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Genetics and Human Behavior

IV annual Swedish Symposium on Biomedicine, Ethics and Society

When Does Genetics Play a Role in Understanding Human Behavior?

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"Moral dimensions in group discussions about genetically modified food."

In our presentation, we will focus on how non-experts in focus groups understood and talked about genetically modified food. We suggest that the issue of GM food was not only framed as an ethical issue in its own right (i.e., is it right or wrong to produce, sell or buy genetically modified food?), but that it was interpreted as part of overarching questions concerning human agency, responsibility, everyday epistemology and trust. By providing examples from the conversations in the focus groups, we will discuss different moral dimensions that were articulated in the data, and how they might be related. Some of the values attached to concepts such as 'nature' and 'natural' will also be discussed. In doing this, we also hope to shed some light on the issue of why many Swedes, not least in surveys like the Eurobarometer, express concerns about genetically modified food.