic but "rooted in fear," for example) resulting in an emotional atmosphere marked by ambivalence.

Many previously shunned emotions are emphasized in #womenswellness due to their authentic value. For example, shame is a particularly powerful authentic affect in this space, and thus performed and conjured up in situations where none is present, and

feeling shame or guilt is *assumed* for the therapeutic script to create a stronger emotional echo, as in this post where a dietitian attempts to decipher how her potential future clients might be feeling:

- ✓ Are you sacrificing emotional/mental health because of how you eat? (feeling isolated, depressed, obsessed about food, etc.)
- ✓ Are you truly able to enjoy food without guilt/shame?

Confessing shame taps into the symbolic capital connected with *vulnerability* in the contemporary ethical media space. According to Anu Koivunen, Katariina Kyrölä, and Ingrid Ryberg (2019), especially after #metoo, vulnerability and suffering injury have become paradoxically equated with power and as something that counts as shared experience in intimate publics. Being vulnerable becomes a mode of agency, and victimization is perceived as “productive” and thus suitable for the digital attention economy (*ibid.*). Vulnerability is useful in this discourse in creating a shared experience and an honest affective space, and as something that can be molded into resilience. For example, this Instagram dietitian reminisces on how life-altering realizations—some foods “whack your hormones out of balance”—often stem from hitting rock bottom:

You may not know this, but I used to be one of those people who couldn’t function without caffeine. [...]

I started performing poorly, was unable to focus on taking care of my family and my mood was suffering.

I felt helpless, like I had no control over my life ...

In their analysis of the contemporary cult(ure) of confidence directed at women and girls, Gill and Orgad (2015) posit that revealing shame or insecurity is crucial, as the point is to “deal with” these feelings with the help of confidence technologies. In the wellness intimate public of Instagram, however, this would be an over-simplification, as shame or failure is often *not* dealt with in any decisive manner, and they almost seem to create an impasse in which feeling bad is rendered, if not desirable, at least valid and normal. As Toffoletti and Thorpe (2020) argue, accepting and encouraging public expressions of vulnerability enables “a collective ownership of feelings of inadequacy” in environments where women are subject to bodily judgement. Affective authenticity is more important than appearing confident, which seems to indicate a shift in what kind of affective registers are generally legitimated in these spaces.

Feeling grateful

Many of the preferred affective practices of #womenswellness rely on high levels of emotional competence that require making oneself feel certain feelings, suppressing unwanted feelings, and “psyching oneself up” via different strategies of self-persuasion. According to Illouz (2007), emotional competence is not unlike cultural competence, and is hence translatable to social capital in many situations. This is especially true in feminine and middle-class spaces, and the #womenswellness digital intimate public is indeed both.

In tandem with the demand to share, the intimate public leans on myriad feeling rules that are designed to help *cope* in contemporary society as a woman. These affective strategies work through building up *resilience*: surviving, day in and day out, with the help of appropriate mental and emotional techniques.

Emotional labor is constant in #womenswellness, as the reality—of both *oneself* and one's surroundings—is always lacking yet always moldable too. Emotional labor is the work that matters, since telling oneself to feel a certain way seems to be all that is required to succeed. However, on top of psyching oneself up, the *actual* work—losing weight, working out—needs to be done as well, which begs the question of whether resilience training is helpful at all or if it is just labor on top of labor. What *is* achieved via affective labor is *maintaining* the intimate public, since its existence requires emotional work to be put in continuously.

Resilience can be considered a necessary quality to survive in neoliberal societies defined by anxiety and uncertainty (see Gill and Orgad 2018). Resilience is part of the affective-discursive machine of digital gendered spaces, where sharing failures is countered with coping mechanisms to either fix that failure or to learn to accept it. Resilience training is also perceived as being feminist, as through it, women are made stronger so that they can better look after themselves (Angela McRobbie 2020, 39). Resilience is certainly a kind of common sense in contemporary digital spaces, where the vocabularies and affective dimensions related to resilience are utilized almost automatically (see *ibid.*, 49).

What are your favourite ways to prevent burn out? Figure 1.



Figure 1. What are your favourite ways to prevent burnout?.

Resilience manifests in different ways in #womenswellness data. What is always required, however, is emotional labor and active mental work, trying to *feel the feelings you are not yet feeling*:

Some of my favorite ways of getting motivated are 📌

1 Telling myself this workout is to get stronger 📌 #strongoverskinny

2 Picturing how I will FEEL AFTER I workout #energized #proud #accomplished [...]

4 & last I will look in the mirror & tell myself “Look girlfriend no one else can show up for yourself but YOU so let’s do this!” #selfloveadvocate

One of these desired mindsets in #womenswellness is gratitude. Gratitude is considered an effective technology in tricking oneself into feeling good: being thankful conjures up positive thoughts in order to suppress negative emotions. Gratitude requires a high amount of emotional competence, since *especially* in the face of difficulties, people are urged to focus on the things they are grateful for, as to feel better is to *be* better (Sara Ahmed 2010, 8), and thus more resilient and more productive:

Happy and healthy—the version of me I’m working hardest to be! 📌

An emphasis on gratitude urges people to be more adaptable and more positive (Gill and Orgad 2018) and to steer clear of any inappropriate feeling. The emotional ambivalence of #womenswellness is apparent here, since emphasizing gratitude works counter to the feeling rules that establish negative emotions as valid and more authentic than positive ones. Shame, failure, or anger is useful in this intimate public due to authenticity and relatability, whereas techniques of resilience—like gratitude—are useful for managing life and coping with, for example, the coronavirus pandemic, “growing pains,” and feeling overwhelmed in day-to-day life, as one fitness coach and dietitian instructs:

Let’s start this week with an “attitude of gratitude”!

Five things I’m thankful for today 📌

Feeling kind

In #womenswellness discourse that follows the contemporary popular feminist zeitgeist, a “feministic” tone is often present, as gendered intimate publics centered on wellness value “focusing on how you *feel* rather than focusing on how you look” (see Toffoletti and Thorpe 2020, 3). A focus on feeling promotes emotion as the desirable mode of feminine self-expression and places authenticity and intimacy at the center of discourse (ibid., 3, 11).

There is an interesting difference in strategies of resilience in #womenswellness compared to resilience observed in previous studies of postfeminist or popular feminist media texts. Surpassing the usual imperative to “be confident” (e.g., Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad 2015, 2017) and alongside the requirement to “be grateful,” the wellness intimate public of Instagram focuses on techniques that emphasize kindness and sympathy as affective responses to situations that require resilience. This kindness is not directed toward others in a traditional fashion equating femininity with care work and

accommodating other people, but toward the *self*. In wellness contexts, this generates a feeling rule of not requiring too much of oneself and being compassionate toward oneself, as these two Instagram coaches proclaim:

Remember, you have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn't worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens. [...]

Yesterday I shared some habitual ways of being that commonly indicate the need for a little self-care. Today I want to share a few ways in which you can show yourself kindness.

Each time you do something for yourself, say "thank you" or "well done." Make yourself a nice meal? Thanks (your name) Drink enough water? Well done ... Go to bed a bit earlier? Well done ... Respond rather than react? You get the gist.

Kindness towards oneself is portrayed as an opposite to "toxic" cultural expectations and it draws from distinctively feminist discourse. Speaking to oneself in a kind and forgiving manner could be categorized as an all-encompassing affective practice that colors the emotional tone and the technologies of the self favored in #womenswellness data.

Popular feminism itself can be categorized as "kind" rather than "angry." Banet-Weiser (2018, 14, 15) argues that popular feminism challenges the traditional stereotypical representation of angry and man-hating feminists by expressing feminist critique in a friendly, "cool," and safe way that does not alienate any consumer groups. As far as affective tones go, #womenswellness does not entirely fit Banet-Weiser's remark on popular feminism not encasing anger since, despite the emphasis on kindness, the discourse does work with and through anger—even if this anger is diluted in tone (see section 4.4). For example, in connection with "protecting one's boundaries," kindness toward the self is justified through some form of aggression toward the world that tries to break these boundaries:

✂ Say "NO" more!

Some of the best POWERMOVES there are.

Having standards.

Holding boundaries.

The ambivalence of this cultural sphere is evident in its stance toward kindness, "likeability," and anger, as there is symbolic value to be gained from both accommodation and aggression in popular feminist media. What is clear, however, is that the intimate public of #womenswellness *feels* ethical (see Kanai 2019), whether or not feminist ethics are actually abided by in reality.

We are all working towards treating our bodies with kindness and it is a PROCESS.

Beyond #womenswellness, perfect bodies are being "revealed" as inauthentic, and stretch marks, loose skin, and cellulite are exhibited in an almost fetishistic manner on Instagram in particular (see Toffoletti and Thorpe 2020). Imperfection connects with both visual and visceral aspects of social media as well as with the "ethical" or kind affective registers that are crucial in guiding the flows of emotion in #womenswellness.

According to McRobbie, the imperfect as a part of the "new age of feminism" offers some scope for criticism of the ideals of perfection, but within carefully demarcated boundaries (McRobbie 2020, 36). The focus on imperfections legitimates the presence of feminism in this discourse more than focusing on perfection ever

could. However, the failures associated with imperfection are drawn with tight lines around those terrains of experience where flaws can be entertained, and the imperfect warrants further new forms of self-care and self-love—new ways in which the self can be governed in a gendered neoliberal culture (ibid., 36, 40). Through this, celebrating imperfections appears almost as a complementary discourse to perfection, creating affective intensities needed in the maintenance of feminine intimate publics.

Feeling empowered and ready to take down *diet culture*

The drive to *empower* oneself and other women is remarkable in Instagram's wellness culture, and emphasizing empowerment is intensely present in the feeling rules of this space. Unlike in feminist activism (where empowerment might be gained through advocating for minority rights, for example), empowerment in #womenswellness is *self*-empowerment: the goal is to reach both self-improvement and self-acceptance ("I'm learning to accept myself as I can"), no matter what you were "taught" to think about yourself and your (diet-related) failures. The word "empower" appears frequently in tags associated with women's wellness content (#empowerher, #womenempoweringwomen), illustrating its catch-word-like status. According to Banet-Weiser (2018, 17, 21), emphasis on empowerment is not hindered by the fact that there is often little specification as to *what* we want to empower women to do. Popular feminist discourse restructures the politics of feminism to focus on the individual woman and urges that woman to just *be* empowered (ibid.). Even though "empowerment" points at the imbalanced power relations between men and women and tells women to "take back the power," the call to empowerment often subscribes to normative femininity where aggression is mostly inner-directed (Angela McRobbie 2015):

I desire this to be a brand that not only creates beautiful products to support you, but also educates, informs, empowers and ultimately connects you to activating your most powerful, balanced, and aligned self every single day.

Empowerment is a matter of feeling and of believing: an affective-discursive configuration that governs women to hone in on the right kind of—resilient—mindset. Empowerment requires yet again substantial emotional competence, teaching women to "make up" the feeling they hope to feel, but do not. In #womenswellness, pursuing empowerment is upwards-striving and optimistic: exerting oneself to reach something that guarantees feeling "in control." Empowerment is perhaps the all-encompassing goal that best sustains "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) in this public, as the good life is within our reach if we just learn to let go of the mindsets holding us back. Although perhaps, the optimistic-ness of this cruel optimism is, in the discursive universe analyzed here, lessened by a newfound suspicion that there is something else, in addition to *ourselves*, that stands between us and the good life, and that confidence alone might not get us there no matter how hard we try to be empowered.

One of the most prevalent targets for specific affective responses, in the data, is *diet culture*. Despite its ambivalence, diet culture talk in #womenswellness appears somewhat countercultural, as its declarations focus on the anti-feminist reality of weight loss in

Western culture. Invoking diet culture as an object of frustration seems to give this digital space a surface on which to reflect feelings brought on by gender inequality.


This cultural space holds a shared investment in overturning the culturally endorsed assumption that (thin) bodies can be read as evidence of health, happiness, worthiness, and responsibility (see Donaghue and Clemitshaw 2012). This feminist manner of argumentation aims at bringing to light elements of contemporary culture that restrict women's prospects for self-actualization and self-love. "Diet culture" is criticized because it relies on beating oneself up for not having enough self-discipline:

We've been so brainwashed, it's basically hard-wired in us to think that we just don't have enough "self-discipline" to "lose the weight," "get to the gym," "get healthy." [...]

Forget all the diet culture buzzwords and the fear and shame they create. Shift your mindset to simply showing your body and mind some love and respect.

But, as in the excerpt above, the only way for women to break free from the culture of dieting is *by themselves*: by "shifting the mindset" they are currently "trapped in," by starting to "empower their minds," by becoming "the leaders of their own lives," by deciding "enough is enough," or, as is often the case, by "clicking the link on the bio" and applying for a wellness influencer's group program (often aiming at some kind of weight loss or body modification).

Finding peace in one's body is possible even in a toxic culture that valorizes thinness and fitness above all else. How? Through ever more elaborate techniques of self-governing that are aimed at, first and foremost, exercising control over feelings:

 How many hours are you spending counting the calories in your food, stressing about what to eat, nitpicking at your body in the mirror and dreaming of a smaller/thinner/more toned body?

Now imagine a life where you are content with what your current body [is] and you weren't trying to change it. [...]

How would you feel? How would it affect your mood?

Even though contemporary culture is to blame for our problems and insecurities, in neoliberal feminist fashion, resolving this issue comes from within. According to Catherine Rottenberg (2014), neoliberal feminism is concerned with instating a feminist subject who manifests self-responsibility and does not demand anything from the society. In the popular feminist affective discourse of #womenswellness, the psychic regulation entangled with gendered culture is simultaneously both rejected and complied with. Diet culture talk is noteworthy in how complex and counteracting the different feeling rules (stemming from both postfeminist confidence culture and popular feminist counterculture) appear: appropriate emotion tiptoes on the edge between up-beat positivity and inert frustration and disappointment, as the feeling subject seems unsure of whether to keep striving or to settle for what one already has. There seems to be, perhaps, a stoic quality in the ideal resilient woman: reach for something better but do not be too disappointed if (and when) you fail Figure 2.

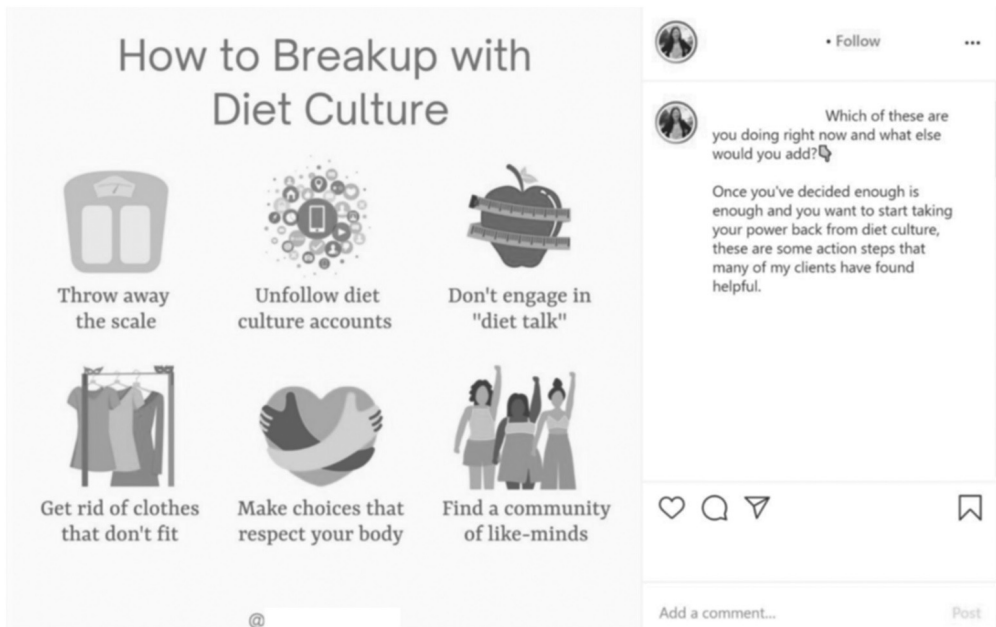


Figure 2. Feeling empowered and ready to take down diet culture.

Conclusion

This analysis investigated the affective practices in Instagram's #womenswellness digital intimate public. The aim was to ascertain what feelings were most visible in the data and if these feelings corresponded with popular feminist sensibilities. By focusing on wellness in connection with food, the analysis hoped to grasp the affective, healthist, and diet-related aspects of the #womenswellness discourse.

The analysis concluded that feeling is the essential fuel that enables the #womenswellness intimate public to operate. The affective entanglement produced through performative confession (often relating to failures) circles around "seemingly solvable but never resolved issues" (Kanai 2019, 55), as these issues—such as failing to be happy, grateful, or kind to oneself—enable this space to exist in the first place. What is remarkable here is how the legitimate emotions, behaviors, or subject formations present in this wellness content of 2020 do not necessarily follow the gendered discourse previously observed in analyses on postfeminist media (see Banet-Weiser, Gill, and Rottenberg 2020).

Confessing negative feelings in order to swiftly "deal with" them with the help of confidence technologies (such as "power poses," brand-related confidence ambassadors, or insisting that "confidence is the new sexy," see Gill and Orgad 2015) seems to have been partly replaced by the encouragement of public expressions of vulnerability and thus appreciation of affective authenticity. The emphasis put on resilience in previous studies (e.g., Gill and Orgad 2018; McRobbie 2020), however, has bearing in connection with #womenswellness as well; what is different is whether this resilience manifests through "being confident" and "bouncing back" or through accepting personal flaws and making the effort of being consciously "kind" to oneself. Thus,

“resilience” seems to be highly resilient in itself, and changes shape in contemporary neoliberal culture with the beat of emerging and reclining cultural sensibilities. The shift apparent here is the partial displacement of *post*-feminism with a highly visible and popular feminism that gravitates toward played-up feminist-ness of “protecting one’s boundaries” and saying no to diet culture. Even if the rules of feeling in contemporary feminine culture may change, what remains constant is the rigorous self-governing needed to survive a woman in neoliberal culture.

As a platform, Instagram excels in weaving intimacy and authenticity to consumer practice, making it the quintessential space for therapeutic (consumer) culture. Studying affect in Instagram’s wellness content makes visible how contemporary configurations of feminism suffuse with more life-stylistic and consumerist spaces, altering the existing modes of subject formation and cultural tides of “legitimate” emotion. The #womenswellness space is certainly sparse in legitimately “resistant voices,” but if popular feminism could be categorized as being guided by cultural norms and as a complex formation where *not necessarily all* the forms of oppression are contested (see Anu Harju and Annamari Huovinen 2015), then these affective practices might have countercultural potential that affects understandings of gender in our society in a precisely *popular* manner.

The adoption of a popular feminist discourse might be the first step towards a more inclusive cultural field that does not rest solely on normative notions of worthiness or acceptability. Per #womenswellness data, wellness culture that has previously targeted mostly white and middle-class women (see O’Neill 2020; Tiusanen 2021) seems to have expanded its reach to “all women,” regardless of ethnicity, social status, body size or physical ability or disability. Thus, in (and as part of) the process of battling gender inequality, popular feminist discourse of wellness welcomes *all* of us to surrender ourselves to bodily, mental, and emotional forms of self-governing.

Note

1. In total, 24 separate posts have been quoted here.

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