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Recreation in the Outdoors—Exploring the Friluftsliv Experience of Adolescents at Residential Care

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ABSTRACT

Providing recreational activities is an important aspect of the intervention at residential care. We explore adolescents' experience of outdoor recreational activities organized by the care workers in the context of *friluftsliv* (literally: free-air-life). Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method is used to analyze eight interviews with adolescents from residential care homes. Our analysis reveals that their experience of *friluftsliv* is made up of three constituents, described as *Departure from everyday life*, *Shared experience*, and *Facing a different existence*. Our discussion investigates the qualities and challenges related to *friluftsliv* as recreational activities at residential care and relates to the literature on nature-based interventions in child and youth care.

KEYWORDS

Friluftsliv; outdoor recreation; out-of-home care; phenomenology; residential care

Adolescents placed in out-of-home care have typically been placed in such care due to challenging circumstances in their family or with regard to their own development. This may for instance include antisocial behavior and/or failure of care involving traumatic experiences in early childhood. They have a high risk of developing health-related problems, both somatic and emotional (Kääriälä & Hiilamo, 2017). One context which offers the opportunity to support personal growth and development is leisure time, during which adolescents can have the possibility to thrive and gain positive experiences and positive emotions (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Iwasaki et al., 2018). Leisure can provide an avenue for youth at risk to reinforce positive relationships and learn about self, others, and the world (Hopper & Iwasaki, 2017). Developing meaningful and healthy relationships is important for adolescents in care, as this is something they struggle more with compared to other adolescents (Gallagher & Green, 2012).

In the research literature, two different terms tend to be applied: “leisure activities” and “recreational activities”. In our understanding, both terms

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apply to activities that people do in their leisure time. Whereas, “leisure time” refers to time off from work, school, or other regular responsibilities, “leisure activities” and “recreational activities” refer to activities we choose to do to make our leisure time more interesting or enjoyable (Khasnabis et al., 2010). To avoid confusing leisure time with leisure activities we will use the term “recreational activities” throughout this article.

When they offer active engagement and experiences of positive emotions, recreational activities are linked to increased well-being (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Newman et al., 2014). Iwasaki (2008) argues that the benefits of recreational activities are 2-fold, they can promote well-being and help people deal with difficulties in life. For adolescents in residential care, recreation is part of the intervention, where the care workers support them in getting positive experiences. According to Säfvenbom and Sandahl (2000) children in care show a greater desire to do recreational activities in their private arena than in a public arena, unlike children who do not receive child welfare services. A recent study sheds some light on this matter, stating that marginalized youth often feel excluded from mainstream recreation (Hopper et al., 2019). Leisure time, during which we can engage in recreational activities, is considered a unique context because it is typically conceived of as freely chosen, autonomous/self-determined, and intrinsically motivated engagement (Iwasaki et al., 2018). How free our choice of recreation really is can be disputed, however, as this arguably depends on our cultural and personal background, gender, socialized leisure tastes, values, and personal aptitude (Stebbins, 2011). Säfvenbom and Sandahl (2000) point to the influence care-workers has, as children in care in their study favored self-involving activities in the presence of their care workers. Here self-involving is understood as a private initiative, as opposed to joining a sports team or other types of organized public activities. The authors suggest that this might indicate that children in care need guidance and support to find meaningful recreational activities.

We are exploring a particular context of recreational activities provided at two residential care homes in Norway, known as *friluftsliv* (literally: free-air-life). This is a highly valued recreational pursuit in Norway, where it is regarded as an important way of supporting one’s well-being and quality of life (Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2016). *Friluftsliv* as a concept concerns both recreational activities in the outdoors and our experience with, and relationship to, nature more broadly. Henderson & Vikander (2007) claims that the closest English translations, “outdoor recreation” and “outdoor life”, fail to capture the whole and precise meaning of *friluftsliv*. *Friluftsliv*, in a traditional sense, concerns feeling the joy of being in nature, being in harmony with the surroundings, and doing something meaningful (Henderson & Vikander, 2007). As described by Reed and Rothenberg

(1993) in their book *Wisdom in the Open air: The Norwegian roots of deep ecology*, Norwegian friluftsliv traditions have inspired a distinctly Norwegian branch of eco-philosophy, which has been influential internationally. Particularly central is Arne Naess (1912–2009), who is considered to be one of the founders of deep ecology. To Naess, as Breivik (2020, p. 6) points out, friluftsliv was not simply a matter of outdoor recreation, but “a deeper form of life in free nature” which could eventually contribute to “overcoming the ecological crisis” (2020, p. 10). In his main work on eco-philosophy, a chapter is devoted to friluftsliv (Naess, 1990, pp. 177–181, see also discussions of friluftsliv in Naess & Haukeland, 2002). Here he indicates guidelines for friluftsliv, which implies respecting nature, aiming for varied interaction with nature, a natural lifestyle, and taking the time to adjust when moving from an urban setting to “the stillness of nature” (Naess, 1990, p. 179). The Naess-inspired friluftsliv tradition has called for realizing a rich life by simple means. This involves taking a break from the hectic lifestyle many people usually have, aiming for connecting deeply with nature in the present moment with the use of as little technical equipment as possible (Naess, 1990).

One could argue that there is a significant discrepancy between such a philosophical ideal of friluftsliv and people’s day-to-day practice of friluftsliv in an increasingly more affluent society. In present-day Norway, the comfort and standard of cabins that are used for recreational purposes are in many cases approaching that of houses used for permanent residence. Although modern friluftsliv practices have been and continue to be evolving, we believe that the philosophical backdrop is still informative in regard to understanding friluftsliv practices and the values and ideas upon which they are based. The Naessian ideal could for instance serve as a measure of to what extent different friluftsliv practices are genuine in terms of their purpose and effects.

The practice of friluftsliv should be understood as a dynamic cultural phenomenon, continually evolving, with new patterns and activities emerging. Some examples are the increasing popularity of randonee skiing, sports climbing, and downhill biking. These exemplify a trend toward activities that require more specialized equipment and training, quite contrary to Naess’ ideals (though it must be remarked that as a mountaineer, even Naess engaged in the use of some specialized equipment, in contrast with his own stated ideals). The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, in their definition of friluftsliv as “physical activity in open spaces during leisure time to experience diverse natural environments and foster experiences of nature”, does not directly address the use of equipment (Gurholt & Broch, 2019). Nor do they address the issues related to what might interrupt or disturb our connection with nature. Short nature

hikes (<3 h) remain the main friluftsliv activity amongst the Norwegian population, followed by skiing and fishing/boating (Statistics Norway, 2021). Rather than limiting friluftsliv to specific activities that adhere to a strict standard, we adopt a broad view of friluftsliv which is more in line with contemporary practices. In doing this we maintain the importance of the Naessian ideal for friluftsliv whereas simultaneously being open to changing activity patterns in contemporary society.

In reviewing research on friluftsliv, we include research on related nature-based activities. The belief that nature can benefit our health and development has brought the use of nature into educational programs like Outward Bound (Outward Bound, 2018), and mental health treatment programs like Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001), Adventure Therapy (Gass et al., 2012), and Friluftsterapi (Ferneer et al., 2019). There is a range of different nature-based activities on offer, from treatment centers located in natural surroundings to weeklong hikes trekking through the wilderness. A variety of studies claim that contact with nature can be beneficial for health and development (Cutcliffe & Travale, 2016; Ferneer et al., 2019; Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2016; Ministry of Environment, 2010; Mutz & Müller, 2016; Steigen et al., 2016). Benefits that these studies point to include positive effects on our well-being, a feeling of having surplus energy in our everyday lives, decreased stress levels, reduced depressive symptoms, attention restoration, acceptance of self, and increased physical activity.

Harper (2017) performed a scoping review of outdoor adventure (OA), an umbrella term for different outdoor approaches, in the child and youth care (CYC) literature. He divides the different approaches into three categories: (a) wilderness and adventure therapy, (b) therapeutic camping, and (c) adventure education and physical activity. The friluftsliv practice of the care homes we studied can be placed in category c, which Harper (2017) describes as approaches comprised of OA activities that are built into other adolescent and youth care practices. We believe this category fits best as the OA activities we study are integrated into the everyday lives of the residential care homes. Friluftsliv is organized as recreational activities, not as therapy sessions. The lifestyle at the care homes is generally urbanized, but enriched by recreational friluftsliv activities on some holidays, weekends, or afternoons. This establishes a pattern that is not so different from the Norwegian lifestyle more generally, except for the institutional setting. Harper (2017) finds that many CYC practitioners engage in this type of OA and have been doing so for several years. These activities are, however, not recognized as an intentional intervention or as a form of programming, and they are under-appreciated in adolescent and youth care research (Harper, 2017). Most research on outdoor activities for adolescents and

youth comes from specialized interventions like wilderness therapy and therapeutic camping (Harper, 2017). In both cases, participants transfer back to their families, foster care, or residential care after the intervention. In the context of residential care homes in Norway, friluftsliv is an integral part of life at residential care, where outdoor activities are included as elements of everyday CYC practice. We want to stress that this creates a different context compared to interventions designed as therapy programmes. When nature is used in therapy, a lot of attention, both in the intervention and in the research, is paid to therapy and therapeutic outcomes (Bowen & Neill, 2013; Fernee et al., 2017; Tucker et al., 2018). In contrast, in the context of residential care, the intervention is largely focused on therapeutic parenting, meaning that the care workers strive to emulate the environment of an ordinary family home as a way of addressing the adolescents' developmental and nurturing needs (Gallagher & Green, 2012). In residential care, "ordinary" experiences, including ordinary recreational activities, are regarded as therapeutic, and achieving such experiences is in itself a success factor in this context. Attention is given to the adolescents' strengths and resources, whereas, "it is necessary to directly facilitate the development of the contexts and experiences that increase positive emotion and the development of the resources and capacities that support well-being" (Carruthers & Hood, 2007, p. 280). By analyzing and describing adolescents' experiences we are answering Carruthers and Hood's (2007, p. 281) call to examine the *quality* of friluftsliv as a recreational experience.

What kind of elements are utilized in OA practices to facilitate experiences that benefit the participants? There is a range of elements being utilized across OA practices, see Harper (2017, p. 69) for a summary. We want to highlight those that are relevant to our study, namely challenging opportunities, direct experience, supportive relationships, and awareness of self and others. The combination of challenging opportunities and supportive relationships is generally viewed as key ingredients in positive youth development (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004). According to Thurber et al. (2007), high-quality camps offer such experiences and also foster adolescents' agency through activities that provide the opportunity to take initiative, take risks, and develop mastery. Hall (2007) adds that by overcoming challenges youth can prove to themselves that they are capable of more than what they have been told by others.

In recent years research has been done in Norway based on findings from Friluftsterapi (FT), a Wilderness Therapy program at Sørlandet Hospital in Southern Norway. FT was offered as a stand-alone, outpatient, and voluntary group treatment for adolescents aged 16–18 years who were referred to mental health care at the Department of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (Abup) (Fernee, 2019). This is a ten-week program that

includes both single-day sessions and overnight trips, combining individual and group-based therapeutic work with basic outdoor life. Fernee (2019) proposes that nature, understood as the wilderness, is a core therapeutic factor of wilderness therapy. Drawing on field work and interviews with participants in the FT program, she found that venturing outdoors serves as a catalyst for change by reducing the participants' resistance toward treatment and that providing an unfamiliar and neutral therapeutic context can help participants to be more open to new experiences. She observes that the contrast that the wilderness setting pose, when compared to the urbanized everyday lives of the adolescents, is important for this catalytic effect. Further, she finds that time spent in the wilderness can aid the participants in reconnecting with self, others and nature. Referring to studies showing unprecedented levels of maladjustment and loneliness, Fernee (2019) also argues that advances in technology, e.g., smart phones and social media, have worrying effects on the mental health of the current generation of children. Relatedly, Gabrielsen and Harper (2017) proposes that time spent in nature, and connecting with nature, can alleviate the negative effects associated with increasing dependency on digital activities and online connectivity.

Duerden (2012) conducted qualitative interviews with 11–15 year-old pupils that participated in a 2-week adventure recreation program. The participants highlight the importance of new and novel experiences, overcoming challenges, and supportive relationships with staff and peers. Participants describe the staff as supportive and caring, and mention that they appreciate the opportunity to do things at their own pace and to be supported and motivated, rather than pushed, into activities (Duerden et al., 2012). Caulkins et al. (2006) interviewed six troubled adolescent females (aged 15–16) going on a 6-week wilderness therapy program involving daily hikes. Participants experienced reflection, perceived competence, and accomplishment (Caulkins et al., 2006). Participants also described enhanced awareness of self and others. Backpacking gave them ample time to reflect, observe the natural surroundings, and/or socialize with others in the hiking group. Social interaction facilitated therapeutic insights, particularly during moments of emotional distress, enhancing participants' feeling of connection with peers and therapists. Several participants also mentioned that they developed a sense of timelessness which they attributed to backpacking. The unstructured and distraction-free nature of their backpacking experience, potentially relieved some of the pressure of everyday life. Caulkins et al. (2006) highlight that some young women appeared to benefit less from the backpacking than others, with several participants expressing sincere dislike for the entire endeavor. Fernee (2019) similarly remarks that participants in her study differed in how they responded to the FT program, suggesting a

connection between the perceived degree of contrast to everyday life and the element of challenge that is inherent in venturing outdoors.

To summarize, important elements being utilized across different nature-based practices are challenging opportunities, direct experience, supportive relationships, time away from distractions, and awareness of self and others. Spending time in nature is used as an aid to connect with self, others, and nature. This process of connection was also understood as disconnecting from parts of our modern lifestyle that may have a negative effect on our mental health.

Whereas, studies from other contexts are useful, we believe it is necessary to examine the experience of youth from residential care specifically. Our purpose is to assess the qualities and challenges related to friluftsliv as recreational activities at residential care. Our research questions are:

1. What constitutes the friluftsliv experience for youth at residential care?
2. What kinds of recreational experience do friluftsliv activities in nature afford at residential care?

The first research question will be approached by the use of descriptive phenomenology, as explained in the next section. The findings will in turn be the starting point for our discussion about friluftsliv as recreational activities at residential care. The discussion is sorted under four headings: *Novel experience*, *threshold of self-discovery*, *social bonding*, and *nature experience and the friluftsliv ideal*. Under the first three headings, we discuss how our data relate to relevant findings from the body of available research literature. Under the final heading, we comment on the relevance of using the Naessian friluftsliv concept in studies of the modern practice of outdoor activities in residential care.

Materials and methods

We use a descriptive phenomenological approach, which builds on humanistic traditions within psychology, a perspective known for looking at the whole individual and sources of well-being, rather than merely focusing on illness and dysfunction (Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenology is particularly concerned with how a phenomenon, such as friluftsliv, is experienced. Using phenomenology, we aim at explicating the meaning structure of friluftsliv, providing a description of what this experience is like. Whereas, phenomenology does not provide causal statements, it does provide an understanding of what it is like to experience a given phenomenon.

We have gathered lifeworld accounts from participants in our study by performing in-depth interviews focused on their experiences in nature. As

is well-known, the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) as a term was first introduced by Husserl (1970), and concerns how we, in our everyday lives, experience the world firsthand independently of any theorizing. Our lifeworld constitutes a pre-reflective and immediate experience of the world, a world we normally take as given. In other words, it concerns our everyday experience of the world as we go about our lives. Our lifeworld is social and historical because we communicate with others and our way of life has been developed and passed down from others before us (Schutz, 2005). In our view, phenomenology's analysis of lifeworld experience is valuable for understanding adolescents' experiences of friluftsliv at residential care, as it relies on how participants perceive their circumstances.

The first author undertook participant observation, visiting two different care homes in Norway as they engaged in friluftsliv activities. Giorgi (2009) highlights the importance of the researcher, during analysis, being imaginatively present to the situations that the participants describe. With this in mind, having accompanied the participants during their outdoor activities strengthens our ability to analyze their descriptions. The observations that were made also informed the interview guide. Doing the initial interviews, the first author noticed that the adolescents had an easier time answering questions concerning specific situations. Spending time with the participants also gave an opportunity to build rapport with them, which is critical in phenomenological research (Giorgi, 2009) and when researching adolescents and youth (Ryder et al., 2017).

Data collection

The first author joined two different care homes on cabin outings during the winter and Easter holidays and conducted eight interviews with adolescents. These interviews comprise the data material for this article. In addition to describing the sampling process, we include a brief description of the setting to familiarize the reader with the friluftsliv context at residential care.

The care homes were selected based on purposeful criterion sampling (Guest et al., 2013), searching for adolescents in care who had experience with our phenomenon of interest (Giorgi, 2009). The first author contacted The Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat), who are responsible for establishing and running residential care institutions in Norway (<https://bufdir.no>). Bufetat approves state as well as private care institutions, assessing the institutions' ability to address the specific needs of the adolescents they care for. Bufetat relayed contact information to care homes that actively use friluftsliv as part of their intervention. The two care homes selected were the only care homes that reported back that they wanted to participate and that stated that friluftsliv was an essential part of

their approach. Both care homes report that they comply with Bufetat's requirement that a minimum of 50% of staff must be qualified social workers (with a 3-year bachelor's degree). The rest of the staff come within a range of other relevant degrees or other relevant experience, particularly within friluftsliv. At care home A it was the staff that chose the relevant unit within the care home, and the first author only met the three adolescents living there after the staff had made sure that the adolescents were willing to take part in the study. The control was given over to the care workers because they know the adolescents and can safeguard their needs. At care home B the first author joined staff and adolescents on cabin trips where most of the adolescents were expected to participate. For different reasons, there were several adolescents that ended up not going on the trip, and there were also some who went but did not want to do interviews. All participants that were present on the trips were invited to do interviews. The main criterion for inclusion was that they had been present on at least one friluftsliv outing with the care home. The adolescents represent a variety of cultural backgrounds, and they also differ regarding how familiar they were with friluftsliv.

Both care homes focus primarily on adolescents 12 years and older, as younger adolescents placed in out-of-home care normally enter foster care. Care home A houses 10–15 adolescents, spread across different units. The unit that the first author visited involved three adolescents, two girls, and one boy, age 14–17. The adolescents had been placed there by child welfare services as care takeover, or as assistance measures because parents could not provide sufficient care. The duration of their stay varies from months to years, depending on when they can return to their parents or move to foster care. Care home B houses 20–25 adolescents spread across different units. They are placed there by adolescent welfare services because of severe behavioral misconduct and/or substance abuse. The duration of their stay is initially up to one year, with the possibility of extension. Five adolescents from this care home, three boys and two girls, age 16–19, participated in interviews. This brings the total number of participants up to eight adolescents, four boys, and four girls, age 14–19.

Each care home facilitated trips to backcountry cabins to pursue friluftsliv activities. Even though the degree of wilderness or remoteness varies, each cabin and location make nature experiences easily accessible. At both care homes the adolescents could choose between the relative comforts of the cabin, and to engage with the outdoors to varying extents. Care home A went to the same cabin twice. It had electrical power and was situated in a cottage area near the roadway. Care home B went to two different cabins, each reached by a snowmobile ride, 10–20 km into national parks offering wild and relatively untouched nature. These cabins were simpler, relying on

solar power and a power generator for electricity and running water. The generator only ran mornings and afternoons/evenings. The whereabouts and style of these cabins illustrate how different friluftsliv contexts can be. Staff organized a range of different activities, like cross country ski hikes, snowmobile rides, sleeping outdoors, eating outdoors, sleigh races, and playing in the snow. Participation in the different activities was optional.

The interviews were conducted in the cabins. The adolescents were informed in advance that we wanted to learn more about their experience of friluftsliv. Each adolescent joined the interview voluntarily and signed a consent form. NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data) approved our procedure for handling research data and making sure participants made a voluntary and informed decision to participate (project number 368276). Participants did not receive compensation for their efforts, as we wanted their decision to volunteer for the interview to be genuine. All interviews happened in a room with only the adolescent and the interviewer present, but with care workers and the other peers nearby. The first author used a semi-structured interview guide with themes centered on the adolescents' experience of friluftsliv. The interviewer asked the adolescents to describe their experiences in detail, elaborating on events and what the experience was like. The goal of the interviews was to get "as complete a description as possible of the experience that a participant has lived through" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 122). Examples of questions: (A) Can you describe something that made an impression, good or bad, on you today? (B) What do you like to do when you are doing friluftsliv activities? (C) Can you tell me about something the others (peers or adults) did that made the excursion better or worse? (D) Is there something about nature that made an impression, good or bad, on you?

Analysis

Eight Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the first author, who followed Giorgi's four-step method for descriptive phenomenological analysis (2009). Step one is to read the transcribed material to get a sense of the whole. In phenomenological analysis, it is important that the researcher assumes the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction. This involves bracketing, which means that the researcher should withhold his or her own pre-understanding and theoretical knowledge (2009), and implies staying with the data as they are given by the participants. The goal of our analysis is to investigate how friluftsliv is experienced by the participant whereas moving between the data material as a whole and its various elements. Giorgi describes this the following way: "One gets the sense of the whole while sensitively discriminating the intentional objects of the

lifeworld description provided by the participant” (2009, p. 128–129). What we are interested in is how *friluftsliv*, as a phenomenon, appears in our participants’ lifeworld descriptions.

Step two is to determine meaning units by marking the material every time the researcher senses a shift in the meaning of the experience. Examples from our data are participants describing how they experience sleeping outdoors, where the first author would make a mark as their descriptions shift from the details of their surroundings to their perception of the social atmosphere. This is a spontaneous activity that is determined experientially rather than intellectually. The meaning units should be sensitive to the goal of the analysis, which is to get close to the meaning of the *friluftsliv* experience expressed in a psychological perspective (Giorgi, 2009).

Step three is to transform each meaning unit containing the participants’ lifeworld expressions into a language that carefully describes the intuitive psychological meanings experienced by the participant. By psychological aspects, Giorgi (2009) refers to how a participant constitutes his lifeworld. Examples from our data are how participants describe their physical and social surroundings, and how this affects their experience and course of action. The participants can describe the same psychological meaning using different words or examples. The researcher uses a procedure of free imaginative variation to make sure that the transformation leads to higher-level categories that describe something essential about the experience without relying on contingent facts (Giorgi, 2009, p. 131–132). This is done by mentally removing one aspect of the phenomenon tentatively. If this removal radically alters the given experience, we are getting close to an essential aspect. If the experience does not change, we have probably identified a contingent part. The researcher is moving from a rich and complex lifeworld perspective and then trying to tease out the psychological meaning embedded within it. This includes rendering implicit factors explicit. Transformation also aims to generalize the data to a certain degree so that it becomes easier to integrate data from various participants into one and the same structure. After each unit has been transformed, the researcher compares it to the data contained in the meaning unit to make sure that the transformed meaning unit does not leave out anything important.

Step four is to scan all the transformed meaning units and write up the structure of the experience. The structure usually consists of several key constituent meanings and is intended to present only the essence of the experience. The constituents can only be fully understood in relation to the context they derive from. Together they constitute a complete whole. Themes from a thematic analysis are, in comparison, more loosely connected and not necessarily shared by all participants. A key test of the structure amounts to checking whether the structure collapses when a constituent is removed

(Giorgi, 2009, p. 166). This amounts to removing one constituent at a time, checking if the remaining structure still gives a faithful account of the descriptions given by the participants. Whereas, each transformed meaning unit represents a partial analysis, the structure takes a more holistic perspective and provides an overview of the whole description (Giorgi, 2009, p. 167). In principle, the structure applies to more individuals than the persons upon which it was based. According to Giorgi the meaning structure highlights the psychological understanding of the lifeworld phenomenon (2009, p. 199). Giorgi stresses that such an analysis can never grasp the totality of the original experience as it has a narrower focus that leaves out anything that is not psychologically relevant. What the meaning structure provides is the insight that can help make sense of the data collected and the variations we find within it (Giorgi, 2009). The structure represents a central tendency but does not offer any final word regarding findings.

The quality of our research depends on the richness of the descriptions in the data, and on our ability to compose a structure that captures the essential aspects of the adolescents' experience (Giorgi, 2009). The fact that the first author spent time with participants during fieldwork on the friluftsliv outings can impact the analysis positively. The field work provides intimate familiarity with the circumstances of the participants' friluftsliv activities, which makes the first author more sensitive to the viewpoint of the participants. Giorgi (2009, p. 154) argues that such sensitivity is important during analysis but emphasizes that identity with the other is not the goal. Participants were not invited to review the transcripts or the analysis. The custom in phenomenological research is that the analysis is the researcher's product and responsibility. The analysis relies on the researcher's transformation of the material rather than the exact wording of the participants (Giorgi, 2009).

Results

The adolescents' experience of friluftsliv at residential care is constituted by the following three constituents: *Departure from everyday life*, *Shared experience*, and *Facing a different existence*. These constituents make up the structure of the experience, which is presented below. As this is the essence of the experience, it is described as belonging to the ideal, or generalized, participant. Once we have presented the structure, we give a detailed description of each constituent separately, relating them to findings from our data.

Departure from everyday life

The adolescent's friluftsliv experience signifies a departure from everyday life. She has a sense that friluftsliv offers something unique and novel that

also means leaving the known and familiar everyday life at residential care behind. She experiences coming closer to nature and noticing how the natural environment looks and feels different compared to everyday life at the care home. The adolescent describes feeling an incentive to fill her days with varied and novel activities and to spend more time outdoors. This can lead to a range of feelings, from playfulness and excitement to trepidation and insecurity.

Shared experience

The adolescent is perceptive of her peers' and care workers' attitudes toward friluftsliv, as the atmosphere in the social group affects her own experience. She perceives the social atmosphere as generally warmer and more inclusive during friluftsliv, compared to life at the care home. She enjoys feelings of inclusion, belonging, and bonding when she senses that people are available and actively engaged in each other. At the same time, she is wary of negativity, rejection, and non-supportive attitudes amongst the others.

Facing a different existence

The adolescent experiences not merely to leave everyday life, but also that she needs to face her new surroundings. Being inside a cabin serves as a gateway, bringing her close to the outdoor environment and the activities happening there. Whereas, she has gained access to the outdoors, she has temporarily lost some of her physical and virtual access to familiar everyday territories. The adolescent experiences that it requires an effort to cross the threshold and actively engage in the outdoor activities and the outdoor environment.

As mentioned in the Materials and Methods section, the proposed structure should be tested by checking whether it collapses when a constituent is removed (Giorgi, 2009, p. 166). "Departure from everyday life" constitutes the part of the experience that relates to leaving behind what is known and familiar. Our participants describe different expectations of the friluftsliv outings, but they all expect them to be different from everyday life. All the descriptions contain a sense of leaving behind certain components of the life they are used to. Removing this constituent would mean missing out on experiences and feelings that arise when the adolescents change the environment, and on expectations that build-up before an outing.

"Shared experience" constitutes the social part of the experience. Throughout the descriptions, our participants comment on how the experience of social relations is different during friluftsliv, e.g., by feeling more

connected. Their descriptions indicate that the experience of friluftsliv is shaped through a social lens. Removing this constituent would mean missing out on both the social dependency and the social connection that all participants describe.

“Facing a different existence” constitutes the experience of friluftsliv as something that the participants are necessarily affected by. Given that everyday life as they know it is temporarily out of reach, our participants describe a sense of having to relate to their new surroundings. Removing this constituent would mean missing out on the participants’ experience of being actively involved in the friluftsliv setting. Even those participants that mainly stayed inside the cottages describe how they inevitably needed to relate to their new surroundings.

Departure from everyday life

Going away on an outing signifies a departure from everyday life, leaving behind what is familiar. The adolescents build up expectations during the days leading up to an outing and during the drive up to the destination. One boy describes how his attitude and expectations changed during a snowmobile ride that took him from the car parking lot, through the wilderness to the cabin:

Interviewer: I can recall, before we left, you were a bit undecided. You kind of wanted to join, but weren’t completely sure.

Boy P4: Yeah, to be honest I wasn’t so keen on this trip. But I tried to keep it to myself, didn’t want to ruin the holiday for myself or for anybody else. I kind of tried to motivate myself to join this trip. And then we got into the car, and it was ok.

Interviewer: Yes.

Boy P4: Then we were on the snowmobile and immediately I thought, “This is gonna be cool”.

The snowmobile ride serves as a good example of how a novel experience grabs their attention and gives them the experience of doing something different from everyday life. The snowmobile exemplifies how this change in attitude can happen quite abruptly and forcefully, taking the adolescents by surprise. Whereas, a snowmobile ride can be viewed as an activity, the scenery and surroundings themselves can also make it a novel experience. Examples that participants highlights are beautiful landscapes or a starry night sky—which is very different when the view of the night sky is not polluted by city lights. Being situated in natural surroundings allows the participants to notice the looks and feel of the natural environment. When asked about memorable moments, one of the girls (P3) said:

“Just to see this whole place, it looks like the world’s end or something. It is very beautiful, wow, the whole place is kinda like a fairytale”.

When the adolescents enjoyed friluftsliv, they tended to perceive it as a unique experience, offering activities and atmosphere that they don’t get in every-day life:

Boy P4: I think the winter holiday has been very good. There’s been a good atmosphere and we have done many fun things. Sleeping in a lavvu, I have done many things that I don’t normally do in the weekdays.

Spending a night outdoors, getting more time to experience natural surroundings, further heightens their experience of doing something unique:

I: How is it different to wake up outdoors, compared to waking up inside your room?

Girl P1: Because it is so boring (inside). You wake up, you see the same four white walls every day.

I: Ok, and outdoors you wake up to ...

Girl P1: Something different. Something nice.

Going away for a weekend or a holiday represents a noticeable change compared to the familiarity of everyday life. These changes can give rise to a range of feelings, from joy and excitement to trepidation and insecurity. At one care home, several adolescents ran away before a trip. One boy also ran away during a trip. Whereas, we are left to speculate on the reasons for running away, it is safe to assume that these adolescents did not anticipate that these outings would bring them a positive experience. But even though adolescents might be skeptical before a trip, their attitudes can change. The outing, where the interview took place, was P2’s second outing with the care home. He has reluctantly joined and does not express very high hopes before the trip:

Boy P2: This week has actually been better than I thought. I actually thought it was gonna be a shitty experience, but it actually turned out to be kind of decent.

Interviewer: What did you imagine beforehand?

Boy P2: I don’t really know. Just felt the whole thing was gonna be crappy, I didn’t even remotely wish to participate on this trip.

Interviewer: What has been good about this trip?

Boy P2: I don’t know. I just pick up on a kind of positive attitude, in a way. It’s kinda been, I don’t really like snow and stuff [...]. I have tried cross-country skiing, walked to the lavvu. I have filled my days with something, compared to what I usually do at the care home. At the care home I usually don’t, there isn’t a whole lot happening there.

The boy from the example above was positively surprised when he discovered that going away to a cabin was not as bad as he had feared. Leaving behind the familiarity of everyday lives and entering a context they are not familiar with can be unsettling. Our participants, like P2, describe a friluftsliv outing as consisting of varied physical activities, more time spent outdoors, and enjoying the company of the others. They describe feeling motivated to participate in different activities and gain new experiences during a friluftsliv outing:

Interviewer: How is it different to be you at the care home, compared to being on an outing?

Girl P1: At the care home I am different because there you lose ... All we do at the care home is to sit inside, play cards, go out and feed the horses. We don't go outdoors so often ... but I don't know. You lose the motivation to go out there, because all you want to do is stay in bed. But here, I do spend some time in bed, that I do. But I do go outdoors as well.

Our participants experience a friluftsliv outing as a departure from everyday life at the care home. They describe a felt incentive, or expectation, to be active and fill their days with varied activities. According to the participants, the change in setting also leads to a change in mindset. As they leave the care homes behind, they also leave some of their habits behind, feeling more inclined to engage in the activities on offer. A combination of the natural surroundings and the activities on offer underscores the uniqueness and novelty of the experience. Both are different from what the participants are used to, giving them an experience of leaving their everyday lives behind. The new setting can be motivating for some, and daunting for others. Whereas, some adolescents ran away before the outings, others went along but participated in few, if any, activities.

Shared experience

Peers and care workers have a bearing on each adolescent's experience, through both their general attitude and their relations. Many participants describe a sense that, during friluftsliv, the social group seems to get into a positive mood and share a common attitude of having a good time together. They perceive the social atmosphere as generally warmer and more inclusive during friluftsliv, compared to life at the care home:

I: How is a weekend here compared to a weekend at the care home?

Girl P6: Here I don't have Internet ... all of us are kinda together here. At the care home we just sit with our phone, and everyone stays in their rooms. But here we are gathered in the living room and we play boardgames and we are outside all day.

I: Is it the Internet that makes it different?

Girl P6: Yes. Nobody dares to spend 4 G [mobile data], so ... And now it's much nicer to spend time with the others. You bond better. Just like in the summer, because then we are on the beach every day. And then we are together, and we DO things together.

The positive atmosphere in the group influences each individual's experience. When people are available for each other, being together becomes more attractive and fun. Many participants described how they gather in the common areas to play board games or hang out together:

I: How does being on an outing together affect your relationships with the other adolescents?

P1: Well, you get to know people better. Because at the care home people aren't always gathered. People go about their own business, you know ... When you're here, then, I dunno, you get to know people better. It becomes more like a proper family outing.

A few adolescents suggested that people might be gathered more because there are less distractions, with the Internet suggested as the main culprit in everyday life. They experience that people are socially aware and available to each other. Participants describe it as a positive experience when they share good moments and feel present in each other's lives. The adolescents narrate how this is a different experience compared to the residential care home, where they have a notion of sometimes living parallel lives:

Boy P7: On a weekend [at the care home] we don't gather in the living room to watch a movie. I am up in my room ... the girls are in their rooms ... we are not gathered. But here [at the cabin] we are together, so here it's easier to do things together.

The participants also expressed appreciation for both giving and receiving support in their relations with peers and care workers:

Boy P5: I think maybe people have appreciated my positivity. That I've been in a good mood and been happy. And lots of laughter and a positive atmosphere. I think especially the adults have appreciated that.

Doing something meaningful for others, and doing things together, allows for bonding. One girl (**P6**) describes her best memory from a trip, where she and a care worker did a hike on cross-country skis. It was an exclusive experience to her, as this was something that only the two of them shared; "It was only me and the care worker. It is only us that enjoy cross country skiing". Often it's not about the activity itself, rather it's about sharing it with someone:

Boy P7: Some of the girls here say things like [P7 imitates his peers with enthusiasm in his voice:] "Whoo-hoo, come on, come on!". When I go downhill skiing, I always try to challenge another girl who lives here to race me down the hill. To get some competition. I think it can be fun to beat those that are a little bit older than myself in a race.

The social climate can be inspiring and joyful, and it can also affect the adolescents' perceptions of what they see as viable recreational activities. The girl (P6) who enjoys skiing described how her physical and social environment changed her perception of recreational possibilities:

Girl P6: It was a bit hard to keep up the interest [in skiing] when I lived with my mom. But when I lived in foster care and at residential care, then there's kinda been more opportunities for skiing. It's more fun and there are more people that can do it together.

The girl described how she did not really consider skiing a viable recreational pursuit when she lived with her mother, and that she saw the increased opportunity as she moved to foster and residential care. Her experience shows how the social environment can inspire and broaden the scope of possibilities. This same girl described how a care worker has challenged her to go a certain length on cross-country skis before the season ends, and how she is now looking forward to take an extra weekend trip to the cabin so that she can reach her goal.

Whereas, a positive mood can feel arousing or inspiring, the adolescents describe feeling equally disheartened when they feel rejected. The first author witnessed a girl asking a care worker to borrow a snowboard, as she wanted to join him and a group of adolescents that were playing on a ski jump. The care worker did not want to lend her his snowboard and said he was afraid the board would be damaged. The girl then turned around and went straight back inside the cabin. When asked about the incident during an interview, she said:

Girl P3: So I got annoyed. It was their snowboard, and they were scared of it breaking. Or, I don't know what. But then I got annoyed because I wasn't able to try it.

This was experienced as a very direct rejection by the people who are there to support P3. Sometimes the adolescents picked up on a general mood of negativity, like when others complained and openly expressed their disdain. One of the boys (P5) explained that he preferred spending his time with the care workers and that he could notice how his peers shut him out. Our participants describe friluftsliv outings as a shared experience where they feel close to both peers and care workers. On the one hand, this allows for bonding and shared experiences. On the other hand, this puts adolescents in a vulnerable position, where negativity or rejection from others can make the experience more difficult.

Facing a different existence

As stated earlier, the adolescents describe their experiences of friluftsliv as a departure from their everyday environment. Upon arrival at the

destination, they now have to face their new surroundings and figure out how to relate to the possibilities and limitations that follow. Whereas, joining activities is optional, they have a choice between spending their days inside the cabin or venturing into the outdoors. Even staying inside the cabins is different from life at the residential care home. Life in a cabin reduces their possibility to move around, possibly invoking feelings of being stuck. As they find themselves in this new location, such feelings can provide an incentive to go outdoors and check out the nature nearby:

Girl P8: There is kind of a bit more things to do outdoors here, than there is indoors in a way. Because there isn't Internet and stuff. So it's like, easier to come up with something to do outdoors then.

Our participants describe that they have limited options of finding ways to pass time inside a cabin. A combination of fewer distractions and a lack of alternatives make the outdoors more attractive to them. Many of our participants mention spending time outdoors as a positive highlight from their outings. They also describe a felt need or expectation to seize the opportunity and go outdoors:

I: Are there other things that have made this outing good?

Boy P5: It's really the fact that I've been outdoors, that I've been able to be outdoors. Pushed myself more to go out. Since we are on a holiday now, right. Now we have the chance to be outdoors. At the care home it's more like, that's our home. Then you have other things to do as well, inside. You know, then you can be a bit more by yourself. You can go and do your own things. While here it's like you have the chance and a real opportunity to go outdoors. So it's, well, that I have been outdoors a lot. I've done many different things.

P5 describes himself as an outdoorsy person who enjoys friluftsliv, but he still remarks that engaging in outdoor activities requires efforts on his behalf – he has to push himself. Our participants describe engaging in outdoor activities as challenging. Even if there are fewer options inside, it can still be difficult for the adolescents to join the outdoor activities:

Boy P7: I can be very slow to put on outdoor clothes. And I'm like: "No, I don't wanna go outside". So it takes me a long time to get out. But once I'm out, it's like, "oh, this was great", and I don't want to come back inside.

Our participants express an appreciation for being outdoors, as this brings a much-needed variation compared to staying inside a whole day. **P8** was asked about her best moments from the current outing.

Girl P8: That the care worker took me for a ride on the snowmobile. That was fun, just to be outdoors, to get out. It felt good to get out and be outdoors for a little while... Because I know how boring it can be to just stay inside the whole time. You get bored and like, "what are we gonna do now?" So it's kinda good to be outdoors and get some variation.

Often our participants cannot explain why they choose to go outdoors and get engaged in activities and projects. They use descriptions like “it just felt right”, or “I just wanted to do it”. Once they are outdoors, they notice the nature around them and get fascinated by it.

I: Is there something about nature that you notice, or that makes an impression on you?

Boy P7: The sun, and at least when there is snow it kinda looks like there are tiny diamonds in the snow. It's the same when, if you have ever been out in a boat, you notice what looks like tiny pearls in the water. Since det sunshine reflects in the water.

Another example is the girl P1 that commented on the starry night sky, as it was viewed at night sleeping in a lavvu. The area was in the wilderness, with no light pollution, so she could notice a sky full of stars—very different from how the night sky looks from areas closer to the cities:

Girl P1: It [the night sky] was magical. It was really nice, just wanted to ... It felt like you are being pulled out into another galaxy.

Our participants experience their friluftsliv outings as a step away from their everyday life where they need to relate to a new setting with different possibilities and limitations. Life in a cabin limits their distractions and gives the adolescents fewer and different options for passing the time. There is no Internet, so adolescents cannot retreat to their own virtual worlds to pass time. They find themselves in a situation that is clearly different from everyday life. Passing time, the adolescents are left with the option of doing things inside the cabin or outside the cabin. When options inside are limited, the outdoors is more attractive. And once they venture outdoors, they start noticing the environment that surrounds them.

Discussion

As our results section showed, the friluftsliv experience for youth at residential care is constituted by *Departure from everyday life*, *Shared experience*, and *Facing a different existence*. The structure only presents the essence of the friluftsliv experience, not all of the ramifications of the experience in a detailed way (Giorgi, 2009). The purpose of our discussion is to unpack the ramifications based on the constituents to assess what kinds of recreational experiences the friluftsliv activities afford. The discussion is organized under four different headings, depicting different kinds of recreational experiences. The first three are (in order of appearance): *Novel experiences*, *Being on the threshold of self-discovery*, and *Social bonding*. Under the final heading, *Nature experience and the friluftsliv ideal*, we

discuss the relevance of using the Naessian *friluftsliv* concept to understand experiences from modern practices of outdoor activities at residential care.

Novel experiences

Departure from everyday life and *facing a different existence* are integral parts of the *friluftsliv* experience, made possible in part due to the novelty of both the environment and the activities provided through the *friluftsliv* context. Our participants describe the joy of trying new and different games and activities, as the activities they normally do at the care homes may lose their appeal over time. The novelty of going on an outing and leaving everyday life behind can inspire adolescents to engage with their new environment. Examples are adolescents finding their own hills for skiing or sleighing, spending a night outdoors, and enjoying the landscapes and the starry night sky. Having direct experience with nature is highlighted by many participants as a novel experience. Those participants that slept outdoors comment on how different it feels to come closer to nature, as shown by P1's experience of waking up after a night outdoors and P4's remarks about the night sky. Our participants describe that they experience a noticeable difference, that being on a *friluftsliv* outing is a novel experience that offers something different than everyday life at the care home. Another example is P3's description of the natural surroundings as majestic and fairy tale-like. This supports Fernee's findings (2019) that adolescents perceive the natural environment as a contrast. How the adolescents react to this contrast differs, as it can both lead to attraction and be a deterrent. Research on youth-at-risk suggests that this group overall lacks experience from *friluftsliv* activities compared to adolescents in general (Gurholt et al., 2020). This adds to the importance of managing expectations and exposing them to *friluftsliv* experiences so that they can actively choose whether or not to pursue this interest going forward.

Whereas, the natural surroundings play a part in shaping their experiences, there can also be other contributing factors. The *friluftsliv* outings organized by the care homes are experienced as a holiday, as they happen during weekends and other holidays. Whether this experience is due to the cultural connotations of *friluftsliv* or a holiday-induced mood, we cannot say. What is clear is that our participants express a changed attitude and that they are getting prepared to try new things. Our participants express the novelty of the activities on offer and a felt need to seize the opportunity to have these experiences. They also report that getting engaged in novel activities can be daunting. Hopper et al. (2019) also address the comfort zone and report that their participants point to the importance of both feeling in control and being pushed out of their comfort zone. Judging by our

participants' descriptions, it seems that the novelty of the situation leads them to push themselves.

Both the natural surroundings and the activities can give experiences of instant "WOW-factors". By this, we mean an experience that forcefully grabs adolescents' attention with the power to astonish them, such as a snowmobile ride or a sky full of stars. The attitude of adolescents who are initially hesitant can sometimes change following a powerful or awe-some experience.

Being on the threshold of self-discovery

The friluftsliv setting, which provides novelty, lack of distractions, and reduced access to familiar territory, make the adolescents encounter something different from what they are used to in everyday life at the care home. Encountering this difference puts adolescents on the threshold of self-discovery. The outcome depends on how they react to the limitations and possibilities they are presented with. Our findings show how the participants handle this encounter in different ways; some stay inside a cabin most of the time, some run away before or during an outing, some end up joining many activities despite feeling very reluctant at the start, and others describe pushing themselves and putting in a lot of effort to join activities they already expected to enjoy. Being exposed to new activities, environments and settings put the adolescents on the threshold of self-discovery, but the outcome is not given in advance.

Iwasaki (2008) mentions self-discovery as an example of human development and the learning one attains through recreational activities. In search of a good fit for an activity, our findings point to friluftsliv as a setting that can potentially provide the opportunity and also the attitude needed to expand adolescents' repertoire of activities. A friluftsliv outing presents many possible ways for adolescents to discover new interests and capabilities, given that they participate and get involved. Our participants describe doing things they don't normally do (P4), filling their days with activities for a change (P2), and pushing themselves to go out (P5). They describe how the lack of Internet during outings reduces their options for passing time inside the cabins. This makes it more attractive to explore possibilities outdoors. Both Fernee (2019) and Gabrielsen and Harper (2017) have argued that friluftsliv can remedy the negative effects associated with increased dependency on digital activities and online connectivity. Judging by our participants' descriptions, Internet serves as a distraction, and the adolescents have a sense of getting more involved and doing more varied activities when they don't have online access. In the friluftsliv setting, one could argue that the friluftsliv activities become more attractive partly due

to a lack of better alternatives. The limitations of the setting are what help the adolescents take advantage of the outdoor activities that they might not otherwise consider to engage in.

Let's consider those adolescents that do not wish to do friluftsliv activities but are brought along anyway. Whereas, some of these adolescents might change their attitude during the trip, others will not. These might end up spending a large amount of their time not wanting, not knowing, or not daring to get involved with the different activities. The varying degrees of participation during outings show us that it is difficult to assess adolescents' interests and capabilities satisfactorily beforehand. Seeing that many end up with positive experiences testifies to the importance of trying out and exploring new interests. This can still be challenging, however, as some participants have stated directly, or demonstrated by not participating in activities.

Gibson (2014) uses the term *affordances* to describe the complexity of an environment, related to the different ways one can approach and interact with it. He claims that an environment rich in affordances stimulates action and a wealth of experiences. Our participants report having a variety of experiences during their friluftsliv outings; majestic landscapes, snow mobile rides, skiing, sleighing, playing boardgames, or sleeping outdoors. Friluftsliv caters to a wide range of interests—which is important, considering that care workers try to facilitate a recreational experience for groups of adolescents with differing backgrounds and interests.

The adolescents describe having experiences they did not anticipate beforehand. In our work with the analysis of our data, we noticed how some adolescents were positively surprised—like the boy (P2) who did not intend to join the trip but ended up enjoying it. Other examples are the girl (P1) who taught herself how to snowboard or the boy (P4) who joined many activities that he had not expected he would join. Nature has been described as an attractive environment, and our participants also mention the importance of experiencing support from peers and care workers. It is when adolescents both experience the necessary social support and get inspired by their surroundings that they can become active participants and discover new things about themselves. When it creates a supportive atmosphere and offers desirable activities, friluftsliv enables self-discovery.

Social bonding

Doing friluftsliv appears to have an influence on the whole group of participants and how they behave as a social unit. The adolescents describe an atmosphere that is generally positive. Our participants narrate that they interact more with each other during friluftsliv as opposed to living parallel lives at the care home, where each one tends to be in the confines of their

own rooms or personal space. At the residential care home, they meet in smaller groups, if they meet up at all. The participants describe how, during trips, they feel a sense of connection with others that is noticeably different. The context of friluftsliv changes adolescents' expectations. We cannot say for sure whether this is due to fewer distractions, such as the Internet and other aspects of busy modern lifestyles, or if it can be attributed to the cultural values of friluftsliv, or something else entirely. What the adolescents' descriptions tell us is that, in their experience, attitudes change in the friluftsliv context and people are more socially engaged with each other. Knowing that adolescents in care generally struggle with social relations (Gallagher & Green, 2012), we observe that they can benefit from a setting that allows for social bonding.

The meaning of activity has been highlighted as essential to happiness and well-being (Iwasaki, 2008). Iwasaki points to *social and cultural connections and harmony in interpersonal contexts* as one of five themes describing meaning-making mechanisms of leisure-like pursuits. As an example, Iwasaki (2008) mentions spending quality time with friends and family and the importance of building quality ties. Quality relations emerge as an important promoter of adolescents' well-being and a constitutive part of their experience of friluftsliv. The finding that friluftsliv can provide a context for building quality relational ties was also made in Baklien et al.'s (2016) study. He interviewed Norwegian families that went hiking in the forest and found that nature represents a peaceful background where families can strengthen relational bonds. His participants describe feeling free from other disturbances, being more present, and experiencing a sense of connectedness to each other (Baklien et al., 2016). What our participants describe—as Baklien also highlights—is a sense of togetherness that emerges in a context characterized by fewer distractions and a higher degree of presence in each other's lives. Whereas, the cultural connotations of friluftsliv influence how our participants value their experience, quality ties with others are regarded as an essential feature of quality living across cultures (Iwasaki, 2008).

Sharing friluftsliv experiences with the other adolescents at the care home also affected their expectations. One girl described how she did not perceive skiing as a viable leisure option at home whereas doing it with others at the care home made it more tempting. Our participants described experiencing activities and situations they would not have sought out on their own. When adolescents favor activities in the presence of their care workers (Säfvenbom & Sandahl, 2000), this can be a sign that they experience more support and less rejection from them than from their peers. Being near care workers who have interests, skills, and the means to do different kinds of activities expands the adolescents' opportunities,

as does the possibility to have someone to share those experiences with. In a supportive environment, community with others can make recreational activities more attractive, and enjoying recreational activities as a social community strengthens the bonds between participants.

Whereas, *friluftsliv* provided opportunities for a positive social atmosphere, this appears to be a fragile constellation. As our findings show, the adolescents are wary of the social atmosphere in the group and vulnerable to rejection from others. This rejection can come both from peers and from care workers. Building healthy relationships is something that adolescents in care often struggle more with compared to other adolescents (Gallagher & Green, 2012). As adolescents rely on the support of the care workers, it is important that the care workers don't reject them or let them down in other ways. Many participants remarked how they appreciated sharing moments with their care workers, and that to be rejected was difficult. Being in a cabin, often far away from other people, means that the adolescents are dependent on the social group of the care home—there is nobody else to turn to. Nor is retreating to their rooms or social media a viable option, given that there is no Internet and possibly no cell phone coverage where they are. We can see how this isolation sets up *friluftsliv* as a context that allows—maybe even forces—the adolescents to work on relational skills. This dependency on a small social group can place already vulnerable adolescents in a vulnerable situation. Residential treatment is generally seen as a last alternative, used only in cases where no other options are viable, and with this pretext, care should be taken to ensure that interventions are done in the least harmful manner (Harper, 2017).

Nature experience and the *friluftsliv* ideal

What kind of relevance does the Naessian *friluftsliv* concept have for studying and understanding experiences from modern practices of outdoor activities at residential care? Can a Naessian perspective contribute to a better understanding of the adolescents' experiences? Though these questions deserve a research paper on their own, we would like to comment on them as it concerns how we understand the kinds of recreational experiences afforded through *friluftsliv*.

As noted in the introduction, *friluftsliv* concerns both physical activity in natural environments and fostering direct nature experience. Our participants describe themselves as being more active during *friluftsliv* outings than what they are at the care home. Whereas, the degree of participation varied, *friluftsliv* thereby had the potential to increase the physical activity level for our participants. The scope of nature experience also depended on the adolescents' degree of participation in the outdoor activities.

Many participants commented on how the lack of Internet made it less attractive for them to stay indoors. In light of the Naessian *friluftsliv* ideal, the fact that the adolescents' *friluftsliv* experience was shaped by a setting without Internet access can be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, the adolescents' expectations of constantly being online are symptomatic of a modern lifestyle far from the simple life promoted by Naess. On the other hand, the unusual lack of Internet connectivity gave the adolescents a rare experience of living under simpler conditions—in line with the Naessian *friluftsliv* ideal. And this may be the case even if they used some modern equipment whereas engaging in *friluftsliv* activities outdoors.

As Naess claimed, connection to nature starts with a direct experience of nature. Making the indoors less attractive is in itself an incentive for adolescents to go outdoors. Naess argued for a rich life by simple means, by methodically removing distractions that stand in the way of being fully present in nature. We see from our findings how Internet works as a major distraction, and that removing it makes venturing outdoors much easier for adolescents. Was cabin life simple enough? From our data, we cannot claim that the outings lead to a deeper connection with nature and a holistic lifestyle, in line with Naess' ultimate goals. But at least the natural environment was actively noticed by the participants, and *friluftsliv* allowed for varied interaction through different activities. Our participants emphasize social bonding and the feelings evoked by carrying out various activities. Some of the more detailed descriptions of nature come from those who spent the most time in nature, e.g., engaging in outdoor camping, which made it possible to experience a starry night sky and the sounds of the night. Such experiences are in line with Naess' argument for taking the time to adjust from a hectic lifestyle and connect to nature.

As we have tried to demonstrate, the Naessian view is still useful, as it points to different aspects of genuine nature experience. What the adolescents experienced at the outings is in our view an introduction to *friluftsliv*. Whereas, the nature experience they had was limited, many participants took some of their first steps in this context. This is especially significant given that adolescents at residential care are a target group that has less *friluftsliv* experience than the population in general. We have interpreted *friluftsliv* as a dynamic cultural phenomenon. The adolescents got a taste of both the physical activity and the nature experience involved in *friluftsliv*. The Naessian ideal underscores the importance of feeling connected to nature and entering into a caring relationship with nature. To what extent this is achievable in the context of modern *friluftsliv* practices is open to debate.

Limitations and future research

This article has provided a lifeworld account of how youth at risk in residential care experience friluftsliv activities. Though our sample size is in line with customary practice within descriptive phenomenology, a limitation with our study is the small sample of interviewees ($n = 8$).

Another limitation is the outsider role the first author had when joining the excursions and conducting the interviews. Spending time with the participants can bring the researcher closer to the participants, compared to only doing interviews without any field work. However, it can be difficult to fully understand the relationships that careworkers have built over time with the adolescents without being one oneself. The quality and nature of their relationship will affect the adolescents' experience, and in this context, the first author had an outsider's perspective. Knowing more about the care workers' motivations for providing friluftsliv activities would have provided further insight. This will be attended to in a future article where we plan to interview care workers.

A third limitation is the study's restriction to the Norwegian context. Whereas, this context is particularly relevant for the concept and practice of friluftsliv, further research focused on friluftsliv activities involving youth at risk in other cultural and institutional contexts would contribute to solidifying our findings and enrich the discussion.

So would longitudinal studies exploring the effect of engaging in friluftsliv activities over time. Concerning life after residential care, it would also be interesting to explore how adults regard their friluftsliv experiences from residential care and how these have affected their relation to nature, to friluftsliv, and to themselves. This could be informative, e.g., in relation to studying what it takes to start engaging in friluftsliv activities, establishing knowledge that could potentially improve the care worker practice of doing friluftsliv at care homes.

Conclusions

Our analysis concludes that the friluftsliv experience of adolescents in residential care is made up of three constituents: *Departure from everyday life*, *Shared experience*, and *Facing a different existence*. The character of their friluftsliv experience indicates some of the recreational experiences that can be afforded through friluftsliv at residential care. The natural surroundings and the context of a holiday outing combine to provide a sense of novelty, which contributes to foster an attitude making the adolescents motivated to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. The friluftsliv setting has the advantage of removing distractions and bringing the adolescents closer to nature, thereby pushing them out of their comfort zones and to consider

taking on new challenges. Hands-on experience with friluftsliv can potentially expand the recreation repertoire that they can pursue on their own and facilitate self-discovery by allowing them to learn new skills and discover new interests and talents. The challenge is that friluftsliv simultaneously leads vulnerable adolescents into a vulnerable position, giving them limited options to retreat if the experience turns out to be negative, overwhelming, or of no interest.

The friluftsliv context creates an atmosphere that supports social bonding. The long-term benefits of increased social bonding address the relational needs of adolescents in care, possibly strengthening both peer and care worker relationships. The experience of the residential care home as a social unit that engages collectively in activities provides further incentive for engaging in activities that the adolescents might not have sought out in their home environment.

By the time the adolescents move out of residential care, they no longer have access to the social network established by the residential care home. This is a predictable challenge that care workers need to address and plan for in due time. Whereas, adolescents may miss the social support of the care home after moving out, at least they now have hands-on experience with different friluftsliv activities. This may give them the necessary skills and confidence to pursue friluftsliv activities on their own, with a new social network on a private basis, or possibly via participation in leisure organizations.

On a final note, the adolescents' first-hand experience with friluftsliv also involves being socialized into a central Norwegian cultural tradition. Though this may not have happened entirely in line with the strictest deep ecology standards, they have at the very least gotten somewhat familiar with contemporary ideas about what friluftsliv practices can amount to. This might give them the chance to engage in activities that most Norwegians regard as valuable and rewarding, and in this sense give them equal opportunities more on par with the general population.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare that they have no relevant interests to disclose.

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