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# Friluftsliv as a cultivating asset for children's educational resilience

How resource-strong families value and invest in  
friluftsliv for their children

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Nr 27

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## Abstract

This study focuses on how a specific type of family invests in and ascribes value to friluftsliv and how the outdoor habits parents create for their children can be understood in relation to their children's education. Friluftsliv is a Nordic term that involves nature-based activities such as hiking and camping but can be many activities conducted in connection to nature. However, the concept is also closely linked to the meaningful emotional connection while spending time outdoors. With a Bourdieusian perspective on friluftsliv, five families were interviewed, and two participant observations were conducted on two separate occasions by following an outdoor organization that provides children and young adults with outdoor experiences. The organization also founded its own preschool focused on outdoor pedagogy. A sixth interview followed, interviewing an organization manager of one of the outdoor organization branches in the country. In understanding how the families in this thesis invest in and practice friluftsliv, this study explored the connection between the families interviewed and their active choice of having their children in outdoor preschool. The choice of outdoor preschool was found to be a strategy that the families utilize to set a foundation for their children, a foundation for resilience and autonomy in a long-term perspective. The friluftsliv concept as a practice thus became an asset also in children's school life, by cultivating a foundation of an active lifestyle and, by extension, managing and coping with staying in school even if it is strenuous and challenging at times. Through outdoor preschool and friluftsliv, the children learn skills and values that are useful throughout their childhood and adulthood.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Friluftsliv – learning for life.

At first, I was hesitant to the outdoor pedagogy while my husband was very positive toward having our children in the outdoor preschool. What happily surprised me was the children's resilience to the outdoors!

The above citation is told by one of the families who were interviewed for this thesis. In asking why being active and playing outdoors is important for their children, the mother answered that the children learn to be resilient. As an example, they were explaining how the children play outdoors even if it is raining, thus being resilient to weather, and that they enjoy exploring their natural environment. As we will see in this thesis, this resilience in and from the outdoors also shapes the children's school life.

Friluftsliv is a Nordic word with many definitions, the definition of which will be further explained in this thesis. Friluftsliv is a Nordic outdoor tradition characterized by leading a simple life close to nature.<sup>1</sup> The concept mainly includes activities like hiking, canoeing, rock climbing and other adventurous activities.<sup>2</sup> These types of activities are of course not unique to the Nordic countries. During the late 1800s, for example, North America had an extensive back-to-nature movement which took the form of bird watching, recreational fishing, camping and so forth.<sup>3</sup> Other research into lived experiences, personal challenges and decision-making has been done also in Canada and New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> In a Swedish context, friluftsliv has become more and more frequently associated with experiences that bring people closer to nature on a deeper, emotional level.<sup>5</sup> Connection to nature derives in part from a history of the general population in the early 20th-century living in rural areas, a history which eventually developed into a lifestyle and feeling of belonging in nature.<sup>6</sup>

To understand the strong position of friluftsliv in Sweden, this study will begin to explore the history and definition of friluftsliv and how this concept came to be a part of the national curriculum. Furthermore, this study aims to explore

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<sup>1</sup> Karin Sjödin, Mikael Quennerstedt, and Johan Öhman, 'The Meanings of Friluftsliv in Physical Education Teacher Education', *Sport, Education and Society* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2023): 1–14.

<sup>2</sup> Britte Brugge, 'Friluftsliv with Preschool Children', in *Nature First: Outdoor Life The Friluftsliv Way*, ed. Bob Henderson and Nils Vikander (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 121–129.

<sup>3</sup> Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin, "Naturen Som Ungdomsfostrare," in *Friluftshistoria: Från Härdande Friluftslif till Ekotursim Och Miljöpedagogik*, ed. Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2008), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice J. Kane and Hazel Tucker, 'Sustaining Adventure in New Zealand Outdoor Education: Perspectives from Renowned New Zealand Outdoor Adventurers on the Contested Cultural Understanding of Adventure', *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 11, no. 2 (2007): 29–40, doi:10.1007/BF03400855.

<sup>5</sup> Brugge, 'Friluftsliv with Preschool Children'. 121.; Yi Chien Jade Ho and David Chang, 'To Whom Does This Place Belong? Whiteness and Diversity in Outdoor Recreation and Education', *Annals of Leisure Research* 25, no. 5 (October 2022): 569–582, doi:10.1080/11745398.2020.1859389.

<sup>6</sup> Jonas Mikael, 'Becoming-Place: A Rhizomatic Exploration of Friluftsliv in the Swedish School Curriculum', *Curriculum Perspectives* 39, no. 1 (April 2019): 85–89, doi:10.1007/s41297-019-00065-5. ; Thomas H. Beery and Daniel Wolf-Watz, 'Nature to Place: Rethinking the Environmental Connectedness Perspective', *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 40, no. December (2014): 198–205, doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2014.06.006.

the relation between friluftsliv, the values ascribed to this concept, and why this is important for the families of this study and their children's education. First, however, the friluftsliv concept needs to be specified for this thesis. The next section will therefore aim to define friluftsliv from a Nordic point of view.

To understand why the families interviewed for this thesis choose to invest in outdoor education for their children, and why it is an important part of the children's upbringing, it is imperative to first explore the meaning behind friluftsliv.

Dominant Western cultural narratives of the outdoors imbue 'natural' places as sites of recreation, adventure, and a refuge from an otherwise fast-paced 'unnatural' world.<sup>7</sup> Thus far, friluftsliv is known to have a deep-rooted history in Nordic countries and has, in some cases, been translated as outdoor life, referring to the specific relationship to the Scandinavian countryside, history, and culture.<sup>8</sup> Backman explains how Friluftsliv is like outdoor recreation and outdoor education, both of which have sometimes been translated to outdoor life.<sup>9</sup> However, as it stands, outdoor recreation refers to nature-based activities (like hiking and skiing) and outdoor education relates to certain pedagogies and nature-based learning. Neither definition does quite capture the cultural aspect of friluftsliv, the essence behind it or the values of friluftsliv. Outdoor recreation as a term is simpler in scope than friluftsliv entails since it almost exclusively refers to specific activities and does not quite capture the inherent deeper relationship to nature.<sup>10</sup> For example, the ideas of friluftsliv and outdoor recreation can be distinguished by saying that friluftsliv is 'outdoor recreation with its heart within the land and linked to a tradition of being and learning with the land'.<sup>11</sup>

The definition of friluftsliv is broad and depends on from what angle it is approached and could therefore be discussed and explored on its own. However, for this thesis, the concept of friluftsliv refers to spending time in nature, connecting with nature, the environment and different activities that are conducted in nature. The aim here is not to define or specify what activities this concept involves, even though physical activity per se takes place in many types of friluftsliv.<sup>12</sup> The idea behind friluftsliv comprises more than physical activity, as it also refers to being inspired by and experiencing nature.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, physical activity alone is not enough to explain friluftsliv. What is important for this thesis is rather the connection and the feeling of well-being when spending time in and doing activities in close connection to nature. Moreover, for this thesis, the aim is to understand friluftsliv in relation to education and to

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<sup>7</sup> Ho and Chang, 'To Whom Does This Place Belong? Whiteness and Diversity in Outdoor Recreation and Education'.

<sup>8</sup> Backman, 2008, 'What Is Valued in Friluftsliv within PE Teacher Education? —Swedish PE Teacher Educators' Thoughts about Friluftsliv Analysed through the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu'.

<sup>9</sup> Backman, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas H. Beery, 'Nordic in Nature: Friluftsliv and Environmental Connectedness', *Environmental Education Research* 19, no. 1 (February 2013): 94–117, doi:10.1080/13504622.2012.688799. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Henderson, 'Lessons from Norway: Language and Outdoor Life', *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education* 13, no. 3 (2001): 31–32. Cited in Beery, 'Nordic in Nature: Friluftsliv and Environmental Connectedness'.

<sup>12</sup> Idar Lyngstad and Eivind Sæther, 'The Concept of "friluftsliv Literacy" in Relation to Physical Literacy in Physical Education Pedagogies', *Sport, Education and Society* 26, no. 5 (2021): 514–526.

<sup>13</sup> Idar Lyngstad and Eivind Sæther, 'The Concept of "friluftsliv Literacy" in Relation to Physical Literacy in Physical Education Pedagogies', 516.

understand parents' investment in friluftsliv and their children's education with the support of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts which will be further explained in Chapter 4. The purpose of exploring the concept of friluftsliv is, therefore, to gain an understanding of how it relates to education and children's education resilience.

## 2. Aim and Research Questions.

In the following section, the reader is presented with the aim of this thesis and research questions.

This study aims to explore how families invest in their children's education by incorporating friluftsliv in their daily lives and to understand the motivating factors behind choosing pre-schools with an outdoor education pedagogy. Moreover, this study aims to understand the values parents ascribe to friluftsliv and the importance of cultivating the children's habit of staying active and the closeness to the outdoors from an early age.

### 2.1 Research Questions

- 1) How can we understand middle-class families' early investment in friluftsliv?
  - a) What outdoor practices do middle-class families incorporate in their daily life?
  - b) What values and skills do parents want to transfer to their children?
- 2) How does the importance of friluftsliv affect parents' choice of children's preschool?

### 3. Background

#### 3.1 Friluftsliv – A Nordic point of view.

To better understand why spending time outdoors and being active is important for the children of the families in this study, we need to first understand the culture that is embedded in friluftsliv and understand who the groups are that conduct outdoor activities, as well as understanding the history and development of outdoor education. Therefore, the following sections aim to describe the emergence of friluftsliv in Sweden.

There is a global context when it comes to outdoor education, outdoor recreation, and spending time outdoors. Research into lived outdoor experiences, personal challenges and decision-making in a natural setting has been done for example in Canada and New Zealand, and as mentioned in the introduction, also in North America.<sup>14</sup> However, to limit the research for this master's thesis, I have chosen to focus on a Nordic context. Another motivating factor for this is the number of Nordic studies exploring the definition and meaning behind the term friluftsliv. Therefore, it seemed relevant to focus this study and the literature on a Nordic context.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, both Finland and Norway expressed an increasing interest in the landscape and nature of their own country.<sup>15</sup> Among the Nordic countries, then, Norway is arguably the country where friluftsliv has the strongest standing in terms of culture and access to rich and varied nature.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the position of friluftsliv in Norway has historical and ideological roots and the friluftsliv tradition has been viewed from various socio-cultural contexts.<sup>17</sup> When these ideologies become established in society, it became possible to produce and understand patterns for how the individual experiences and interprets meaning in their meeting with nature.<sup>18</sup> By studying friluftsliv during different periods we can gain an understanding of its qualities as they have been considered from time to time.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.2 The clean, fresh air of the mountains and sea – creating a national identity.

The shift from agricultural to industrial society and urbanization in the early 1800s in Sweden created a distance to nature which impacted farmers and the bourgeois differently. Farmers no longer had the same power or knowledge needed to work the landscape, while the bourgeoisie took the upper hand in scientific and technical advances. Natural sciences were no longer something which was taught by following adults working in the fields, but rather something

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<sup>14</sup> Kane and Tucker, 'Sustaining Adventure in New Zealand Outdoor Education'; Ho and Chang, 'To Whom Does This Place Belong? Whiteness and Diversity in Outdoor Recreation and Education'.

<sup>15</sup> Sverker Sörlin, 'Upptäckten Av Friluftslandskapet', in *Friluftshistoria: Från Hårdande Friluftslif till Ekoturism Och Miljöpedagogik*, ed. Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin (Malmö: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2008), 16–26.

<sup>16</sup> Björn Tordsson, 'What Is Friluftsliv Good for? Norwegian Friluftsliv in a Historical Perspective', in *Nature First: Outdoor Life the Friluftsliv Way*, ed. Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 62.

<sup>17</sup> Tordsson, 'What is friluftsliv good for?' 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 62

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 62.



that was taught through schoolbooks.<sup>20</sup> What was previously something which farmers worked in close relation to shifted instead toward a nature mystique to the bourgeoisie culture, where artists and writers created a romantic attitude toward nature.<sup>21</sup> Selected regions and places, therefore, became attractive destinations.<sup>22</sup>

In the later part of the 1800s, people who were better off began to engage in alpinism and nature-based activities.<sup>23</sup> The new interest in climbing mountains and hiking in the wilderness reflected the industrialist performance morale and the new individualism.<sup>24</sup> Both the mountains and the sea presented a challenge in the effort of walking through the vast wilderness yet met with beautiful scenery after a long and arduous hike.<sup>25</sup> This sort of activity was not only healthy, clean and fresh, but also far away from factories and urban noise.<sup>26</sup> Nature, the recreational landscape, therefore, comes to stand for something real, natural, and untouched, in opposition to the commercial and productive urban landscape.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it is toward the end of the 1800s that this connection to nature grows stronger and a new national identity emerges, an ideology of simplicity, authenticity and naturalism which spreads across the social spheres.<sup>28</sup> Also, tourism and friluftsliv resulted in the meeting of urban and rural cultures where, on the one hand, the peasant was ideal according to romantic ideas since this identity had grown in harmony with the natural landscape, and on the other hand, the urban traveller had to attain this genuineness by actively becoming familiar with nature.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.4 Nature Organizations and the Emergence of outdoor pedagogy

Because of the emerging industrialization and its impact on the rural landscape, there was a growing interest in nature conservation in the early 1900s. This became even more visible in the growing number of organizations aimed toward nature-based activities and conservation.<sup>30</sup> One of these is a nationwide outdoor organization which eventually founded its preschool focused on outdoor pedagogy. This organization will be explained closer below.

The environmental education pedagogical perspective on friluftsliv dominated the educational application of friluftsliv from the 1970s through the 1990s and numerous other formal and nonformal friluftsliv educational efforts exist within Sweden. As early as 1957, one of these organizations became actively involved in environmental education with the arrival of Skogsmulle, a mythical forest being, a character developed to lead children and families on outdoor

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<sup>20</sup> Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Den Kultiverade Människan*, 2nd ed. (Malmö: Gleerups Utbildning AB, 2019), 61.

<sup>21</sup> Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Den Kultiverade Människan* (Lund: Liber Läromedel, 1979), 53.

<sup>22</sup> Tordsson, 'What Is Friluftsliv Good for? Norwegian Friluftsliv in a Historical Perspective', 63.

<sup>23</sup> Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Friluftshistoria: Från Härdande Friluftslif till Ekoturism Och Miljöpedagogik* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2008), 12.

<sup>24</sup> Frykman and Löfgren, *Den Kultiverade Människan*, 1979, 54.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 56–57.

<sup>29</sup> Tordsson, 'What Is Friluftsliv Good for? Norwegian Friluftsliv in a Historical Perspective', 64.

<sup>30</sup> Sandell and Sörlin, *Friluftshistoria: Från Härdande Friluftslif till Ekoturism Och Miljöpedagogik*, 13.

adventures based on curiosity and a love of nature.<sup>31</sup> The educational outcome of the Skogsmulle program is focused upon the development and support of a child's sense of wonder in nature, and reaches also beyond Skogsmulle, where the organization offers other programs including an outdoor approach to preschool. This outdoor preschool presents its pedagogy as 'Nature and environmental education through year-round friluftsliv, play and adventure in and with help of nature'.<sup>32</sup> This approach to preschool, as we will see, plays a large role for the families and children in this thesis.

On the nationwide website, the organization is described as a "democratic, politically and religiously independent non-profit organization that has been promoting outdoor life and protecting the right of public access since 1892" and who offers "fun, safe and educational adventures - in the mountains, water, snow, ice, and forest. All year round and for everyone."<sup>33</sup> The website offers downloadable information pamphlets in 7 different languages. The main page of the website shows videos of a spring meadow, children playing in and discovering the forest together, people mountain biking, hiking in groups and sea kayaking on a summer's evening. One of the activity descriptions explains how:

Cycling on winding paths in forests and nature is great. Get the adrenaline, the peace of mind and the outdoor life, all at the same time. [...] you get to grow together with like-minded people [...].

This description together with the pictures of groups hiking and doing other activities in the forest or mountains, portrays a sense of teamwork and group belonging. Other events on their website include skating, mountain tours, wilderness adventure for children and outdoor knowledge groups, where the aim is to offer outdoor events. One branch of this outdoor organization agreed to let me follow two of their child and youth outdoor groups in participant observations.<sup>34</sup> These observations will be described in the results and analysis sections in Chapter 7.

### 3.5 Friluftsliv in school curriculum – a concept within physical education

Scandinavian countries have a tradition of children playing outdoors, learning to safely outdoors play and to be independent.<sup>35</sup> Outdoor activities, therefore, have a long history in Swedish culture and identity to enjoy nature, forests and mountains and relax from a busy work-life, as a sense of belonging, relaxing and finding meaning and spiritual connection. As mentioned in the previous sections, the idea that nature and people belong together has its roots in the romanticism of the 19th century<sup>36</sup> Various youth movements drew children out into the open

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<sup>31</sup> Beery, Nordic in Nature, 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> Beery, Nordic in Nature, 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> Authors note: Name anonymized and is hence forth referred to only as "outdoor organization".

<sup>34</sup> Authors note: Name anonymized.

<sup>35</sup> Merete Lund Fasting and Jannicke Høyem, 'Freedom, Joy and Wonder as Existential Categories of Childhood – Reflections on Experiences and Memories of Outdoor Play', *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, April 2022, 1–14, doi:10.1080/14729679.2022.2066008.

<sup>36</sup> Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Den Kultiverade Människan* (Lund: Liber Läromedel, 1979); Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Friluftshistoria: Från Härdande Friluftslif till Ekoturism Och Miljöpedagogik* (Malmö: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2008).

air and during the 1950s and with them, in the early eighties, outdoor education preschools appeared.<sup>37</sup>

Having sensory experiences of nature is an old tradition and something that has long been considered important. This idea has since permeated the preschool movement with the purpose of children learning about plants and animals and that it is healthy to spend time in nature and fresh air.<sup>38</sup> This, in turn, has permeated into the Swedish curriculum and is a part of the physical education (PE) curriculum in compulsory schools. Physical education aims to develop the pupils' sense and understanding of health and physical ability.<sup>39</sup> The purpose of friluftsliv then, is to learn how to safely conduct outdoor activities and partly environmental sustainability.<sup>40</sup> Physical education, therefore, includes a wide range of activities to learn about health and develop health – and environmental awareness, as well as creating a foundation for children to stay active and healthy throughout their working lives, to create a foundation for a healthy lifestyle.

In Sweden, friluftsliv and outdoor education activities are expressed in the curriculum for Physical education.<sup>41</sup> The curriculum has an important role in that it deals with the school's mission, basic values and overall goals and guidelines and guides teachers in their planning of physical education.<sup>42</sup> The aim of physical education, as stated in the curriculum, is to promote a healthy foundation for an active and healthy lifestyle, which will transfer to healthy and productive adults.<sup>43</sup>

The syllabus for physical education (PE) used to specify activities such as skating, skiing and hiking. However, after a curriculum reform in 1994 the specified activities were changed into mere goals, where different outdoor activities were described as friluftsliv, rather than specified activities, leaving room for PE teachers to interpret the syllabus.<sup>44</sup> It has been difficult to map explicitly why these changes were made but Sjödin et al., write that the entire school system was responsible for introducing children to friluftsliv and that in the 1980s, changes to the curriculum transferred this responsibility exclusively to physical education.<sup>45</sup> This change decreased the use of friluftsliv even though it is named one of three key learning areas in physical education.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the curriculum reform in 1994 made Physical Education and health more

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<sup>37</sup> Petra Rantalo, 'Skogsmulleskolan', in *Friluftshistoria: Från Härdande Friluftsliv till Ekoturism Och Miljöpedagogik*, ed. Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin (Malmö: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2008), 138–155, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Rantalo, 'Skogsmulleskolan', 138.

<sup>39</sup> Skolverket, *Läroplan (Lgr22)*. Skolverket, 'Läroplan (Lgr22) För Grundskolan Samt För Försköleklassen Och Fritidshemmet', § 5. Kursplaner, 5.4: Idrott och Hälsa, Accessed 9 May 2023, <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=9718>

<sup>40</sup> Skolverket, 'Läroplan (Lgr22) För Grundskolan Samt För Försköleklassen Och Fritidshemmet', § 5 Kursplaner, 5.4: Idrott och Hälsa, Accessed 9 May 2023, <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=9718>. 49.

<sup>41</sup> Skolverket, 48

<sup>42</sup> 'Så Använder Du Läroplanen För Grundskolan - Skolverket', Accessed 9 May 2023, <https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/laroplan-och-kursplaner-for-grundskolan/sa-anvander-du-laroplanen-for-grundskolan>.

<sup>43</sup> Skolverket, *Läroplan (Lgr22) för grundskolan samt för förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Erik Backman, 'What Is Valued in Friluftsliv within PE Teacher Education? —Swedish PE Teacher Educators' Thoughts about Friluftsliv Analyzed through the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu', 64

<sup>45</sup> Karin Sjödin, Mikael Quennerstedt, and Johan Öhman, 'The Meanings of Friluftsliv in Physical Education Teacher Education', *Sport, Education and Society* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2023): 1–14.

<sup>46</sup> Sjödin, Quennerstedt, and Öhman, 3.

theoretical, resulting in it being difficult for teachers to adapt to practical lessons, and difficult for students to achieve the new goals.<sup>47</sup>

While outdoor activities in physical education lessons have become difficult to conduct for various reasons, for example, economic (monetary) or geographical (place), PE lessons have seen an increase in a more theoretical approach. This may be, for example, to learn about sustainability and ethics in nature or how to conduct nature activities safely, so, rather than having specified activities listed in the curriculum, the outdoor education part now includes goals such as "... be able to act safely and prevent risk in connection with movement, outdoor activities and in friluftsliv".<sup>48</sup>

The aim of the curricula is that it should be the same across the nation.<sup>49</sup> But the question remains as to whether it is, depending on factors such as geographical place or a school's economic capital. In some public schools, funding for outdoor activities has decreased or been withdrawn altogether. This in turn creates obstacles to following the curriculum evenly across the country and municipalities. Children's living environment affects their possibilities for trying different activities, which is why schools need to provide all children and adolescents with equal education so that everyone is allowed to try various outdoor activities. The value assigned to outdoor recreation in physical education classes and the PE syllabus in Sweden, therefore, does not seem to result in the implementation of outdoor education in practice.<sup>50</sup> What this entails is that the different meanings reflect both the complexity of teaching friluftsliv and the lack of common ground for the content and motives identified in outdoor education.<sup>51</sup>

Hopefully, this background section has provided some background on the emergence of friluftsliv in relation to the Swedish school system. In the above sections, a historical background has been presented to create a basis for understanding the relation that friluftsliv holds in Sweden as a cultural means but also the importance that friluftsliv holds in Physical Education. The aim of this thesis, however, is not to explore compulsory school per se, but rather to understand how families relate to school and how the families understand friluftsliv as a tool for their children's education.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework used in this thesis will be presented.

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<sup>47</sup> Jenny Josefsson and Kajsa Kronlind, 'Lpo 94 Och Lgr 11 - Hur Skiljer Sig Kursplanerna i Ämnet Idrott Och Hälsa?' (BA diss., University of Gothenburg, 2012).

<sup>48</sup><https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/grundskolan/laroplan-och-kursplaner-for-grundskolan/laroplan-lgr22-for-grundskolan-samt-for-forskoleklassen-och-fritidshemmet?url=-996270488%2Fcompulsorycw%2Fjsp%2Fsubject.htm%3FsubjectCode%3DGRGRIDR01%26tos%3Dgr&sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdfa219f> Accessed. 1/5/2023

<sup>49</sup> Skolverket.se

<sup>50</sup> Backman, 2008, 'What Is Valued in Friluftsliv within PE Teacher Education? —Swedish PE Teacher Educators' Thoughts about Friluftsliv Analysed through the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu', 61.

<sup>51</sup> Sjödin, Quennerstedt, and Öhman, 'The Meanings of Friluftsliv in Physical Education Teacher Education', 2023. Simon Beames and Matthew Atencio, 'Building Social Capital through Outdoor Education', *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* 8, no. 2 (December 2008): 99–112, doi:10.1080/14729670802256868. 102.

## 4. Theoretical framework

### 4.1 A sociological outlook on friluftsliv and outdoor pedagogy

This paper will largely draw upon the theoretical concepts of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The purpose of this section is to explain the central concepts of Bourdieu that will be used for analytical purposes in this study.

The concepts presented below will later be used to understand the families interviewed in this thesis and their attitude toward friluftsliv and school and to analyze the values ascribed to the concept of friluftsliv. Ascribed values in this context refer to that which is deemed valuable and legitimate. In the following sections, the reader will be presented with the Bourdieusian concept of social field, symbolic capital including cultural, economic, and social capital and lastly habitus. These concepts will be used in understanding what resource-strong families entails in this thesis and how the families utilize these assets in relation to friluftsliv and the attitudes toward friluftsliv as a practice.

To understand Bourdieusian ideas it is important to note that his concepts are relative to each other and one, therefore, cannot be understood without the other. Bourdieu writes "It is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms".<sup>52</sup> For this thesis, therefore, three Bourdieusian concepts will be explained: Symbolic capital (including economic, social, and cultural capital), social space and habitus. Since these concepts are complex, deeply relational, and sometimes abstract or difficult to grasp, this thesis will aim to take a somewhat narrow definition of each of these concepts for the analysis of this paper's findings. However, that is not to say that the social world should be discussed abstractly, but rather, the Bourdieusian idea is to study the social world empirically while also considering the influences of the researcher, thus thinking relationally.<sup>53</sup> The social world, then, is made up of several different fields and, thinking in terms of field is to think relationally.<sup>54</sup>

Bourdieu's central theoretical concepts are that of field, habitus, and capital. Habitus and capital will be explained further down in this chapter. Social field is a concept pertaining to specific values within said space. Bourdieu describes social space as a structure of social positions.<sup>55</sup> Field, on the other hand, is slightly different. Field is a concept very much influenced by structure and relational notions and according to Bourdieu, it is this structure that determines both the forms of interaction between agents and the strategies available to them in their struggles within the field.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, field includes analyses of its location in

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<sup>52</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J G Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 242.

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 96, 224.

<sup>54</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant, Loïc J. D., *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 96.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 134.

<sup>56</sup> Donald Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält: några nyckelbegrepp i Pierre Bourdieus sociologi', in *Kunskapsmål, teori, empiri*, ed. Anders Gustavsson, 1996, 61.

relation to the fields of power and the dominant class.<sup>57</sup> For example, as Broady puts it:

Not all social contexts are fields in Bourdieu's sense. A field occurs when people fight over symbolic or material assets that are common to them, we are dealing with a field only if it has a sufficient degree of autonomy.<sup>58</sup>

Since this study focuses on the families interviewed, and not in comparison to another group or field, this study cannot support the notion that studying friluftsliv is a field in and of its own, but rather, this study focuses on the families interviewed and social space. Social space is a rather narrower concept compared to social field, which is why for this study it was deemed more suitable. Below then, social space will be further explored, as well as Bourdieu's concept of habitus and capital.

## 4.1 Social space

As a body and a biological individual, I am, in the way that things are, situated in a place; I occupy a position in physical space and social space.<sup>59</sup>

Bourdieu describes the social world as a map to view the social world from an above perspective.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, social space may be described as an invisible space, where what is valued and recognized is different from what is valued and recognized in other social spaces where other symbolic values are at stake. Also, the agents within the space have points of view on this objective space which depend on their position within it.<sup>61</sup> In other words, social space is a structure of social positions and within it, the agents that occupy the space are in turn defined by the distribution of properties, for example, house, or land.<sup>62</sup> What we will see in this study, is that families who value outdoor pedagogy and friluftsliv, tend to own their houses and live rurally. These are indications of their lifestyles within the social space.

Bourdieu and Wacquant write that "capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field."<sup>63</sup> Social space is thus interesting to understand within outdoor education and friluftsliv, in that, we want to understand the fundamental processes of cultivating these children's habit of staying active and their closeness to the outdoors from an early age. Therefore, it seems important to have attempted to describe Bourdieu's social space concept, to better grasp the concept of symbolic capital discussed in the next section, and to remain in the notion of

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<sup>57</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält', 1996, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält', 1996, 63.

<sup>59</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 131.

<sup>60</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 169.

<sup>61</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 169.

<sup>62</sup> Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

relational thinking within the field of outdoor education.<sup>64</sup> By this I mean to keep in mind that the Bourdieusian concepts are related and affect each other since agents are situated within said space based on the volume and composition of capital. So, social agents are situated in social space, characterized by their position relative to other places, creating a social topology.<sup>65</sup> For this thesis, the concept of space relates to understanding the family's lifestyles where friluftsliv is incorporated. Those who invest in friluftsliv are situated roughly in the same social space, their lifestyles and social positions in the social space are what this thesis aims to understand in relation to friluftsliv and education, and where the different assets are situated is also where these families are found.

To conclude with the quote at the beginning of this section; the families in this study occupy certain positions in social space and this study therefore aims to explore what those positions mean in social space. The body is, in nature, involved in the physical and social space.

## 4.2 Symbolic capital

The social world is accumulated history.<sup>66</sup> This accumulated history is something that we will return to in the next section where another concept of Bourdieu is explored; habitus. Now, depending on the social field in which symbolic capital is used, it can be explained in three basic forms; economic capital; that is, monetary assets which may be converted to for example property but also know-how and understanding of the economic rules of the game; cultural capital; knowledge, skills, and educational capital; social capital; connections and membership in a certain group which can be used to exchange in other forms of capital. In other words, academic qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital.<sup>67</sup>

In this study, economic capital is a helpful tool to understand the monetary assets families need when choosing outdoor preschools for their children. As we will see in the results section, outdoor preschool involves greater expenditure on clothing. Cultural capital, as explained above, includes educational qualifications, something the interviewed families have in common in that in most families both parents hold higher education degrees of at least 3 years. Finally, social capital as described above includes, for example, connections and membership in a certain group. This is handy to keep in mind since social capital is indeed utilized and reproduced in the observed outdoor groups, as explained also in the results section for the observation studies conducted for this thesis. For example, social capital is utilized by bringing one's friends into the group, children bring their friends into the outdoor groups. As specified by both the leaders in the second group and the organization manager, mostly those who are interested in friluftsliv and who want to invest time in it and know about the outdoor groups also attend or assign their children to outdoor groups or outdoor pedagogy preschools.

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<sup>64</sup> Beames and Atencio, 'Building Social Capital through Outdoor Education'.

<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu. *Pascalian Meditations*, 134.

<sup>66</sup> Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, 1986, 241.

<sup>67</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, *Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology*; 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 187.

These subtypes of capital represent the structure of the social space which was previously described.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, capital must be understood in relation to the space in which they are used and reproduced. Generally, the educational capital held at a given moment expresses, among other things, the economic and social level of the family of origin.<sup>69</sup> In this sense, symbolic capital reflects several types of capital, capital which will look different depending on the social space studied. For example, looking at a literary event, one could argue that relevant capital to discuss would be e.g., cultural capital. As an example, literary experts (professors, critics etc.), who understand the language and the importance of say, a literary prize, can ascribe value and prestige to the literary space in this example, thus legitimizing the values within this space. If there is little to no knowledge or understanding of the literary field, then there would be no value in the cultural capital in this field.

Now, the point of understanding symbolic capital is to understand what values are ascribed to friluftsliv, i.e., what is it that is valuable, that creates legitimacy by and for the families within the social space they are in. In other words, symbolic capital must be given value by the dominant social groups in society. Broady describes symbolic capital as "that which is recognized" and writes that it is used by Bourdieu to capture the fact that certain people, degrees, titles or institutions enjoy esteem, reputation and prestige, i.e. are recognized and acknowledged.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, Broady writes that Bourdieu has used the word credit to capture the characteristics of symbolic capital, in that symbolic capital as credit is a kind of advance that the group alone can grant those who give it the most material and symbolic guarantees.<sup>71</sup>

Bourdieu describes symbolic capital in different states: the embodied; the long-lasting dispositions of the body and mind, and the objectified state; in the form of material cultural goods and items.<sup>72</sup> Cultural goods can be appropriated materially, which presupposes economic capital, and symbolically, which presupposes cultural capital.<sup>73</sup> This means that the families in this study, as we will see when the families are presented in Chapter 8, inhibit educational capital and a knowledge and understanding of the school system. This helps them to navigate the school system and choose pre-schools based on this knowledge. Moreover, their ideas of what friluftsliv can give their children both in school and in their spare time, is convincing them to continue investing time and economic capital gained from their educational capital. Thus, their children are not only users but also products of the educational system and social origin exerts its influence throughout the whole duration of schooling.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J G Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–258.

<sup>69</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 105.

<sup>70</sup> Donald Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält: några nyckelbegrepp i Pierre Bourdieus sociologi', in *Kunskapsmål, teori, empiri*, ed. Anders Gustavsson, 1996.

<sup>71</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält', 44.

<sup>72</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', 243; Bourdieu mentions cultural goods exemplified in pictures, books, or instruments. For the context of this thesis, those could also be in the form of specific types of garments of outdoor clothing and equipment.

<sup>73</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', 247.

<sup>74</sup> Bourdieu, 'Inheritors', 1979, 13.



### 4.3 Habitus

The Bourdieusian concept of habitus is closely linked with social space and capital. The incorporated capital, habitus, is shaped by a person's trajectory and shaped by a person's life history and, in turn, different experiences shape the habitus. Habitus, in other words, is a system of dispositions.<sup>75</sup> Bourdieu writes "He feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus."<sup>76</sup> Therefore, when looking at the observed and interviewed families in this study, it is important to recognize their understanding and experience of friluftsliv and why it is favorable, to understand what habitus formation that takes place in the social space of these families. When habitus is legitimized by the surrounding social world, this then becomes a form of symbolic capital, a power which can be used in the social world.

Under the social space section, it was mentioned that social agents are situated in the social space. These social agents are equipped with habitus that is legitimate and valuable in the social space which then is inscribed in their bodies by past experiences.<sup>77</sup> Habitus, in other words, is a form of symbolic capital, in that the values and assets ascribed to the notion of friluftsliv become valuable to the social agents within this social space.

Broady describes Bourdieu's habitus as a system of dispositions which allow people to act, think and orientate themselves in the social world.<sup>78</sup> Habitus is a system of durable and transferable dispositions, structured structures that generate and organize practices and representations.<sup>79</sup> What Bourdieu means, is that this system of dispositions, habitus, is that which forms how people think, act, perceive and value in given social contexts, and that this is embedded in the body and is in countless everyday situations, starting in the earliest childhood, in the family, in school, where people's capacity and practical knowledge is formed.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, as Broady writes, social conditions are within us and, we can live under certain social conditions because similar social conditions have shaped us, in body and mind.<sup>81</sup> This can in turn be related to the first section of this chapter, social space, where Bourdieu is quoted saying "As a body and a biological individual, I am, in the way that things are, situated in a place; I occupy a position in physical space and social space".<sup>82</sup> The habitus is thus connected with the body and mind, in relation to a place in social space. For example, as Fasting and Høyem explain how young people reflect upon their childhood experiences of outdoor play and friluftsliv, what is emphasized is the joy, wonder and communication with surrounding nature and people, associating it with autonomy and self-determination, thus, personally, and meaningful to the young people, these experiences become important parts of who they are.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, trans. Peter Collier, *Homo academicus*, Le sens commun (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1984), 52; Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000, 130.

<sup>76</sup> Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 143.

<sup>77</sup> Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 138.

<sup>78</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält', 1996, 41.

<sup>79</sup> Bourdieu in Broady. 41. Translated from Bourdieu, P. *Le sens pratique*, Minuit, Paris, 1980, pp.88 f.

<sup>80</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält: några nyckelbegrepp i Pierre Bourdieus sociologi', 1996, 51.

<sup>81</sup> Broady, 'Kapital, habitus och fält', 51.

<sup>82</sup> Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 131.

<sup>83</sup> Lund and Høyem, 'Freedom, Joy and Wonder as Existential Categories of Childhood – Reflections on Experiences and Memories of Outdoor Play', 2022.

## 5. Literature review

The following section aims to present different studies of friluftsliv.<sup>84</sup> Many themes in the research found around outdoor education and recreation involve pedagogy, didactics, and the meaning behind outdoor recreation, both in terms of school policy and in more general terms. The following sections are divided into three themes of studies on outdoor education and outdoor recreation: learning outdoor education – pedagogy and didactics, outdoor education – urban vs. rural schools, social background – economic and social capital and lastly friluftsliv – a cultural phenomenon.

### 5.1 Learning through outdoor education - pedagogy and didactics.

Research on outdoor education from different theoretical and methodological approaches shows that the physical education curriculum is vague, until recent curricula reforms where the definition and learning outcomes of outdoor education were further defined to be easier for physical education (PE) teachers to plan their lessons in practice.<sup>85</sup> Backman explains that Swedish PE teachers are given the responsibility to interpret the curriculum and choose content and methods aimed to reach goals stated in the national syllabus, however, the number of days assigned to friluftsliv teaching has declined from several days per school year to an optional element today.<sup>86</sup> This indicates that since each school has different conditions economically and geographically, the friluftsliv component of physical education may exist in some schools and be non-existent in some.

From a student perspective, Tugetam takes a sociocultural perspective on outdoor education and explores how and what students learn in an outdoor education setting, with an emphasis on friluftsliv.<sup>87</sup> The ethnographic study follows students on an outdoor education program during a week-long stay in the Scandinavian mountains and investigates the learning process that takes shape and how the students interact with each other and their teachers.<sup>88</sup> The students were interviewed during the excursion and six months after their week in the mountains. Results from the study indicate identity shaping in the sense that outdoor education leads students to develop new knowledge about their own mental and physical capacity, which leads them to view themselves and their role in the family and society in a partially new way.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the study found that the students who had spent one week in the mountains during their school excursion learnt that they were capable of more than they first thought. This is

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<sup>84</sup> Beames and Atencio, 'Building Social Capital through Outdoor Education', 102.

<sup>85</sup> Beery, 'Nordic in Nature: Friluftsliv and Environmental Connectedness' 2013; Tugetam, 'Att Göra Och Erfara Friluftsliv', 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Backman, 'What Is Valued in Friluftsliv within PE Teacher Education?—Swedish PE Teacher Educators' Thoughts about Friluftsliv Analysed through the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu', 2008.

<sup>87</sup> Tugetam, 'Att Göra Och Erfara Friluftsliv', 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Åsa Tugetam, 'Att Göra Och Erfara Friluftsliv: En Ethnografisk Studie Om Lärprocesser i Gymnasieelevers Friluftslivsundervisning' (Ph.D, Linnaeus University, 2020).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

something the students brought into the school environment as well and applied the experience of walking up a tough hill to finishing difficult or strenuous tasks in school.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, this connection that students and children make between strenuous exercises in nature and managing difficult tasks in school, is something that can be referred to as resilience in school.<sup>91</sup> This concept will be important also for this study. Of course, all children in school are wished to be able to persevere and to make it through the school years but, as Paul Tough points out, to be resilient and tenacious when faced with obstacles, we need to stop and consider the deep roots of those skills, the steps that every child needs to take to get there.<sup>92</sup> This is partly what this thesis aims to find out by understanding the family values and investments. Nature play is an important component of the development of resilience in early childhood.<sup>93</sup>

Beery and Jorgensen explore childhood nature experience and illuminate important aspects of sensory-rich learning.<sup>94</sup> Their study combined two previous studies, one from Sweden where adults were interviewed to explore an understanding of the sensory experience of childhood collecting in nature via participant memory. Collecting in this study referred to collecting items such as rocks, flowers and leaves and the impact on the adults' memories of such activities in their childhood. The second study included direct observations of children's play and exploration in an outdoor kindergarten in Norway. Results and analysis from this study indicate childhood interaction with variation and diversity with living and non-living items from nature, allows children important learning opportunities. The results and analysis also support practical implications for sensory-rich environmental education and underscore the practical importance of childhood access to nature.<sup>95</sup> The two studies combined in the article together explore how sensory-rich nature experience may contribute to the ways in which children come to know nature.<sup>96</sup>

Mikaels study Place-responsive pedagogy involves four different studies, which involve different dimensions to the relation between nature and learning, whereas one of the studies conducted aimed to explore relations between human and nature and the different ways we can relate to place.<sup>97</sup> Results indicate that how teachers speak about friluftsliv matter, and pedagogically it is about, in practice, viewing teaching about place from a sustainable approach. Another study by Mikaels regarding learning in an outdoor environment suggest that a place-responsive pedagogy to teaching school-based friluftsliv has educational potential and has opened up new and unthought-of ways for these teachers to

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<sup>90</sup> Tugetam, 'Att göra och erfara friluftsliv', 2020.

<sup>91</sup> Mats Trondman, 'Skolframgångens Elementära Former i Det Mångkulturella Samhället', in *Skolframgång i Det Mångkulturella Samhället* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2016).

<sup>92</sup> Paul Tough, *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why*, 2016, 65.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Beery, 'Exploring Access to Nature Play in Urban Parks: Resilience, Sustainability, and Early Childhood', 2020, 12.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Beery and Kari Anne Jørgensen, 'Children in Nature: Sensory Engagement and the Experience of Biodiversity', *Environmental Education Research* 24, no. 1 (January 2018): 13–25, doi:10.1080/13504622.2016.1250149.

<sup>95</sup> Beery and Jørgensen, 2018.

<sup>96</sup> Beery and Jørgensen, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Mikaels, *Place responsive pedagogy*, 2017, 67-68.

relate to friluftsliv as a learning area in the physical education and health curriculum.<sup>98</sup>

Fägerstam found that space and place as concepts for teaching are interesting and relevant for outdoor education as it may provide insight into the role of nature in outdoor teaching and learning.<sup>99</sup> The results from their study suggest that the social and physical space outdoors contributed more than a particular place for teacher's practicing physical education. Moreover, dimensions of learning that were social and emotional were more prominent than other factors.<sup>100</sup>

## 5.2 Outdoor Education – urban vs. rural schools

A study of how outdoor education is perceived and understood by students showed that in rural areas, students tend to express outdoor education in a more defined way, meaning that they would in a more explicit and precise manner explain what outdoor education was for them and what activities they included in it.<sup>101</sup> The same study showed that pupils in urban areas found it more difficult to define outdoor education, where the study drew the conclusion that this may be due to a larger distance to nature-based activities than for pupils in rural areas.<sup>102</sup> This study was based on focus group interviews with rural upper secondary students and urban upper secondary students and the research questions guiding the study asked how do students interpret and understand the subject of friluftsliv in physical education, what activities are included in the lessons and how do the local syllabi describe the elements of friluftsliv?<sup>103</sup> The results indicate that in both the rural and the urban schools explored in their study, the friluftsliv concept is vague in the physical education syllabus and the students are unsure of what they are meant to learn. Furthermore, the results suggest that student's leisure activities and previous experiences of friluftsliv may impact the view and understanding of friluftsliv, which is why the study further suggests a clearer definition in the school syllabus in order for students and teachers alike to better understand the concept, what activities friluftsliv indeed entail and more explicit learning criteria.<sup>104</sup>

Another study, which may support the previous in that experience in nature-based activities helps students understand the friluftsliv concept, indicate that locality strongly influences youths.<sup>105</sup> This can in turn explain how place may play

<sup>98</sup> Jonas Mikael, 'Becoming a Place-Responsive Practitioner: Exploration of an Alternative Conception of Friluftsliv in the Swedish Physical', *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership* 10, no. 1 (January 2018), doi:10.18666/JOREL-2018-V10-I1-8146.

<sup>99</sup> Emilia Fägerstam, "Space and Place: Perspectives on Outdoor Teaching and Learning" (Ph.D., 2012), 71.

<sup>100</sup> Fägerstam, 'Space and Place: Perspectives on Outdoor Teaching and Learning', 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Albrechtsson Kajsa, "Skolan? Jag Tycker Inte Att Man Har Lärt Sig Något" En Studie i Hur Friluftslivet i Skolan Upplevs Av Elever i Stad Och Landsbygd' (BA diss., Gymnastik- och idrottshögskolan, GIH, Institutionen för idrotts- och hälsovetenskap, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Albrechtsson, "Skolan? Jag Tycker Inte Att Man Har Lärt Sig Något", 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Maria Rönnlund, "'I Love This Place, but I Won't Stay': Identification with Place and Imagined Spatial Futures Among Youth Living in Rural Areas in Sweden', *YOUNG* 28, no. 2 (April 2020): 123–137, doi:10.1177/1103308818823818.

a role in how students perceive and understand friluftsliv, and that based on different places, the student's perception indeed varies.

### 5.3 Social background – economic and social capital

The relationship between experiences of outdoor activities and pupils' background may also be of importance. Wells explains how where at least one of the parents has a higher education degree, children tend to have more experience in and of a larger variety of outdoor activities.<sup>106</sup> Teenagers' leisure and sports activities vary widely according to their families' backgrounds, finances, and habits. For example, leisure varies from one group of children to another, depending on living conditions in general. Young people in what may be described as economically vulnerable groups, single parents, foreign-born parents, and other working households have less active leisure time and participate relatively little in organized leisure activities.<sup>107</sup>

Beames and Atencio outline central themes of social capital and explore the role of outdoor education in building social capital within local communities.<sup>108</sup> With a Bourdieusian perspective, they explore how individuals invest in relationships and how institutions play a crucial role in developing social networks.

### 5.4 Friluftsliv – a cultural phenomenon

Based on previous research, it seems important to highlight that, so far in the context of this thesis, there are different definitions related to outdoors: outdoor education, outdoor recreation, outdoor life, and nature-based activities. Outdoor education refers to education outside of classroom walls.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, outdoor recreation refers to, among other things, camping and hiking.<sup>110</sup> Outdoor life and nature-based activities both refer to leisure activities conducted outdoors and, so far, the activities ascribed to these vary far and wide but what ties them together is the outdoors in close connection to nature.

The term friluftsliv, then, in a Nordic context, refers to something that is experienced in the open air and is considered to be culturally, socially, and environmentally significant.<sup>111</sup> From previous research, the term outdoor education remains a vague formulation in that it is difficult to define learning outcomes, and what is eventually taught during physical education lessons is down to each individual teacher. Furthermore, this then relies heavily on the

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<sup>106</sup> Karen Wells, ed., 'Sweden', in *Teen Lives around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2020), 535–546.

<sup>107</sup> Karen Wells, ed., "Sweden," in *Teen Lives around the World: A Global Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2020), 535–546.

<sup>108</sup> Beames and Atencio, 'Building Social Capital through Outdoor Education'.

<sup>109</sup> Mikaelis, 'Becoming-Place'.

<sup>110</sup> Jonas Ahnesjö and Tom Danielsson, 'Organized Recreational Fishing in School, Knowledge about Nature and Influence on Outdoor Recreation Habits', *Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education* 23, no. 3 (1 November 2020), 261–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-020-00061-8>.

<sup>111</sup> Barbara Humberstone and Kirsti Pedersen, 'Gender, Class and Outdoor Traditions in the UK and Norway', *Sport, Education and Society* 6, no. 1 (March 2001): 23–33, doi:10.1080/713696039.

teacher's own previous experience with outdoor education activities.<sup>112</sup> Currently, many teachers utilize the vague curricula policy to adapt their own experience to their nearby environment. Some teach outdoor education on a more theoretical basis, for example, to teach environmental awareness. The question remains, however, in whether outdoor education should be further specified in the school curriculum to make for a more equal learning platform across the nation, regardless of proximity to nature.

The term friluftsliv generally refers to the cultural phenomenon of spending time in nature for recreational purposes and the notion of friluftsliv as leisure and outdoor recreation is deeply rooted in Nordic tradition.<sup>113</sup> With this in mind, it seems important for the focus of this thesis to use the term friluftsliv when talking about outdoor life and recreation and outdoor pedagogy concerning schools with an outdoor pedagogy profile. The purpose, for one, is to simplify the concept with only one word throughout this thesis, and second to not lose the essence of what is embedded in, and the values ascribed to friluftsliv, since it is both something that is being practiced and something that is experienced. Therefore, the following sections will continue to use the term friluftsliv to examine the values behind it and why some parents find it important for their children to receive this experience from their parents.

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<sup>112</sup> Erik Backman, 'Friluftsliv in Swedish Physical Education - a Struggle of Values: Educational and Sociological Perspectives', *Friluftsliv in Swedish Physical Education - a Struggle of Values: Educational and Sociological Perspectives*, Studies in Education in Arts and Professions ; 2 (Ph.D, Stockholm, Department of Education in Arts and Professions, Stockholm University, 2010), 147.

<sup>113</sup> Mikael, 'Becoming-Place'.

## 6. Methodology

The following section includes the motivation behind and the choice of semi-structured interviews and participatory observation studies. First, the reader will be introduced to the structure and implementation of the observation studies followed by the interviews, and how both these research methods were conducted. Choosing to do participant observations has guided me in the interviews that followed, to ask questions and follow-up questions. The observations acted as a preliminary study for the interviews with families that were reached via social media groups related to friluftsliv. The observations were exploratory in nature to find out what they are doing and understand the motivations behind joining outdoor groups from an early age.

### 6.1 Constructing the object.

There is no escaping the work of constructing the object and the responsibility that this entails. There is no object that does not imply a viewpoint, even if it is an object produced with the intention of abolishing one's viewpoint (that is, one's bias), the intention of overcoming the partial perspective that is associated with holding a position within the space being studied.<sup>114</sup>

The intention of the above quote is to highlight the continuous reflexive work that is part of doing social science research. It means that, as the researcher and author of this thesis, I must remain cautious of my own pre-understanding. This can however be particularly difficult within the social sciences, where the separation between everyday opinion and scientific discourse is more blurred than elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> To achieve this I have used theoretical frameworks, coding software, anchored arguments with empirical data and supporting with previous research and theoretical literature. This also highlights the tension between the subjective, predisposed researcher and the scientific call for objectivity while trying to reflexively produce data.<sup>116</sup> It is one thing to have this struggle in mind, but how can this be utilized in practice? Being aware of one's bias and preunderstanding of the social world is one of many approaches to cope with what Bourdieu expresses as "the pitfalls of sociological research."<sup>117</sup>

The difficulties and risks of sociological research are, in part, what Kalir has described as "the tension between subjectivity" (e.g., the relation between the observer and the observed) and the scientific call for objectivity, which in a positivist manner, shortly, means to remain distant to the studied object. This is, of course, difficult when conducting participant observations and hour-long interviews on a subject that is indeed interesting to the researcher. Kalir also

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<sup>114</sup> Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamberdon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*, ed. Beate Krause, trans. Richard Nice (Berlin; Walter de Gruyter, 1991).

<sup>116</sup> Barak Kalir, 'The Field of Work and the Work of the Field: Conceptualising an Anthropological Research Engagement\*', *Social Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (June 2006), 235–46, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2006.tb00037.x>, 236.

<sup>117</sup> Bourdieu, Chamberdon, and Passeron, *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*, 5.

explains that, without showing genuine interest and involvement in the subject matter, it may turn out difficult to gain the trust from the participants.<sup>118</sup> Although this thesis does not describe a sensitive topic per se, it is important to establish a common ground with participants and also show the participant that the subject is interesting to a researcher and that it is an important piece to study, a small contribution to the study of outdoor education. This, together with Bourdieu's reflexivity, creates the bond necessary to collect empirical data yet with the ongoing understanding of the position the researcher holds in relation to the subject and participants.

When conducting the observations and interviews, ethical considerations that were taken into account include first and foremost to inform study participants of their rights to exclude themselves from the study at any point up until publishing of this thesis, as well as informing them of how the information is being stored, and informing and ensuring anonymity.<sup>119</sup> The participants were contacted beforehand and were informed of the study and information about consent, their permission to record interviews and to use the transcripts for the purpose of this study. Second, methodological transparency is also an important aspect to consider, hence the aim to thoroughly and methodically explain how the empirical data has been gathered.

## 6.1 Observations

### 6.1.1 Participant observation

Choosing observations and interviews as the qualitative tools for this study meant that it was possible to gain insight into friluftsliv and those who chose to participate in outdoor organizations. Interviewing parents, therefore, became a natural next step to understanding how and why they choose to invest time in friluftsliv, both as a family and for their children. Reaching the intended group of respondents proved difficult. Contacting schools and getting in touch with headmasters and teachers was a lengthy process in that, as an outsider to the school environment, a master student was not naturally someone teachers made time for or prioritized their time to meet. Therefore, valuable weeks got lost in trying to reach teachers who were willing to meet or send out information about a student thesis. After some weeks of silence, it became necessary to draw on a new plan.

A local outdoor organization was contacted whereby their operations manager accepted participation in an interview and, furthermore, helped reach out to groups within the organization where it might be possible to observe the groups and interview involved parents. With this information it was then possible to reach out to group leaders via email and explain the aim of this study and ask for permission to observe their group outing. Seven groups received an email in which one group declined participation and two groups responded that they accepted participation in the study. The groups all received the same email which included a short introduction as well as an attached information letter.<sup>120</sup> The informal information letter included an introduction to the study, a short

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<sup>118</sup> Kalir, 'The Field of Work and the Work of the Field', 236.

<sup>119</sup> Swedish Research Council, 'Good Research Practice', 2017, <https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/reports/our-reports/2017-08-31-good-research-practice.html>.

<sup>120</sup> For more details, refer to appendix C.



description of why they had received this email, information about ethical considerations such as participation and anonymity, and contact information for the supervisor and master student conducting the study. Both observations took place in December 2022 and these observations were partly the basis for the family interviews.

### 6.1.2 Observation limitations

To understand more about the families who choose to involve their children in these outdoor organization groups, it seemed necessary and valuable to interview the parents. During the observations, some parents chose to discuss their points of view on outdoor activities and the importance of outdoor education for their children. However, these discussions were completely organic and did not follow an interview guide as with the formal interviews. This was mainly due to the nature and aim of the observations, where I wanted to observe the setting and the people involved within the setting, and what they were doing, thus affecting the participant observation with my presence as little as possible. However, this less structured observation meant I did not count on the questions that arose after the observations were finished, and once again it proved difficult to reach out to the participants afterwards. An effort to reach out to the observed groups was made, though no one replied back.

From the second group, one of the parents signed up for a follow-up interview but later withdrew from the appointment. Therefore, follow-up interviews from both observations were not possible, which had unfortunate impacts on the results of the observations, since, naturally, interesting questions arose while transforming the observation notes to text. One could argue that two observations create a good basis for a pilot study and should hence be revised and refined before conducting main data-collecting observations, for example by preparing to gather contact details for follow-up interviews.

However, despite not being able to do follow-up interviews with the observation participants, the data gathered during those days proved fruitful still, and the family interviews (with families from outside the outdoor organization) confirmed many of the conversations during the observations thus supporting the empirical data gathered from the observations. The observations therefore became the empirical basis for the interviews, which will be further examined in the analysis section of Chapters 7 and 8. Also, the unstructured observations and their results created the basis for this thesis and its eventual focus: resource-strong families. This will be further defined in the summary of chapter 8, the families. The resources mentioned are education, time, and experience.

## 6.2 Interviews

The following sections will present how the interviews were planned and conducted, as well as describe limitations.

### 6.2.1 Sampling

For the interviews, then, I reached out via four social media groups, all involving outdoor life in some way. This specific sampling has its reason in that the original idea was to contact schools in urban and rural areas to gather an understanding of how different location impacts children's understanding of friluftsliv and

gather a wider selection of families with different educational and socio-economic backgrounds. However, this did not turn out as intended, whether it was due to poor description in the information letter or simply unfortunate timing, my emails were returned with only one teacher who kindly replied that yes, I was welcome to join their class in April. Unfortunately, this would be too late to begin collecting data with the intention of reaching the deadline in May 2023. Therefore, it was necessary to change tactics. From the observations, as described above, some patterns had emerged where most of the children in the outdoor groups came from resource-strong families. During the interview with the organization manager of the observed groups, the manager was asked who are the children that attend these groups.

They replied that:

Those who apply to these groups are ... ah, unfortunately, I shouldn't say, but there are many parents who are used to being outdoors. The ones you really want to reach, the ones who don't go out as much, unfortunately, don't come, you don't really reach them with these groups, it's quite homogeneous in that way.<sup>121</sup>

This, then, together with the empirical data gathered from the two occasions of observations, became something that I wanted to investigate further. Why is the group that chooses outdoor organizations homogenous? Following the observations, I prepared an email and searched to outdoor groups on social media platforms with the intention to reach families who spend time doing friluftsliv and to interview these families. The four groups in total had roughly 7500 members. Before posting on their sites, permission was asked from the group's administrators so that it could be mentioned in the post, hopefully increasing the chance of participation with the go-ahead from group administrators and looking less like a spam post. The informal post shortly described the aim and nature of the study. From these four social media posts, 6 people answered showing interest in the study, two chose to participate in interviews.<sup>122</sup> To reach a higher number of interviewees, a previous interviewee was contacted who helped reach out to a few more people who might be interested in participating in this study. Fortunately, this turned out fruitful and the study gained one more interviewee. The two social media posts that did not result in any interview participants were revisited with a friendly reminder of the previous post. However, after some weeks and nearing the deadline of the thesis, the posts were removed since they did not receive any feedback.

### 6.2.2 Conducting the interviews.

The interviews were conducted via phone in two cases, over Zoom in three cases and one interview in person. All six interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, sectioned into three preliminarily themes: family interests, the role of the school and profession. Within each of these themes were questions to guide the interview. The conversations all started with the same question: for the interviewee to begin explaining what their family does in a week, on the weekends and who does what, to gather a sense of the family and grasp the families use of

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<sup>121</sup> Outdoor organization manager.

<sup>122</sup> To see post, refer to appendix D.

leisure time. The conversations grew in an organic matter, meaning that some questions flowed into each other and were answered without having to ask the questions written in the guide.

Once the interviews were finished, they were saved on an external hard drive for safe storage. Respondents were informed that the recordings will be deleted once the thesis is published. The transcription was done manually. This meant listening to the audio or video file and pausing to write down the conversation. Every word was written down, as well as expressions such as laughing or feelings of astonishment. To save valuable time, however, linguistic transcription in a closer sense was not done since the aim of these transcriptions was not to do discourse analysis, but rather to understand their values in outdoor life and education by coding the transcriptions into themes. Once all interviews were transcribed, they were transferred to qualitative data analysis software for coding. Coding is one of the key phases in the writing process.<sup>123</sup> When adding all the transcribed material to the coding software, the next step was to mark passages of text with nodes, which are a collection of references about a specific theme.<sup>124</sup> After going through each transcription and sentence, they were divided into these nodes, or analytical themes. These themes will be presented in the results section in chapter 9.

### 6.2.3 Interview limitations

To create an understanding of what values, investments and practices parents want for their children and why they are important for them, the questions asked during the interview would need to be quite open in order to spark conversation.<sup>125</sup> The upside of a semi-structured interview is that the flow of the conversations, many times, segway into the next question in the guide or some questions may simply be answered in one go. The conversations with each interviewee grew organically, guided by the questions. The drawback of not asking specific questions on each occasion resulted in sometimes very different conversations or off-topic discussions. However, since the aim of the interviews was not to gather specific data, but rather to understand the parents' point of view of the importance of friluftsliv for their children, this thesis opted for the semi-structured option and was helped by codifying the transcriptions to analytical themes.

In the next chapter, the results and analysis gathered from the observations and interviews will be presented.

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<sup>123</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 4th ed (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 595.

<sup>124</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 596.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 471.

## 7. Results and analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings gathered with the methods mentioned in the previous sections. The empirical data will be presented in chronological order in which they were conducted beginning with the observations here in Chapter 7, followed by the presentation of the interviewed families in Chapter 8 and finally a thematic analysis in Chapter 9 which is finalized with a conclusion in Chapter 10.

The aim of the observations is to create a basis for the interviews and to act as empirical support in showing how friluftsliv-related activities are practised and valued by the families in this study. In the following sections, we want to create an understanding of why it is important for the children in the observed groups and interviewed families to create a foundation for learning through outdoor education.

### 7.1 Learning through Adventure – a foundation for Future

For the first observation, I followed one of the younger outdoor groups within the outdoor organization. The children were between the ages of three to five and they were accompanied by their parents, two of whom were leading the group. The first observation took place on a Saturday morning. This was the last meeting in the autumn semester and the group had met once a month starting in September. The group consisted of two leaders who both had their children in the group and another 9 parents with their children. Some of the children also had older siblings during this outing. Altogether there were 13 children aged between 3 to 6 years, making this the second youngest group found within the outdoor organization. At this age, parents are involved in the sense that they take their children to this group and participate in some of the games to help the children become more comfortable in the group.

Not all parents chose to participate in discussing with me during the observation, however, those who did, asked about the study and expressed their interest in the subject, their interest in the outdoors and the ambition to have their children learn about the environment by playing and exploring the outdoors. Six parents from this group chose to talk about their experiences. All six parents had a higher education background. The families lived in the vicinity and agreed that closeness to nature was an important factor when deciding where to live, including proximity to preschool and school.

The children were wearing warm, durable clothes for the weather, which in December was a sunny and cold day. Clothes included thick overalls or winter jackets and trousers, a hat, warm gloves, and winter boots in order to play in the forest, climbing up in trees and playing in the leaves on the ground. Similarly, the parents wore outdoor-type clothes including trousers of durable material, hiking boots and warm winter coats. Some wore thick down jackets, whereas some wore layers which included warm wool clothing underneath a thicker insulating jumper or jacket, followed by a shell jacket. The quality and brands were mostly of the more expensive and renowned outdoor brands. The children also wore well-known brands though to a smaller degree since they grow out of them – something that was mentioned by the parents who were interviewed. Most parents had brought additional layers of clothing for their children in case they were cold or needed changing.

## 7.2 Creating a safe learning environment – learning by playing.

The group met in the car park of a preschool on the outskirts of the city. Once the group was gathered, parents together with their children followed the group leaders on a path which took them past large fields and into a small, forested area. Before walking further into the forest, one of the leaders stopped at the edge of the forest to gather the children in a circle and asked everyone to pick a stick or a branch of their choice from the ground. They then sang a song and carefully knocked on the surrounding trees with their sticks. The song was about saying hello to the forest and asking permission to enter and play. The children seemed enthusiastic although somewhat shy, hiding behind their parents' legs or standing very close to them. Once the song was finished and the group continued into the forest and to the designated play area, the children gathered around the second group leader who had walked ahead to start a fire.

One of the leaders gathered the group once more, in a big circle. They explained the plan for the day and that they would begin by introducing themselves to each other to break the ice, some children were shy even though they had met a few times previously. The leader also introduced the student who would observe the group and explained that those who would like to participate in informal interviews or ask questions to the student were free to do so, and those who wished not to be included in the study did not have to. Therefore, it remained up to each adult to approach and discuss. Furthermore, the study was explained in short terms and what it would entail for those who participated and that they would indeed remain anonymous. The same information which was sent in the information letter before the meeting was repeated, so that everyone was up to date with the conditions of the observation.

After the short introduction, one of the leaders presented a soft toy in the shape of a frog, explained the frog's name, and that we would all present ourselves to the frog and then pass the frog to the person next to us until everyone in the group had had the chance to present themselves. This game was intended as a fun way to break the barrier, especially for the children who were somewhat shy in the beginning. Once the children were comfortable with the group, they were playing by themselves using what they could find in the forest. Some of the children ran straight to a big fallen log and balanced across it or played fights. Two of the older children found an abandoned piece of timber which they placed over a rock, thus creating a seesaw. A short while later, the same timber became a make-believe bazooka. The child was making shooting noises while pretending to aim at the trees.

The older children engaged with the leader who was making a fire, wanting to help start the fire. The leader agreed that they would all have a chance to help "You will all get a turn in carving wood so we can start this fire". One of the parents helped their child to carve firewood and explained "You should always carve away from yourself, like this, so that you don't accidentally hurt yourself". This shows that with no regular toys, the children can use their imagination to create make-believe scenarios and use their surroundings to play games, either alone or with their peers, and together create a space for learning in the outdoors. In line with Brugge, the children can use imagination and gain new experiences and when given the opportunity to explore their environment like this, they can

develop here.<sup>126</sup> In this example, the parents were comfortable and knowledgeable about starting fires in the forest with only firewood and matchsticks and shared their knowledge with the children who wanted to participate. This shows that knowledge and interest can be transferred to children, and the children are allowed to try themselves. This way, the children learn in a safe environment, learning to utilize their agency as individuals<sup>127</sup>. Furthermore, it seems, previous knowledge from their parents is key for children to come out and start learning how to conduct nature activities safely.<sup>128</sup>

### 7.3 Independent youth through Nature-based learning

The second observation presented in this section is with one of the older groups in the outdoor organization. This group consisted of two leaders and the children were between thirteen and fifteen years.

The second observation took place on a Saturday afternoon. In this group were two leaders and three youngsters ages 13-15. The group met outside the clubhouse of an orienteering club. The choice of meeting place worked as a strategy of accessibility: some came by bus, others by bike or car. This spot facilitated all these means of transport. This place was also located next to a large, forested area meaning the group could easily choose which way to enter the forest, depending on the activity planned for the day. For the older kids, these outings usually last 5 hours.

These children had participated in outdoor groups since a young age and were usually out once a month. The leaders themselves had children in this group and explained that many parents and children attended the groups for children aged 2-5. However, as the children grow older, they tend to find other interests and therefore stop going to these outings, though some might return. "The older they [the children] get, the harder it becomes to motivate them to come along. They might have other interests or friends." Leader 1.

This outing was the last of the autumn semester, and only three youngsters had chosen to participate making this a very small group. On the other hand, because all three had been members of the outdoor organization since they were young and were used to being outdoors, dressing accordingly and safely conducting outdoor activities, the leaders felt confident in letting the kids decide today's events. One of the leaders explains:

[...] Children have different conditions within their families when it comes to friluftsliv. Most of them have previous experience, then we can do a more advanced excursion. Others aren't so used to the outdoors and in those cases, we adapt the activities after level of experience. If you don't have the habit or experience, or gear, to dress for cold weather, then it won't be fun to spend time outdoors.

The leaders welcomed the youngsters and included them in the decision of where to head by discussing what the youngsters wished to do on this outing. The

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<sup>126</sup> Brugge, Friluftsliv with preschool children, 123.

<sup>127</sup> Victoria Ann Cook, "The Teachers Seemed a Bit Obsessive with Health and Safety": Fieldwork Risk and the Social Construction of Childhood', in *Geographies of Children, Youth and Families* (Routledge, 2011), 299–311.

<sup>128</sup> Johanna Björklund Hansson, 'Friluftsliv i Grundskolan: Elevers Uppfattningar Om Och Färdigheter i Friluftsliv' (BA diss., 2009).

youngsters decided together that they wanted to cut across the fields and find their own path in the forest rather than walking on already existing paths. The group commenced to walk across the large fields and are mindful not to walk on the ski tracks. "We can't walk where there are ski tracks, otherwise the skiers will become angry with us, and we wouldn't want that". Kim, 13. The children are thus aware of their environment and have learnt that, although it is not like breaking rules, walking on ski tracks is more an unwritten law, something that is disrespectful to cross-country skiers and that everyone is allowed to enjoy activities in nature, and we should respect each other. These "instructions" or guidelines is something that the children are taught from an early age and bring with them this awareness of their surroundings as they grow up.

During the walk across the fields, the youngsters remember previous outings and talk about when they had stopped on the bridge they just passed and tried to remove a large log which was stuck in the ice. "It became teamwork". Robin, 15. This notion of teamwork is also in line with what the outdoor organization aim to teach in their groups. So not only are they outdoors to experience nature, but also learn about teamwork from an early age.

#### 7.4 Creating Awareness in Nature.

Once we reached the forest edge, the children chose which way to take. They took turns in leading the group through the forest. The first stage of this adventure turned out to be steep and slippery through the snow and ice. It was scrambling, meaning climbing up a steep hill and terrain with hands and feet, grabbing large rock or tree branches. Once everyone in the group had reached the top, one of the leaders gathered the group to discuss the recent choice of path. The point was to bring awareness to and create consequence thinking and route planning. "If someone hurts themselves, for example, breaks a leg, how do you help in a situation like that?" Everyone paused to think for a moment. "We could use wooden planks to splint the broken leg". Noa, 14. The leader explained "Yes, that could be a good splinter, however, it may not be easy to find wooden planks in the middle of the forest. What else could be used? They continued to discuss different ideas. Other options that they mentioned were solid branches.

They were then asked what they could use to make the splinter hold steady. "We could use a scarf!" Kim, 13. "Or our shoelaces." Robin 15. After some discussion of how different types of garments could be used to steady a splinter, the leader continued the exercise by asking "If this [pointing to the area at the top of the steep hill where they were standing] is where your friend has hurt themselves, how can we help them to the hospital from here?". The kids were quiet for a moment, thinking intently about different options. "A helicopter could airlift them out of here, that would be fast". Kim, 13. The leader answered that although it was a good idea, the trees that were surrounding them would make it very difficult for a helicopter to land. "However," the leader continued to point out, "the field that we just crossed would make an excellent landing spot for a helicopter since it is wide and flat. Now, how would you help your friend with the broken leg down the hill and to the helicopter?" Noa, 14 was quick to answer: "We make a stretcher!". Here, they discussed different ideas for making a stretcher of the material they could use in their immediate vicinity. "We could use two large branches to create the stretcher". Kim, 13.

The leader praised them for their good ideas and helped by showing how they could use two jackets and thread the large branches through the arms of the

jackets and tie the jackets together in the middle. Leader 2 continues to explain: "This way, you have a quick stretcher to help bring your friend down to the helicopter. These are some of the things you need to keep in mind when planning a route so that you are mentally prepared should an accident occur. Well done! Now who wants to lead the expedition next?". Here, we can see that the leaders give the children the opportunity to figure out answers in different scenarios, but also work through the situation together.

### 7.5 Navigating the Forest

In the next stage of the hike, the group followed Kim. They led the way through the forest while playing with tree branches covered heavily with snow. "It's funny how this was a game we used to play as children, and now our children like the same game". Leader 2. The game was simple, but everyone seemed to enjoy standing under a tree while a friend shakes the tree so that all the snow falls onto the person standing below the tree branches. The leaders made sure to point out to only play the game with those who said they wanted to participate. This game went on for quite some time as they didn't seem to get bored of it. Eventually, the group reached a path with several directions to choose from. At this point, the leaders said they were not quite sure from which direction they had come. The kids discussed how the group had "walked in a circle from the field" and "that we should walk that way" pointing in the air to show direction. Robin, 15, seemed very sure which way to take from here: "I know that we came from this direction, meaning the large fields should be over there so we should walk this way". The leaders agreed that Robin could continue to take the lead from here. The group walked for some time until reached a viewpoint where they could see the large field that they were headed toward. They all then agreed that this would be a good spot for a break. The kids spread out to explore their surroundings.

What we can see here is that the children are trusted to figure out their own paths through the forest, thus continuing to cultivate children's sense of independence and for them to trust their own abilities. Since this group involved older children, they have worked their way up from the young groups and the older they get the more responsibility they are taught in how to conduct safe nature experiences so that it is indeed safe and enjoyable.

### 7.6 Teamwork and problem-solving

While the children were exploring their surroundings, the leaders unpacked their backpacks and prepared something small to eat and heat up a hot drink in their storm kitchen. This was an older version, not very lightweight, but durable. One of the kids came to help. Kim, 13, poured some of the liquid into the burner. "Yes, we only need a little bit of liquid since we are not going to cook food, only heat up our drink. Make sure to pour carefully so you don't get any of the liquid on your hands. Ah, the burning liquid is so old school, it smells like when I used to go on holidays to the mountains with my family!". Leader 2. The leaders reminisce on mountain vacations they did with their families when they were children and remembers the smell of the burning fuel used for camping stoves. This indicates that camping and outdoor lifestyle is reproduced within the family and passed on to the children who grow up with the memories of having spent time outdoors and/or in the wilderness.

Everyone in the group carried their own backpacks. They were all daypack sized, meaning at least 40 liters to have space for water, food, something the cook



the food on and extra layers of clothing. "It's important to carry an extra warm jumper or insulated jacket for when we sit down to eat. While we are walking, we keep warm, but when we sit down, we quickly lose the heat. We try to teach the kids to dress according to activity and most of the children in these groups have the necessary clothing". Leader 1.

The two kids who were exploring the surroundings were very interested in a large fallen tree, on top of which they had noticed animal prints in the snow on the top of the log. They were discussing what kind of animal could have made it on top of this large log. The kids discussed various animals and argued why one option was better suited for these prints, than the other. Eventually, they agreed that a fox was most likely the animal that could jump this high and make such small prints. This little event brought everyone's attention and they were almost solving a puzzle by teamwork. Once again, teamwork is an integral part of these outdoor groups.

Once everyone had had a bite to eat and drink, they packed their backpacks and the group headed toward the fields below. The leaders had each brought "stjærtapp", a small, lightweight piece of soft plastic which one sits on to slide down a snowy hill. They are easy to carry or fasten to one's backpack since they do not weigh much and have a handle. The whole group grabbed one each and slid down the snowy hill. Not only the kids, the leaders as well. It became a team effort to create solid paths to slide faster downhill. Everyone seemed to enjoy this snowy fast-paced activity. Once the group had made their way down to the bottom of the hill and onto the fields, the group discussed what to do next. It was almost dark, but they still had some time left. The kids were the ones who were left with the decision, and they were happy to stay out. The group then walked along the forest edge. This time with a mission to find a new, steeper hill to slide from. Everyone felt it was fun to walk through the dense forest and continue to create their own paths. At one point it was too difficult to push through branches and trees, so the group climbed the field fence and walked the rest of the way on the side of the field. Still mindful of the ski tracks.

Eventually, there was a steep path from which it was possible to slide downhill. Everyone in the group joined in, walked back up and slid down the hill. Eventually, it was time to head back toward the car park. The hike back was long and relaxing. The kids were investigating the meandering stream and explained that there could be beavers down there, they had seen one once. Once back at the meeting point, the leaders rounded up today's outing by letting the kids know they had done a good job with route planning and wayfinding through the forest. They also asked if they were interested in continuing the group after the holidays, to which all three said yes. Kim explained, however, that they might not join the group for the first week after the holidays since they had planned a biology excursion with a different group and organization. Kim, 13, explains: "Yes, I am very excited, we are going to investigate a certain frog population, and this may take up some of my time. But once I have returned I would very much like to return to this group. This excursion is with a nature science group, and I am very excited to be a part of it." Here, we can see that not only is Kim part of this outdoor group, but they also have nature inspired activities elsewhere. This indicates an interest in nature and an enthusiasm to connect with nature in several activities and groups.

Robin, 15, let the group know they were going on a week's ski holiday with their family. "We tend to go every year, and this year my family from Denmark

are joining us on this trip. I love skiing. In fact, both my sister and I have skied since we were little, mostly in the mountains with our parents. In this example, we can see that Robin's family go on skiing holidays, indicating an economic capital that is needed for these types of holidays. Furthermore, it also indicates a family tradition that is linked to outdoors and staying active, something that Robin feels strongly about and enjoys spending time doing.

## 8. The families

In the following section, each family constellation and their leisure interests will be presented to better understand their relation to friluftsliv and the values, investments and practices the families ascribe to it. The structure of this chapter is made up by first introducing each family, family by family with an emphasis on the specificity of each family. This then is followed by overarching themes that reach across the families in chapter 9. Like mentioned in the methodology section, the observations in the previous chapter were in part the basis for these interviews, and they will be of empirical use, like the following interviews, for the later thematic analysis in chapter 9.

Before presenting the families, it is important to keep in mind that the questions asked following a semi-structured interview guide, may not fully describe the families in the sense that the respondents answered the questions which the researcher had formulated. This means that it is important to acknowledge that the relationship formed between the researcher and interviewee, is indeed a social relationship which may influence the results obtained.<sup>129</sup>

The families in this study are highly educated, live rurally or on the outskirts of a city and they all have in common a want to cultivate an active, natural lifestyle which, in turn, is often mentioned as something that the children can carry with them throughout their school years as well as into adulthood. This means that the children are learning to create habits related to an active lifestyle, a habit of movement in their everyday lives from an early age so that when they enter the school environment, they will understand movement and nature and that movement is beneficial for their learning. We will see from the interviews below, that creating this habit from an early age reflects the parent's own interest in friluftsliv and an overall active lifestyle, which is transferred to their children. This is something the children may not yet understand at a young age, however, as many parents point out, setting the foundation early will help the children feel that movement is something good, even if they might not yet make the connection to why. Furthermore, this connection to the benefits of movement and friluftsliv is something that the parents remember from their own childhoods, the benefits, and values of having spent time in nature as children.

### 8.1 Inherited interests

One of the families interviewed is a family of five. The children are ages 8, 12 and 15. Both parents are journalists, and one of them is, at the time of the interview, studying for a master's, also within the cultural sector. The family lives in a flat

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<sup>129</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 608.

in a large Swedish city, on the outskirts with a lake nearby and a small, forested area in their surrounding neighborhood. During the summers the whole family travels to the countryside and the children play in the garden. They go on walks in the forest or go swimming. In the winter, playing board games, ice skating and downhill skiing but also have plenty of downtime at the weekends to watch series or movies. This family is very culture oriented and likes to visit museums and there is also a large interest in music. Other activities and sports are also included, such as fencing, ballet and football.

When it comes to whom in the family initiates family outings, the mother felt that it is mostly her interest that sparks the initiative and the feeling that something needs to happen, and they mention in the interview that it feels tough to be the one in the family who initiates skating or mushroom picking, when in the end everyone always enjoys it. Despite this feeling, they feel it is beneficial for their children to spend time doing activities outdoors:

My own interest is embedded in what I want them to get. So, I mostly feel a need for them to get out, I want them to get this, plus I think it's nice. You see some kind of benefit in it, I want them to have experienced, you feel that you want them to have been in nature when they become adults. Mother, family 1.

Here, they express their experience of the outdoors, which they want their children to experience as well. It is the thought that an early experience of different activities will translate to positive memories which will be a part of them as they grow up. Here, they explain their experience as a child:

I grew up closer to nature, in a suburb. My parents were extremely interested in nature, there was mushroom picking and berry picking, and you thought it was hard work. But in retrospect, you liked it. But they were very active outdoors. So, you get a lot from home. Mother, family 1.

Even if the activities were not always fun while they were children, as adults they remember the childhood experience as something positive and something that they want to give their children as well. Beery and Jorgensen study illustrate the importance of human engagement with natural landscapes during child development. As detailed in their results, all the adult participants were able to recall rich sensory experience: smells, sounds and taste. And for the small children, spending their everyday lives outdoors and visiting the same environments ensured that these sensory experiences were intertwined with their exploration and play.<sup>130</sup>

There are several schools nearby as well as in the city overall. All children in the family attended the same preschool, which the family described as "a school with a nearby forested area, where the classes spent a lot of time outdoors." This was something the parent saw as beneficial to the children's learning process and overall wellbeing, as well as the children's spare time activities mentioned previously. For example:

But you feel it, if they have a school assignment, you feel that if they have been out skating, there is a calmness in the person, more focus. Mother, family 1.

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<sup>130</sup> Beery and Jørgensen, 'Children in Nature: Sensory Engagement and the Experience of Biodiversity'.

There is a parallel drawn here, between being active and staying focused on homework afterwards as described by the mother in family 1 above. This connection seems to be an important factor in the connection between activities and learning. However, activity in school seems to lessen in secondary school. The older children are now in middle – and secondary school and the opportunities of spending time outdoors, on breaks or otherwise, have since become fewer, something that the mother feels responsible to compensate for:

But you have a bit of a guilty conscience, I feel that I should learn to cross-country ski, and I haven't prioritized that at all, And I've felt that I'm trying to get us to do it it's sometimes in periods I don't have the energy to pull it off, so now I feel that I haven't, but I checked yesterday if there was ice somewhere and then went skating on a lake at the weekend. Mother, family 1.

When there is less time outdoors the parent feels it necessary to take their children for outdoor activities, but there is not always the energy to pull the weight alone. Still, the interest of one parent influences the family to friluftsliv, be it mushroom picking, skating on the lake or family holidays to the mountains. It seems that even with one parent interested in friluftsliv, there is a connection in wanting their children to acquire the same values. In this family, it is not only doing the activities but the calm and focus on one's body and mind that are driving forces.

## 8.2 Understanding the education system.

Here is a family of four: one of the parents works as a case manager in a large Swedish city, and the second parent is at the time of the interview on leave. The children are ages 4 and 8. The family live in a small village in the countryside, in a house with a garden. During their spare time, they usually spend time outside weather permitting. Since they live in the countryside, they spend time in the garden, growing crops or taking care of the animals. They live near the forest, so they also tend to take walks there. During winter, they go sledging and ice skating. Other interests include painting, puzzles, gaming and reading. As with the previous interviewee, the mother takes on the responsibility of activities for the family. At the core lies both interest and their will to initiate different activities for the whole family. This then depends on workload and energy levels, to what type of activity the family will do. During school holidays, there is a little more energy both from parents and the children.

The youngest of the children attends a preschool with outdoor pedagogy. The 8-year-old is in the second grade of elementary school and had previously attended the same preschool as their younger sibling. The village has three preschools and one elementary school. The choice of the outdoor preschool was an active choice based on the school's outdoor pedagogy profile:

I think it's a nice pedagogy and we want that, it's a good preschool with very high staff density with an economic association so it's not municipal but not private either. I mean, they have their own drinking cup, are outside a lot and it seemed good, so we chose them. It was our first choice, not that we happened to end up there. It was an active choice. Mother, family 2.

The above quote shows that previous knowledge of the education system plays a significant role in choosing outdoor pedagogy for their children, but also how the proportion of the child-teacher ratio may affect children's learning processes and that this becomes a part of the school choice, something that was also brought up by family 3, 4 and 5. Fewer teachers per group of children mean less control and attention. This is something the next family is also discussing and is aware of when choosing the outdoor school for their children. In school, however, a school's economic capital and distribution of time per teacher varies, resulting in many cases friluftsliv activities are non-existent in schools.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, parents who are aware of this may be more inclined to choose outdoor pre-schools for their children to cultivate friluftsliv values early on, so that children will bring these experiences with them when they start compulsory school. As we will see in the following section, parents hope that an early exposure to friluftsliv will help their children stay active also in compulsory school, where the amount of sitting still in classrooms increases.

### 8.3 Encouraging children to meaningful activities.

The third family interviewed for this study live outside a small town and consists of two parents: one of the parents works as a software developer and works from home, and the second parent works part-time in a nearby school in addition to being full-time social sciences teacher-student. The children are ages 2 and 3. Their house is situated on a large forest plot and has a small garden with immediate access to a forested area. They deliberately chose to move from the big city to a smaller town where house and land prices are lower because they wanted to be able to afford to live in a house. During the weekends, the family likes to venture into the forest by walking or cycling to make a fire and cook sausages, bring some soft drinks and cinnamon buns and in the summer and autumn pick blueberries and mushrooms. In the winter they enjoy ice skating but, as they mention, even if the children are small, they go skating yet sometimes, because the children are small, they might just play in the forest and enjoy hot chocolate. If it is snowy, they might go skiing and explain:

We have a multifunctional trolley, which we found second-hand, where you can put skis on the trolley, so you can ski with the trolley behind you, but you can also run with it in the forest, go for walks or cycle. Mother, family 3.

These are the activities the family enjoy often and emphasize the closeness to nature and the forest as an easy way to play outdoors.

Both parents have an interest in the outdoors and staying active in general. They both grew up with outdoor sports or with the mountains as their back garden:

My husband grew up in the mountains [name changed for anonymity] and spent a lot of time in the mountains there as a young man. And I spent a lot of my youth on the water, competing in water sports [changed for anonymity]. He, on the other hand, grew up in a family where the outdoors has always been an active part of that family culture, while I come more from a sports culture that found the outdoors later. Mother, family 3.

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<sup>131</sup> Albrechtsson, "Skolan? Jag Tycker Inte Att Man Har Lärt Sig Någonting", 32.

Growing up with outdoor sports and learning, early on, to play in nature seem to remain within the person as they grow up, thus becoming a part of their habitus. This notion of being active in different ways is something the parents want to transfer to their children:

And [we] try to encourage the children to have meaningful activities other than school. Whether it's dancing, games, music, football, ice hockey, scouting or climbing mountains for the children don't matter to us, but we always try to encourage meaningful leisure time with movement and activity. Father, family 3.

Here, we can see that the parents emphasize activities outside of school as well to promote what they call meaningful activities. The parent's explained that they wanted their children to experience outdoor activities from an early age to create that foundation of movement for when they start school. While friluftsliv is a big part of this family and the children are still small and attend outdoor pre-school, they remain positive for their children to try several different leisure activities outside of school. One of the motives for this is do they did not want their children to tie their whole identity to the school environment but also find meaningful activities outside of school:

So that the whole child's self-worth is not linked to its school performance and the social context should not be based entirely in school. Because it also becomes very tough if you feel that you may not really fit into the group you have been assigned to. To also be good somewhere else. Or the children will fit into this narrow norm and congratulations to them in that case [laughs] but then it can be good for other reasons to be involved in other contexts [than school] to learn something else. Mother, family 3.

Not only is meaningful activity important for movement and activity, but also for the children's identity. The mum here shows concern of the school's "narrow norm", meaning that the school system in the past couple of decades has created an environment that suits relatively few children, thus being "narrow". What this means for the mother in this case is that they don't know yet if their children will "fit the norm" and if they don't, they don't want the children's self-worth to only be linked with school and school achievement. This way, they are creating a resilience for staying in school.<sup>132</sup>

#### 8.4 "Doing boring things" – resilience as a useful tool in school

The fourth family includes two parents; one works as a store manager and the other parent as a teacher. The children are ages 4, 14 and 16. The family lives in a small Swedish town in a terraced house with a garden. They live close to the forest and one of the parents usually takes evening walks and says "I feel much better when I get out and move around. I link this very much to how I feel." Other interests in the family include ice hockey, football, floorball, and golf.

The older children spend a lot of time with their friends either in sports or hanging out in the nearby forest recreation area where they can go mountain biking as well. The youngest in the family tends to follow the parent's activities

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<sup>132</sup> Anna Lund and Stefan Lund, eds., *Skolframgång i det mångkulturella samhället*, *Skolframgång i det mångkulturella samhället*, 1. uppl. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2016).

and during the summer they enjoy camping. Last summer they had set up a tent in the back garden which the youngest still remembers and would like to do again. They go on to explain that life circumstances when the older children were young, resulted in quite a different situation, something that they want to change for their youngest:

I have learnt from the last time when the older children were small, I didn't have as many opportunities, I worked away a lot then. So, I try to give her [their youngest daughter] a better one than I gave them. So, we are outside yes, and occasionally, quite a lot. I try to implement friluftsliv for her. Father, family 4.

Since they value friluftsliv and feel that it has benefits for their children both in school and in later life, they have a wish to implement friluftsliv with their youngest, something that was not possible when the older children were young. The parent explains that due to different home and working conditions, there was not a lot of spare time or energy for leisure activities, and less for friluftsliv which by its definition can be quite time-consuming, and as other parents have mentioned, requires quite a lot of engagement from parents. This then results in friluftsliv becoming a conditioned activity. It requires parents to hold certain assets, e.g., economic, to be able to invest in friluftsliv. However, the father in this family notices a decrease in the amount of outdoor education in their children's schools and says that most of the friluftsliv education which should be a part of Physical education and health, is mostly theoretical now. He says:

There have been projects with movement, for example, we know from research that children perform better in school when they move daily, yet we have so little movement that we have today. Much of the physical education today is theoretical. Father, family 4.

Indeed, there are an alarming number of schools with very limited or no teaching in friluftsliv at all (seven out of 22).<sup>133</sup> This is something the parents in this family are concerned with:

I feel that the school should do more. Both with outdoor activities, with littering in nature. You may understand more if you are out in nature and can compare a littered area and a clean area. Father, family 4.

What they are concerned with there is the lack of practical elements in the PE syllabus, something they feel becomes more the parents' responsibility more and more. Parallel to the global environmental crisis, studies are witnessing an educational crisis for friluftsliv in the Swedish curriculum, however, the paradox is that the educational crisis for school-based friluftsliv is an inverted environmental crisis.<sup>134</sup> What this means is that, despite living in a time when the effects of climate change and the increasing need to pursue a course of sustainable development is large, very little is done in school-based friluftsliv to address these challenges and highly important issues.<sup>135</sup> This is also shown in the father's concern and the responsibility he feels toward his children, that they as a family

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<sup>133</sup> Mikael, 'Becoming-Place', 87.

<sup>134</sup> Mikael, 87.

<sup>135</sup> Mikael, 87.

need to step up and teach their children the importance of taking care of our nature, something the school per curriculum should do, but is evidently not in some cases. This is one reason parents want to introduce friluftsliv early in their children's life. The parents feel responsible for teaching the children the things that are missing from physical education and health, thus feel the pressure to do something they feel the school should provide. But what friluftsliv entails is more than just activity, it also inhibits a certain discipline, a value ascribed to friluftsliv:

And they take that into the school world. And I can almost link that to outdoor life as well, that if you manage to walk 10km one weekend, you get better, you get stronger in your body and you can handle things, it's very boring sometimes, it can be a mental challenge, but it's the same in school. It's boring there too at times. And they take that into the school world.

Being active outside of school, and "doing boring things" teaches the children resilience. So, not only does friluftsliv create awareness for the environment, but also a resilience that is useful in school. This is something that also Tugetam found in their study, that when the children hiked up the mountain it was not necessarily something that was fun while doing it, since it is quite straining walking a steep mountain on loose rocks, but the struggle and effort to get to the top was part of this journey toward resilience.<sup>136</sup> The children then bring this learnt effort of working through something strenuous into school, and the example of reaching the top of the mountain becomes also symbolic to completing a task in school.<sup>137</sup>

### 8.5 Cultivating children's autonomy in a calm environment.

The final family presented is a family of four: two parents and two children ages 3 and 7. One of the parents works within the higher education sector, the occupation of the second parent was not discovered. Some of the family's interests include hiking, swimming, horse riding. Both of their children attended or attend preschool outdoor pre-school. The family moved from the city to a rural village to get away from the urban lifestyle:

We lived in the city before but moved to get the feeling of being in peace. That there is not so much going on, that it is free from traffic and all that, that it is quieter as now we are very close to nature. We live next door to nature, it's easy to get out, it's easy for the children, you can just open the door and they can play in the back. You don't have to go to a playground, or you don't have to look out the window like when you live in an apartment and they're in the playground, it's so easy to run between friends [here]. So that's why we chose to move from the city to a house. Mother, family 5.

The calm rural landscape is described as a safe environment for the children to play and move, since they can run between friends who live nearby and travel to school easily:

I try to create an active lifestyle by taking the dog out and walking together with the kids, to make it part of everyday life. Cycling and walking. Like now when they cycle

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<sup>136</sup> Tugetam, 2020, 181.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.



or walk to the preschool, which is only ten minutes away. To show that we don't need to drive short distances, to show what is the natural way and show that it's not hard to do things outside because we also live a bit like that. Mother, family 5.

The children are taught that getting to school and moving by their own accord rather riding in the car, is a natural and preferred mode of transport. The parents are cultivating an active lifestyle in a calm, safe, environment which helps create children's autonomy, independence as well as confidence in their own abilities. If children are constantly supervised by their parents or other adults, it may drastically reduce children's independence.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, a rural setting, where parents feel more relaxed in letting their children play outside on their own, may help children understand and explore their own abilities. Moreover, it seems that teaching this autonomy early is linked to choosing outdoor pre-school:

My oldest, when he started school, once a week they are in the forest. He's so upset that he's not allowed to climb trees because they're afraid he'll fall and hurt himself. And he has attended preschool where they have played freely in the forest with full respect for the forest, just that you are not allowed to climb all the trees just because of how weak the tree is, so I also notice that he is very comfortable with it and does not understand how you cannot play fully in the forest when you are with the school. Mother, family 5.

Here, the parents have noticed that there is a change in play culture from pre-school to school. In pre-school the children were allowed to climb up in trees if the trees were healthy and strong, something that they were taught to observe during outings before climbing a tree. This understanding of their surrounding became rather constrained when the child began compulsory school. It seems, then, that educational professionals have increasingly become more aware of risk management, which turns more toward risk control in schools.<sup>139</sup> Just as another parent explained previously, the children easily become engaged and accustomed to their surroundings and become enterprising in their play:

The youngest goes to outdoor pre-school and the oldest has done it. So, they are very used to it [being outdoors]. They have a certain, I know that I was surprised when I was with them in the forest once because we moved from the city a few years ago, and they changed preschools, how accustomed they are to find things in the forest, they are not bored. They play quite well. I don't need to be there, that's what's so nice, they jump and run, they're not afraid of anything, they know that this is a blueberry, you can eat it, it's nice to be in the forest, looking for stones and branches and stuff and knowing that they can't break things, you have to leave the forest as it was when you came, they have that awareness very much. Mother, family 5.

In preschool, the children learn to explore their surroundings and play accordingly, learning to conduct their outdoor play in a safe manner themselves. These are one of the values assigned to friluftsliv; the autonomy

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<sup>138</sup> Cook, "The Teachers Seemed a Bit Obsessive with Health and Safety": Fieldwork Risk and the Social Construction of Childhood', 2011, 280–281.

<sup>139</sup> Cook, 2011, 282.

and confidence the children gain learning to play outdoors in a safe environment.<sup>140</sup> Thus, learning outdoors is a part of experiencing the outdoors and the rural aspect suggests a less adult-controlled space.

## 8.6 Resource strong families – a summary

In the above sections, five families have been presented after interviewing them for 1 to 2 hours each. The families were asked questions following a semi-structured interview guide. During the interviews, many interesting topics were discussed. From these discussions, with the support of my interview guide and coding the empirical material, themes began to emerge. These themes are discussed in the next chapter, chapter 9.

To summarize the interviews, a couple of important aspects are the time that these families invest in creating outdoor habits for their children. Time is an integral part for these families, as time is something that allows for them to create space in their everyday life, and friluftsliv is something that indeed is time consuming in many ways. For example, family 3 mentions that one of the parents works as a software developer, a job that is highly paid and allows for work from home. Another aspect highlighted by these families is the parent's own experiences of friluftsliv, something that they have grown up with in various ways and want to incorporate for their children as well. Growing up close to nature and nature-based activities create adults that want to continue staying close to nature in various ways. Also, from the interviews, we can see that it is in most cases the mothers who opt for friluftsliv and want their families to experience the positive effects of spending time outdoors. The experiences of friluftsliv can help build resilience yet it also requires that people who are involved invest time by driving to the forest or mountains or moving away from the city to be closer to nature and the calm that it brings.

These families are resource strong in the sense that they have education and work that allows a salary and time that is in some cases required for conducting friluftsliv and are also experienced either in outdoor activities through sports such as sailing, growing up near the mountains or being brought up mushroom picking or ice skating to name a few. A third interesting theme discovered by interviewing these families is the active choice of relocating from the city in order to live in the countryside. This immediate access and closeness to nature is something that these families choose to invest in.

These types of investments make friluftsliv different from other types of recreational activity.

## 9. Friluftsliv and a belief in cultivating long-term commitment

The aim of this section is to tie together theory, previous research and the results from the empirical data gathered from the observations and interviews, to answer the research questions. The sections are divided into three key themes based on the findings from the results. The theoretical concepts of social space, habitus and symbolic capital will be utilized to understand the empirical findings and themes.

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<sup>140</sup> Backman, 'What Is Valued in Friluftsliv within PE Teacher Education? —Swedish PE Teacher Educators' Thoughts about Friluftsliv Analysed through the Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu'.

The themes presented below are cultivating a long-term perspective, parents' commitment, and the role of the school.

### 9.1 The values of cultivating a long-term perspective

From the observations and interviews thus far, an image is beginning to emerge of the type of family that is drawn to outdoor pedagogy and outdoor organization groups. Mainly, these resource-strong families in this study choose this type of organization and culture that fosters nature-confident children. These families are strong in educational capital. Indeed, at least one parent in each family and all the parents in the observed groups have a higher education degree. One could argue, then, that this educational capital creates an understanding for the educational system and believe in the long-term effects of education. They see a long-term effect of staying in school and to stay in school the children are equipped with assets to combat the highly institutionalized, still-sitting, school environment. Thus, cultivating an active lifestyle from an early age is to cultivate a long-term perspective for a healthy life. The product of history that is habitus, produces individual and collective practices which in turn reproduces the values of friluftsliv.<sup>141</sup> But then, what is it that creates this combination of experiences that the parents want for their children, what are the children learning and what is that the parents want to achieve for their children regarding outdoor pre-schools? That is what this section aims to understand.

Many parents have some form of experience of and relationship to the outdoors in their upbringing that they want their children to experience. In this then, their experiences shape the values of the outdoors and are reproduced when parents bring their children along with them, with the aim to teach the "natural ways", as explained by the mother in family 5. Therefore, their symbolic capital, economic and cultural capital, is invested in their children's education and leisure time, becoming an inherited interest. Moreover, what the parents remember as positive experiences from their childhood as something positive, is then continued with their children and this embedded symbolic capital of the body and mind becomes part of the life history of the children. So, even if some activities were strenuous or boring at times, they have continued similar activities in their adulthood. This is then something that they want to implement with their children. The dad in family 4 explained this when saying that, while walking a 10km hike in the forest may be difficult or boring, it gives the children the tools of resilience and patience, something that he saw they bring to the school environment as well.

This way of transferring skills from one arena to the other creates a foundation and a long-term perspective that the children grow up with and, eventually, bring with them into adulthood. The father from family 4 explains further:

I feel that raising children is to give them the proper tools for adult life later. And that adult life is very much based on what you did as a child. Father, family 4.

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<sup>141</sup> Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, 82.

A sensory-rich childhood, then, seems to become a part of one's habitus, where even in adulthood, one remembers childhood nature experiences and relates them to positive memories.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, it is through physical activity on natural ground, that both fitness and coordination can be strengthened.<sup>143</sup> It is through these choices that parents help create habits for their children, by leading by example and showing them what they were taught as young children, thus giving the children the tools for the future.<sup>144</sup>

In the younger outdoor group, one of the leader/parents were showing their daughter how to safely use a knife when cutting in wood, or how to start a fire. These are skills the parents already inhibit and want to transfer to their children from an early age. The habitus of these individuals is closely linked with the history of the parents, and the experiences that the children are experiencing. They want their children to see nature as something valuable and healthy, a place that is fun to explore and spend time in. Bringing the children from an early age while they are naturally inquisitive and curious, helps create this foundation for future learning, both in their spare time activities and in school.

## 9.2 Educational Capital as an Asset

Apart from the interest in the outdoors, these families also have in common higher education degrees. At least one parent, but in most cases both, have higher education degrees. Their education lies within the social sciences though mostly within the natural sciences. Here, one could argue, that the volume of educational capital in these resource-rich families creates a basis for their positions in social space.<sup>145</sup> This then, results in certain habitus formation through outdoor learning that, it seems, parents want their children to acquire. As we have seen, the children of these families are introduced to outdoor experiences from an early age. Furthermore, the parents are aware of the benefits of friluftsliv and realize that not all families have access to some necessary assets for outdoor activity:

And I hear now when I tell you that what we do is incredibly privileged. and it wouldn't be possible if my husband didn't also have a five-year university education with a job so that we can do these things even though I'm a student. I do work a bit on the side, but we are privileged to be able to do these major activities or just to be able to afford to buy a second-hand multisport trolley for our children. They are expensive. Mother, family 3.

Here, higher education becomes an asset which transfers to economic capital and indirectly transfers to activities related to friluftsliv, being outdoors requires time, something that a working-from-home type job offers and indeed a stronger economic capital of a 5-year degree. Bourdieu has shown that educational title credentials fulfil, in a different historical context, a social function quite analogous to that which befell nobility titles in feudal society. The specific symbolic efficacy of educational titles lies in that it not only guarantees technical

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<sup>142</sup> Beery and Jørgensen, 'Children in Nature: Sensory Engagement and the Experience of Biodiversity'.

<sup>143</sup> Brugge, Friluftsliv with preschool children, 124.

<sup>144</sup> Tugetam, 2020.

<sup>145</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984).

competency but also, as the public attestation of 'gifts' or individual 'merits,' consecrates a true social essence.<sup>146</sup> This symbolic efficacy could arguably be connected to the technical competency of understanding the school system and how an early start of setting a foundation for the children is beneficial for the rest of the school years, thus reproducing educational capital, in the sense that the children learn the patience and long-term view that higher education entails, which their parents have experienced. Friluftsliv, therefore, is a way by which these families can achieve this.

### 9.3 Parents commitment

Yes, but I think it's almost crucial, if parents are not interested, especially in the younger ages, because it requires that you as a parent are involved, it's not like you're going to drop off someone to play floorball. Many parents are involved as leaders or helpers [in the outdoor groups], so there is an interest. And of course, the parents' attitude too, if they say "Ugh! What terrible weather" instead of "Oh, how lovely, look how much it's raining!" but that's what I think. Organization manager.

The above quote comes from interviewing one of the outdoor organization managers and shows that parents' involvement and commitment are crucial in the choices parents make for their children, in regard to choosing outdoor preschools and incorporating friluftsliv from an early age by attending the organization's different outdoor leisure groups.

The children are learning from their parents the values of being outdoors, thus shaping a habitus specific to the social space these families exist in. These experiences aim to create resilient, calm, and enterprising children. Moreover, we have discovered so far that these families also inhibit symbolic capital utilized within the space, for example, educational capital and economic capital.

The practices produced by the habitus reproduce the objective structures of which they are the product and are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production.<sup>147</sup> So, these resource-strong parents reproduce their inherent capital by teaching their children what they were taught as children, or, as in one of the cases, by giving the children the experiences of friluftsliv if the parents were not able to before. This indicates that parent's interest and their view of how friluftsliv can be a valuable asset in school and outside of school is transferred through parents' commitment to their children's education and making sure they have the best early foundation for it.

And the children in outdoor preschool are also an extra cost in clothing. It was something we discussed before we chose to put them in the private sector, although the preschool is just like others, outdoor preschool means a lot more costs in numbers, so functional clothing is very expensive even if you buy it second-hand. So, it requires a bit from the parents Mother, family 2.

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<sup>146</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, English ed., Sage Studies in Social and Educational Change, 5 (London: Sage, 1977), 10.

<sup>147</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72.

Their preschool is 9km away, even if there is a closer one only 500m from our house, we actively chose the outdoor preschool. That means every day either cycling to pick them up and drop them off or driving to pick them up and drop them off because there is no public transport there. But we still chose it because it's smaller groups, there are only 25 children in the whole preschool, and the teachers are very committed and enjoy their work. Mother, family 3.

In the above examples, the parents are discussing how the cost of clothing for outdoor preschools is an additional cost for the family, but they find ways to get around it by searching in second-hand markets for clothing. This, then, shows that indeed it requires not only an interest in the outdoors to a certain degree but also time and effort in finding the material assets necessary for outdoor preschool. Again, the time and effort mentioned in the second quote show how outdoor pedagogy is preferable to public preschool. The parents need to drive or cycle daily to drop the children off in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. Despite this, they chose the outdoor preschool, and we can see that the parents are also aware of the "smaller groups", showing an awareness of how small groups affect the children's learning process and the commitment from the teachers.

However, with this awareness of the choice of preschool, there is also a worry about inequalities based on the school choice:

And here I feel that the school should do more, take greater social responsibility in giving children a sensible upbringing with good values. It's so wrong to put it [the responsibility] on parents. If you have committed parents, you have a completely different opportunity later in life. If you have parents who may have, who may want to but don't have the strength, it may be a single mum with three children who pulls the whole load by herself, they don't get to take the children out into the woods. I feel that this is a greater social responsibility than they are taking. Father, family 4.

I think that's what I like about this type of preschool, that it's predominantly for parents who are very committed and have actively sought it out. It still requires some checking because it may not work exactly with everything anyway [any type of clothing]. Mother, family 3.

So, as we can see, these parents are aware of the commitment and effort it takes to place their children in outdoor preschool. It takes knowledge, know-how and an understanding of material assets (clothing and equipment). This can be linked to what Wells writes, in that economically vulnerable groups, single parents, foreign-born parents, and other working households have less active leisure time and participate relatively little in organized leisure activities.<sup>148</sup> This also goes in line with what the organization manager explained about who are the parents and children who attend the outdoor groups, in which they replied that it is indeed a homogenous group who attend the outdoor groups, despite efforts to reach families who may not be as accustomed to the outdoors. Moreover, the manager explains that it is difficult to reach out to different groups, one of the reasons being that organizations are not allowed to advertise in schools and preschools thus creating an obstacle to reaching out to those who may not be aware that these

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<sup>148</sup> Wells, 2020.

outdoor groups exist, and due to this, the families and children who find these groups are the result of social capital, people who know people will pass the information forward to those in their surroundings.

The father in the above quote also mentions the inequality of this type of system and how the focus and responsibility have moved away from the school to the individual parent, thus creating inequalities, since not all parents have the same set of capital to invest. Thus, it becomes apparent that school, indeed, is not equal for all despite it being written into the school law in Sweden that all students have the right to an equally good education no matter where in the country they live.<sup>149</sup> Again, there is a sense of privilege and awareness of the values and opportunities which are cultivated for the children, yet a privilege which they are deeply aware of, and feel very much the injustice toward the school system and that the responsibility now lies on the family rather than the school being responsible for equal opportunities. Therefore, there is an ambiguity in, on the one hand utilizing symbolic capital to gain and above all to maintain their position within the social space, and on the other hand, the awareness of understanding the school system creates a deep feeling of inequality, a double ambiguity.

To summarize, then, the parent's commitment lies within time. The time that parents take to invest in their children, and the time that their respective jobs offer in terms of flexibility in schedule and working hours, being able to work from home, stable working hours. Working from home creates time, studying creates time. These families describe and emphasize experience, a value which can be ascribed to friluftsliv. It is from the outdoor experiences of the parents and children that they learn to become resilient and independent, learn to be close to nature. Friluftsliv, then, is something that is experienced in the now and is also something where the values can be brought into other aspects of life, such as school and understanding one's capability.

### 9.3.1 The Choice of the rural landscape

Something that is common ground for these families, is living rurally. One of the values of choosing to live in the countryside rather than the city is the closeness to nature. In line with Beery, there is a cultural understanding of nature-based activities and an awareness of the role of access to nature.<sup>150</sup> It is both the physical proximity and a mental health aspect of living rurally, as described by several of the parents:

We live in the countryside, so you can be out in the garden, but we are also quite close to the forest. Mother, family 3.

I usually go out and walk in the evenings when I can, and I feel much better when I get out and move around. I connect that very much to how I feel. I reach the forest within a five-minute walk, so I have quite close to getting out." Father, family 4.

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<sup>149</sup> Skolverket, 'En Skola För Alla - Om Det Svenska Skolsystemet.', March 2019, <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6bfaca41169863e6a653cca/1553957052327/pdf725.pdf>.

<sup>150</sup> Beery, Nordic in Nature, 2013.

Like Ho and Chang write, living rurally is a refuge from an otherwise fast-paced 'unnatural' world.<sup>151</sup> As we can see from the above stories, living near nature is characterized by living near a forested area, and that it is linked to a calm setting which has a positive impact on one's mental health. According to Sandell, this mental landscape is a crucial element of friluftsliv.<sup>152</sup> It offers not only activity and movement but also peace of mind, where one can connect with nature and reflect in a calm environment. In addition, the parents have also expressed that choosing to live in the countryside is connected to the safety of a smaller community. There are also indications of how one lived as a child (in a house or apartment complex, rurally or in an urban setting) impacts one's relation to the outdoors. In one of the studies made on students in an urban school and in a rural school, showed that those in the rural school were able to express more explicitly what friluftsliv means to them and expressed the relation between themselves and nature as a positive experience.<sup>153</sup> Playing and exploring nature allows children important learning opportunities, as shown by Beery and Jorgensen.<sup>154</sup> This difference becomes apparent as one of the families explains the differences in how the mother and the father of the family lived quite differently as children:

But that's the thing, I have to get him on board. But then he thinks it's wonderful to be outside, but it's not like he chooses it. But he also grew up in rented accommodation and was not out in nature at all when he was little. Mother, family 1.

What they are explaining here is their interest in nature and nature-based activity was given by their parents (with mushroom picking in the forest), which had led to their own interest for and a connection with nature. In the contrary, the other parent was brought up in the city, in apartments, where the connection to nature was not as apparent. They have thus observed that they are the ones to drag the family along to do these activities, even though, in the end, the whole family find the experience relaxing and fun.

#### 9.4 The role of the school

So far, we have seen that parents are creating a close-to-nature foundation that they find will be valuable not only in school but also in their children's future. In regard to a close relation to nature, these outdoor preschools play a substantial role. Not only is it the interest of the outdoors from the parents, but also their educational capital, knowledge and know-how of the school system that plays a role in choosing this particular pedagogy. Moreover, there is a certain privilege and awareness of the inequalities that this knowledge brings with it.

The point of the curriculum is that they should be the same across the nation.<sup>155</sup> This thesis has found that parents feel it is important to invest in friluftsliv and outdoor pedagogy for their children and, by doing so, they hope to

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<sup>151</sup> Ho and Chang, 'To Whom Does This Place Belong? Whiteness and Diversity in Outdoor Recreation and Education'.

<sup>152</sup> Klas Sandell, 'The Right of Public Access: The Landscape Perspective of Friluftsliv', in *Nature First: Outdoor Life The Friluftsliv Way*, ed. Bob Henderson and Nils Vikander (Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 90–99.

<sup>153</sup> Albrechtsson, 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Beery & Jorgensen, *Children in Nature*, 2018.

<sup>155</sup> Skolverket, 'En Skola För Alla - Om Det Svenska Skolsystemet.'



create a foundation for a healthy lifestyle and future adult life, something they find the school does not always contribute to. Furthermore, staying active and healthy promotes mental well-being, which is of great relevance today, with an increase in mental health issues from stressful lifestyles and pressures from society, in the school environment. Therefore, investing in children's mental and physical health is an important factor in parents' choice of preschool and leisure activities. Moreover, as Tugetam points out, friluftsliv and new experiences help children create an understanding of their abilities, thus creating an understanding of their abilities.<sup>156</sup> Also, as Brugge writes, children who spend much time outdoors are healthier than those who are indoors a lot.<sup>157</sup> Many preschools, the outdoor preschool in particular, have been paying attention to this and are working to shape active children who spend more time outdoors.<sup>158</sup>

However, there are concerns about the level of activity in school, and parents feel it necessary to give their children an early start of being outdoors and learning in smaller groups, but also in the hopes that setting this foundation will create a basis for the children's natural curiosity for finding new activities as they grow up. What this study finds, is that parents argue in favor for the outdoor pedagogy, that is beneficial in many ways, not least when it comes to preparation for school but also social and motor skills. However, what is interesting is that some parents find that perhaps the outdoor pedagogy is too far from how first grade in compulsory school and onwards will look like, but the benefits outweigh this worry. The worry these parents have, is that compulsory school is far too institutionalized and does not suit all children with the current system. Some concerns are expressed:

When you sit still and move less, you get more tired, it's harder to concentrate, and then the learning process may be more rigid. Mother, family 5.

It's completely unreasonable to expect children who are so young to sit still all day. Human beings are not made for that. Mother, family 3.

The preschool does a great job in general; they try because they have a little more freedom in what they can do. But then, the further up you get, the more institutionalized it becomes that you sit inside the walls and do things based on what the school curriculum says. Father, family 4.

These parents are concerned that the move from outdoor pre-school becomes a large contrast to the "institutionalized" compulsory school, where sitting down for many hours is "unreasonable". They are concerned that children may find it too difficult to go from free movement to being more boxed in. As we saw in the previous sections, one of the children was surprised that they were not allowed to climb trees in first grade, something that they were used to being allowed to do in pre-school. There is a dichotomy then, between pre-school being more free and closer to nature, to the more enclosed and controlling school environment. Brugge explains that the immediate surroundings of the preschool is of great importance to the child's development and that if the outdoor environment is to

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<sup>156</sup> Tugetam, 2020, 180.

<sup>157</sup> Brugge, 'Friluftsliv with Preschool Children', 122.

<sup>158</sup> Brugge, 122.

be confined to the schoolyard it is important to regard the young children's need for movement and for being able to work in groups.<sup>159</sup> This is something that the outdoor organization groups offer. During the observations I could see that the children were allowed to explore their surroundings, they were solving problems together and creating imaginative plays together. Like Brugge goes on to say, most children, when given the opportunity, can develop here. A child who is timid, shy and cautious gets to encounter the unexpected in a familiar environment and with friluftsliv, there are many opportunities for solitude beneath tree branches or beside a big rock.<sup>160</sup> How, then, are these practices visible in school?

In the next two sections, preschool and school, the dichotomies of the free preschool and the enclosed compulsory school will be further examined and to finally conclude what the families distinguish as the most important when choosing outdoor preschools.

#### 9.4.1 Preschool – teamwork, resilience, and children's autonomy

Thus far, we can see that outdoor preschools play an important role in the values and skills that parents want to cultivate for their children. What, then, in outdoor preschools is it that is valued and preferred over public preschools? In the following quotes from interviewed parents, we will see that their knowledge of the school system is important to understand their choice, their knowledge of the compulsory school setting and how it may impact the children's learning.

I also think it provides more creative conditions when it comes to how you play, what kind of conditions you get. In a preschool that is very much indoors, it is very easy for it to become very gender stereotypical in many ways because when you have certain types of toys, you have dolls, you have princess toys. I think this preschool is very good at working with everyone and getting to do everything. I'm convinced that most preschools are, but when you're out in the forest and play with what's in the forest, it's not as predetermined. Mother, family 2.

I often think that the school environment and preschool environment, when it is enclosed, it becomes, it becomes noisy, cramped spaces, kind of quick things that happen and that this stripped-down environment that the outdoor environment offers actually makes a difference. Mother, family 3.

From the above quotes, we can understand that the parents feel that outdoor preschools offer a different type of setting compared to regular "indoor preschool", with the outdoor preschool offering a space that is opposite of noisy and cramped. Furthermore, an interesting aspect that is brought to light here, is the gender aspect. The mother is explaining how regular preschools (those not characterized by outdoor pedagogy) easily are shaped into gender stereotypes by access to certain types of toys. They emphasize here, that children who spend most of their time playing in nature are less exposed to gender stereotypes, which also points to nature as a gender-neutral arena for children to learn and play in. Moreover, there is a factor of teamwork and learning social skills not only in the

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<sup>159</sup> Brugge, 123.

<sup>160</sup> Brugge, 123.

same age group, but rather abolishes age divisions, thus creating a group of children who learn to play with children of other ages too:

They have a lot of buddy thinking and group thinking. Mother, family 5.

They work a lot in the preschool to help each other, to socialize across the age groups and the big ones help the smaller ones and I think you can see that even when they get older that they are very kind to each other. Mother, family 2.

The outdoor setting, then, presupposes a "natural" learning setting in comparison to the enclosed indoor preschool, even if the regular preschools also spend time outdoors. However, the difference expressed by these parents is gender-neutral spaces of nature, children playing across age gaps thus learning how to play with each other and learning teamwork early in life. This teamwork was also shown in the observed outdoor groups, where the older children naturally incorporated teamwork despite differences in age.<sup>161</sup> It could be argued then, that outdoor preschool sets an early foundation for children to learn social skills which come in handy later in life, both in school and in an outdoor setting. This nurturing of a certain type of behavior also shows a certain independence in these children:

They gain independence through that type of preschool. I think they get something more out of it, that children themselves can cope with, that some things are not a problem, weather is not a problem. Father, family 4.

I noticed [...] that they work very actively with how the children should behave so that it's nice and calm and that just because you're outside you don't run around screaming. They seemed to enjoy it very much, just that they are very comfortable by themselves, fixing and doing things on their own when they are out. Mother, family 5.

I also think it's just that they get to practice getting around [in the forest] and finding their own ability, so it feels like a good concept. Mother, family 2.

This independency may be an individual social asset, but it is also constructed in a social setting, dependent of their surroundings.<sup>162</sup> This perception is relevant in understanding how children and young people develop their educational trajectories.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, we can see that children attending this particular type of preschool form a habitus that is consistent with life trajectory and values which their parents inhibit. Already here emerges the inequalities which parents themselves are indeed aware of and naturally, they want their children to have the best possible tools to cope with and succeed in school.

So, how is the gap between outdoor preschool and compulsory school perceived? This is what the next section will explore.

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<sup>161</sup> Note: in the older outdoor group observed, the children were ages 13 to 15.

<sup>162</sup> Laid Boukaz and Rehan Taha, 'Kampen Om Att Bli En Elev', in *Skolframgång i Det Mångkulturella Samhället*, 2016, 85–102, 95.

<sup>163</sup> Boukaz and Taha, 95.

#### 9.4.2 Compulsory school – a cultural clash

Parents have so far and among other things expressed their ambiguity toward how today's compulsory school is shaped. They are worried that the institutionalized, enclosed manner of school today and the sitting still for many hours together with less physical education than before, is negatively impacting the children's wellbeing and learning process. Which is why parents feel, in part, obligated to incorporate friluftsliv as an activity outside of school, but also other activities that children choose. In family 1, the mother explained how it feels like she needs to organize the outdoor activities for them, since school is providing much less of it, especially in the older age groups. Indeed, the outline of the outdoor pedagogy with its freer approach, is a concern in that it might be a big difference going from that to sitting still indoors for many hours:

The jump from preschool to school: there is such a huge culture clash. It probably depends on the different preschools, there is such a big jump from preschool-to-preschool class in the form of 25 children in the preschool and 31 in the school in a class of two adults instead of seven adults. staff density is extremely much lower. Mother, family 2.

Even still and despite the worry that the cultural gap between outdoor preschool and compulsory school is too wide or incomparable, parents choose outdoor preschools for their children. Arguably, the reason for this is what we have discovered previously, mainly that the foundation and values that outdoor pedagogy offers, weighs heavily toward choosing outdoor preschools over regular ones. This indicates that friluftsliv, learning and playing outdoors have indeed an impact on children's trajectories, and that the values of friluftsliv is an important asset that children incorporate in the school setting, even if they are not aware of it. This is similar to what we saw in a previous section about children's autonomy and resilience when climbing a mountain. The children bring this experience into school, the experience of going through something boring and/or strenuous, and still manage to push through. Some parents express this notion of resilience<sup>164</sup>:

Hopefully, it [outdoor preschool and learning outdoors] can give the children that when they come to school, during breaks and so on, to be enterprising and active in outdoor play or in movement between school lessons or after school that it can give a start to what you then do outside of school to be able to stay in school. I think it's really sad that sport is being removed and that sport and health are not properly prioritized. Sport and health could rather be expanded to movement, health, and well-being because, according to research, we see that exercise and outdoor activities develop the brain's ability to perform better even in school. Mother, family 3.

This resilience that is cultivated could help create a dynamic mindset for learning, entailing the ability to distance one's identity from setback, and understanding that in school, sometimes we fail, but our whole identities are not linked to the failure.<sup>165</sup> Rather, the resilience toward setbacks is what helps these children learn and achieve.

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<sup>164</sup> Boukaz and Taha, 90-91.

<sup>165</sup> Boukaz and Taha, 90-91.

This swimming school is something I've been so annoyed about, here in the city there is no municipal swimming school that they give to the children before the child is five years old. But at the same time, children should be able to swim when they go to school. It's insane. It's very unfair. And then you come to school and can't even swim, and then you're even more singled out because, ah, I get so annoyed about that. Mother, family 3.

In the above quote, the parents talk about inequalities in school PE lessons and about the requirements of small children before they start school. There is a sense that inequalities begin even before children enter the school world. Some parents may not be able to take their children to swim lessons for economic reasons or time.

As we have discovered earlier, higher education can be linked to work that allows for better time-management outside of working hours. Yet, like we have seen in the previous sections, parents are well aware of these inequalities and are evidently frustrated. However, in the space these families exist, we can thus uncover how their symbolic capital and habitus are created and reproduced in the social space. The parents, as we have come to understand, have higher education degrees, meaning they understand the school system. This in turn means they have valuable tools which they teach their children. So, educational capital together with outdoor preschool creates a resilience which the children learn to incorporate both in friluftsliv and school. Here, then, we are talking about resilience to learning in school, a resilience that parents link closely to being active in their spare time.

## 10. Conclusion

This thesis has studied families who invest in and value the practices of friluftsliv. From what we can see, resource-strong parents, resources insofar understood as educational capital, knowledge of the educational system, time, and inherited interest and by extension inherited understanding of friluftsliv and thereby its values, are indicative of whom chooses outdoor pedagogy pre-schools. What has been found in this study is that those who attend the outdoor groups are generally parents with higher education degrees, a statement supported by the organization manager. The resources are defined as monetary; they have monetary resources to purchase clothing and equipment for outdoor activities.

One of the parents in the second observed groups said that it is rare that children who attend groups have never been outdoors, but if they are they come from low-income families and cannot afford certain outdoor equipment, so the leaders try then to adjust the activities so that everyone who attends can participate. Time is an important aspect as well and is defined as a resource in Chapter 9. The time the families invest is allowed by their work and education degrees, with jobs that allows for some flexibility in their work schedules (compared to for example working in hospitality). Experience is another important theme which emerged from the interviews. Experience in friluftsliv and experiencing it with their children, thus reproducing the values that the parents wish to cultivate. This thesis shows that not only do these families choose preschools with outdoor pedagogy, but they also invest in cultivating the children's outdoor skills through the outdoor organization and spending a lot of time outdoors with the children through friluftsliv.

The five families who have been interviewed and the children and adults from the observed groups are well established in the outdoor arena and the children are sons and daughters of at least one highly educated parent. In some cases, the parents were educated in the natural sciences, which entails an already existing interest in nature and the environment. These educated parents are also well informed of the school system, and aware of its inequalities, thus wanting to create the best possible foundation equipped with the right tools for their children to be prepared for school and to stay in school. They value the long-term perspective that friluftsliv can help cultivate for their children, by learning how to be resilient, independent, and confident in their skills. In learning how to climb, skate, ski or solve problems through teamwork, the children accumulate skills that are valuable also in later life. Furthermore, as mentioned by one of the families, by practicing friluftsliv the children also learn to be disciplined by understanding that doing strenuous activities or tasks in school is not always fun, but they learn to enjoy the achievement of working through the challenge. Outdoor preschool is a first step before school; however, parents' own interests and commitment are a large contributing factor to doing friluftsliv. Additionally, their assets give them meaning which in turn gives meaning to their habitus and lifestyle. To conclude then, how have the research questions been answered? With the help of the empirical material from the observations in Chapter 7, the families interviewed in Chapter 8, and the codified themes in Chapter 9, the research questions can be concluded below.

To understand how friluftsliv is an asset in children's school life, we can approach this from different angles: resilience, inherited capital, and habitus. What has emerged from the collected data is that the families that attend the

outdoor groups in an outdoor organization, and those who choose outdoor preschools, are mainly families who are holders of strong symbolic capital in the means of higher education degrees, which along with it brings resilience to staying in school and seeing the long-term positive impacts of many years in school. Resilience, however, is also achieved by incorporating friluftsliv in children's leisure time. From the empirical data, we can see that when children go through strenuous activities such as hiking, they learn that their ability to muster through something difficult is actually a strength they inhabit. This double-edged resilience is something the children take into the school environment too and something that the parents hope to cultivate by having their children in outdoor preschool already from a young age. This resilience is also taught through playing in any weather, that weather is something fun even if it is raining, and children learn to be independent and trust their own abilities. These conditions, then, help create autonomous children.

A recurring theme in the discussion of the choice of preschool is the wish to give children the opportunity to play outdoors in an open and free environment, not enclosed inside the walls of a school. A preschool with outdoor pedagogy approach is therefore an active and preferred choice over public preschools. The families all agree that the enclosed environment of compulsory school does not feel natural and that children of young ages are not made to sit still in the way that the current school system is built. Thus, by letting the children learn from a young age that activity and the outdoors is something fun, the hope is that this will create a foundation for the children to use throughout their school life, even if they are not aware of the choices they are making yet. But being enterprising and choosing outdoor activities during breaks is something that the outdoor preschool is creating. Furthermore, in relation to children's learning environment, the parents of these families are aware that the outdoor preschools generally have smaller groups, which in turn means that the teachers have more time with each child. Moreover, children in outdoor preschools learn by playing outdoors, in which they learn not only to conduct safe play outdoors but also learn fine motor skills, inter-age teamwork and learn to see across gender norms by playing in what some of the parents described as nature being gender neutral. When this is taught from a young age, this creates the foundation which can help the children navigate the school environment. Also, investing in outdoor activities and outdoor pedagogy preschool helps set the foundation for the children and a lifelong connection with nature, nature play, and values connected to friluftsliv. As discussed in Chapter 9, the values ascribed to friluftsliv vary. Friluftsliv as a practice cultivates discipline, teamwork, and resilience. Moreover, investing in friluftsliv encourages children to do meaningful activities outside of school and to cultivate a long-term commitment to an active lifestyle. The results of this thesis show that parents' commitment is an important factor in motivating the children into the practices and values of friluftsliv. The children are taught independence and autonomy through friluftsliv, which is why outdoor preschool, and this autonomy is an important skill for children to explore their own identities as they grow up, both in activities associated with friluftsliv and others.

The skills that are taught in outdoor preschool and through friluftsliv, are, as we have seen so far, learning motor skills, social skills, and the ability to play independently. The values are closely linked to those of friluftsliv, which is also in connection to the choice of living rurally instead of in an urban setting. The calm environment that the countryside offers is also a closeness and

connectedness to nature, which the children incorporate into their life history. Therefore, friluftsliv is a part of cultural capital by cultivating resilience for and through education, for a long-term perspective.

## Suggestions for further research

This thesis has aimed to explore how families invest in their children's education by incorporating friluftsliv and to understand the motivating factors behind choosing outdoor pedagogy preschools. Moreover, this study has aimed to understand the values that parents ascribe to the practices associated with friluftsliv and the importance of cultivating the children's habit of staying active and the importance of closeness to the outdoors from an early age. From previous research explored in this study, we can see that there are many studies that try to map the definition of friluftsliv as a concept both in the school curriculum and in general. There have been international and Nordic studies and since friluftsliv is a part of the national curriculum, it is indeed an interesting concept to understand and to understand why it may be important to emphasize the learning criteria and move away from the rather vague description in today's curriculum. The families in this thesis have quite clear perspectives on what friluftsliv entails, indicating that perhaps further research into clarifying the physical education curriculum in regard to the friluftsliv part could be of interest. Some research has been done on teachers' perception of teaching friluftsliv, both qualified teachers and those still in teacher training. This thesis has tried to add a small piece of research to existing research in outdoor education and friluftsliv. However, further research into how a wider population may be reached would be interesting in order to get a deeper insight into why friluftsliv and outdoor groups studied in this thesis are particularly homogenous, or if indeed the definition is too narrow to include wider demography of the Swedish population, since, as we have seen in this thesis, the interviewed families are actively choosing an outdoor preschool and are involved in friluftsliv practices.



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## Appendix A - Interview Guide

### Interview guide for parents/guardians

Questions	Analytical purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe a typical weekend, what do you usually do? Who does what? Why?</li> <li>What are the family's interests?</li> <li>What kind of experience with different activities do the children/parents have?</li> <li>How do you get the children interested and excited about outdoor activities?</li> <li></li> </ul>	Interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How and who got you started with outdoor activities for children?</li> <li>What is important to children and parents?</li> <li>How have you benefited in your school education after these activities?</li> </ul>	What types of families are attracted to this type of activity?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you see the role of schools in this?</li> <li>Why do you think it is important for children to do this, to attend the groups?</li> <li>What does your preschool or school do for outdoor activities?</li> <li>How do you view school sports as a whole?</li> <li>What do you see as outdoor elements in school sports?</li> </ul>	Outdoor education in schools - what is the role of schools?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you live? (house/apartment...)</li> <li>Proximity/accessibility to outdoor activities?</li> <li>Occupation</li> </ul>	Social class, educational capital

## Appendix B – Observation Guide

What am I observing?	Analytical purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What does the site look like?</li> <li>- How big or small is the site?</li> <li>- What equipment is available or made available?</li> <li>- Can the children run freely (from traffic etc.)?</li> <li>- How do children use the space?</li> <li>- What are they using to play with?</li> <li>- How do they interact with the other children?</li> <li>- Who are involved with the activity?</li> <li>- Which activities are carried out?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the parents' experiences?</li> <li>- Why is the group important?</li> <li>- Are there similar elements in preschool/school?</li> <li>- How do parents describe the importance of these groups?</li> <li>- Who are the families who attend these groups?</li> </ul>	

## Appendix C - Formal information letter

### Information for parents/guardians

Hi! I would like to ask if you would like to participate in a master's study investigating different families' conditions and understanding of outdoor life in and outside of primary school. This document gives you information about the study and what it means to participate.

### What is the study?

The study on different families' conditions for outdoor life examines how families experience outdoor life both in school sports and how they experience outdoor life in their free time. The study aims to understand different families' perspectives on outdoor life and their experiences of activities linked to outdoor life education in school.

### How does the study work?

Participating in the study means that I will conduct an interview with you the parent. The interview will take roughly 30 - 45 minutes and, for the sake of flexibility, be done via Zoom or telephone, depending on what you feel comfortable with. Before the interview, I will first introduce myself and explain how the study works and that you have the right to interrupt the conversation at any time. During the interview, I will ask questions about previous experiences of outdoor life and what you associate outdoor life with.

### What happens to my data?

Participation in the study is completely voluntary! You can choose to withdraw your participation during and after the interview, until the publication of the study. The responses will be treated in such a way that no unauthorized persons can access them. The interviews will be partly transcribed, but no personal data or other recognizable factors will be included.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either me or my supervisor from the details below.

### Contact details

Bekhtha Allal, Master's student, Uppsala University

Telephone: 072 - 458 02 62

Email: [bekhta.allal.3833@student.uu.se](mailto:bekhta.allal.3833@student.uu.se)

Supervisor's contact details:

Ida Lidegran, Associate Professor in Sociology of Education.

Email: [ida.lidegran@edu.uu.se](mailto:ida.lidegran@edu.uu.se)

Telephone: 018-471 2487

## Appendix D – Social media post

Hi, I hope everyone is having a great day 😊 I'm writing with approval from the admin. I am a master's student at Uppsala University and am currently conducting an observation and interview study in the sociology of education, about different families' conditions for outdoor life in and outside of primary school.

I am looking for volunteers who are willing to participate in an interview! The conversation can take place by phone or Zoom/teams or in person if you live in Uppsala and the surrounding area. The interview takes about 30-45 minutes and is recorded with your approval, will only be listened to by me for transcription purposes and saved on an external hard drive for the safest possible storage. You will be completely anonymous in the study and may stop the interview at any time.

I will ask questions about, for example, what a typical week looks like for you, what interests there are in the family, why it is important to invest in outdoor activities, is there anything the school does well or can improve in outdoor activities.

Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of experience! Contact me via PM if you are interested or have questions about the interview 😊 Every participant is appreciated! Please also find attached a formal information sheet including contact details for me and my supervisor.

All the best,  
Bekhta

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## Master's thesis in Sociology of Education

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1. Ani-Asamoah Marbuah, Dina, 2016, Influence of Parental Income and Educational Attainment on Children's Years of Schooling: Case of Ghana.
2. Waddling, Jennifer, 2017, Preschool Personnel. Professionalisation in a Market Context: The Case of Uppsala.
3. Amoah, Richard, 2017, Family Assets, Habitus, and Pre-primary Education in Rural Ghana.
4. Rui, Dao, 2017, Transnational Educational Strategies of Chinese Students Who Choose a Less Popular Destination—Sweden.
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6. Ciziri, Nubin, 2018, Education in Conflict and Crisis. The case of Kurdish refugees from Syria in Turkey.
7. Lillo Cea, Pablo Antonio, 2018, Inherited and Acquired Assets in the Chilean Higher Education Admission Process.
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9. Li, Jin-Jin, 2018, Chinese Students at Uppsala University: "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow": A sociological analysis of ten students' trajectories.
10. Heywood, Philippa, 2019, Where do teachers teach? Choice strategies developed by Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in Greater Manchester.
11. Peters, Henry L., 2019, The Socialization and Cultivation of Children in Economic Elite Families in Recife. An Investigation of Family Educational Strategies.
12. Livmar, Ewa, 2020, A conflict of lifestyles and battle of time. International students in sustainable development at Uppsala University.
13. Bering, Henriette, 2020, An Even Playing Field? Patterns of Differentiation in the Biographical Backgrounds of American College Athletes.
14. Pratama, Stephen, 2020, Teaching Controversial History. Indonesian High School History Teachers' Narratives about Teaching Post-Independence Indonesian Communism.
15. Pappa, Dimitra, 2020, The Game of Success. Educational Strategies among Greek middle class parents in the education market of parapaedia.
16. Elham, Serajpoor, 2020, The Educational Space of Upper Secondary Schools in Malmö in 2012-2014.
17. Högkil, Lisa, 2020, The creative spark. A qualitative analysis of students' pathways to preparatory art schools using Bourdieusian concepts.
18. Huang, Ying, 2020, Urban and rural students. A qualitative study of the urban-rural divide among graduates from a "super high school" in China.
19. Borgstam, Alison, 2021, Preschool Teachers of Tomorrow. The trajectories, perception, and intentions of Sweden's preschool student teachers.
20. Cevallos, Ricardo, 2021, Rationalizing sociology as an educational strategy. Plurality of convictions and position-takings of sociology students in Swedish higher education.
21. Kestener, Helena, 2021, Making sense of children's mental illness and behaviours in school settings. Unravelling the cultural repertoires of school staff in Swedish compulsory education.



22. Wahls, Rina, 2022, Socio-Geographical Mobilities. A Study of Compulsory School Students' Mobilities within Metropolitan Stockholm's Deregulated School Market.
23. Bryntesson, André, 2022, Snedrekryteringens dimensioner. En kartläggning av forskningstraditioner inom studiet av sociala gruppers ojämlika deltagande i nordisk högre utbildning.
24. Kucharska, Paulina Katarzyna, 2023, Elite Education for the People? Nuances of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in Polish High Schools.
25. van de Peppel, Steijn, 2023, The State of the State of Education. An Analysis of the Development of Dutch Educational Discourse and its Reflection of the Formulation, Reinforcement, and Reproduction of Meritocratic Ideology.
26. Angela, Samantha, 2023, A Bourdieusian Perspective on Aruban Student Mobility. How Aruban students choose to become mobile through the Erasmus + program.
27. Allal, Bekhta Mirjam, 2023, Friluftsliv as a Cultivating Asset for Children's Educational Resilience. How Resource-strong Families Value and Invest in Friluftsliv for their Children.