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**Cross-country Skiing:  
Leaning by Experiencing Nature, Culture  
and a New Self**

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## Summary

Cross-country skiing provides a unique way of interacting with Nature. While the times and the cultural environment no longer make cross-country skiing a necessity for survival in areas covered by snow in winter, many people still go cross-country skiing in forests and mountains for recreation, sport and exploration. This phenomenon implies a transformation of the functions and values of cross-country skiing.

This research is inspired by skiing as a phenomenon personally observed by the author and reflected upon from the view of a newcomer to a Nordic country.

While learning cross-country skiing, the goal emerged of exploring the value of cross-country skiing in modern times by autoethnographically analyzing my lived experiences of cross-country skiing. Inspired by phenomenology and narrative analysis, this research examines the researcher's autoethnographic accounts as a skiing beginner through four specific themes: space and time, the social and cultural environment, body movements, and emotions. This approach aims to exemplify how natural environments and the unique culture and equipment of cross-country skiing came to create and enrich my experiences and knowledge of Nature, culture and self.

Further inspired by the comparative methodology, this research explores values of outdoor activities within contexts of experiential learning and outdoor education by comparing the researcher's personal experiences of cross-country skiing and published, lived experiences of water activities. By examining contextualized examples of cross-country skiing and water activities, this research exemplifies how outdoor activities may facilitate effective, long-lasting and meaningful learning.

Based on its findings, this research identifies possibilities and values for future research to explore cross-country skiing and outdoor activities in different contexts.

Keywords: cross-country skiing, learning of nature, culture and self

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# **1. Chapter One- Themes of Research and Research Background**

## **1.1 The Themes of this Research**

The theme of this research is exploring learning experiences and opportunities provided by cross-country skiing. The experiences of learning cross-country skiing, which will be analyzed and discussed in this research, are mainly based on the researcher's own learning experiences as a beginner, who had no previous skiing experience at the time of arrival in Norway in January in 2017. This research is therefore an ethnographic self-study based on an autoethnographic method. Despite the limitations that the subjectivity of this approach may represent, I suggest that the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing as understood by analyzing my lived experiences correspond to the experiences of like-minded cross-country skiing beginners, referring to the skiing beginners like myself who have no experience of skiing but are eager and enjoy learning cross-country skiing. As cross-country skiing is an outdoor activity highly facilitated by natural and cultural environments, analyzing lived experiences happening within these contexts can shed light on learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing in natural, cultural and self-developmental contexts.

One important learning experience and opportunity of cross-country skiing that will be discussed in this research is the special opportunities that cross-country skiing provides for skiers to interact closely with Nature. Cross-country skiing is an activity in which natural elements play an important role because the topography of landscapes and the snow conditions directly influence the ways that people ski. Compared to many activities and sports that people do in modern society, such as table tennis and soccer,

which can be played in nearly fully controlled indoor environments, cross-country skiing provides plenty of opportunities for people to have direct contact with ever-transforming natural environments. I believe the unique connection between cross-country skiing and Nature creates opportunities to learn not only about Nature but also about cultures and self.

In addition to learning opportunities that may be experienced by skiing in a natural environment, from a holistic point of view, learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing embrace a cultural dimension. For instance, while learning cross-country skiing, skiing beginners will be introduced to a culture of skills, languages and values, including norms and moral aspects regarding how to treat Nature and other skiers. Moreover, different kinds of skis, techniques and waxes developed within such a cultural context reflect the ways humans respond to the natural environment through the means of skiing. From this perspective, learning cross-country skiing provides opportunities to learn about cultures of cross-country skiing to which skiing beginners expose themselves.

Apart from learning about natural environments and skiing cultures, learning cross-country skiing also provides opportunities for skiing beginners to learn about themselves. When learning cross-country skiing, beginners of skiing need to be aware of the natural and cultural environments in which they ski and how they physically and mentally respond to different environments and situations. Under the circumstance, skiing beginners may be encouraged or required to explore body movements that they never experienced before and experience emotions that are provoked by different skiing situations. These new experiences may be opportunities for skiing beginners to understand themselves from a different point of view.

To sum up, the experiences of learning cross-country skiing may serve as opportunities for skiing beginners to learn about Nature, the culture of skiing, and their

own ways of coping physically and mentally with unfamiliar and complex situations while interacting with Nature and the unique cross-country skiing culture. These three domains of experiences, regarding Nature, culture and self, which may be experienced while learning cross-country skiing, pave the way to understand different learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing.

The unique relationship between cross-country skiing, Nature, culture and people may create learning opportunities particular to cross-country skiing, which differ from learning opportunities that individuals might experience while learning to perform other outdoor activities. This situation allows this research to further develop through a comparative perspective, which means comparing cross-country skiing learning experiences and learning experiences of water activities. As natural elements play an important role in both activities, snow in cross-country skiing and water in water activities, this comparison may enhance our understanding of unique learning opportunities in cross-country skiing and uncover general learning opportunities of outdoor activities. More precisely, this research also aims to explore the general learning experiences and opportunities of outdoor activities.

## **1.2 The Importance of this Research**

My main research interest is to better understand what it means or implies to learn an outdoor activity. As a natural environment is believed to play an important role in learning experiences of outdoor activities, cross-country skiing, an outdoor activity highly facilitated by natural environments, can exemplify how a human closely interacts with a natural environment through an outdoor activity.

Following my interest, the goal of this research is to understand learning experiences and explore learning opportunities derived from learning cross-country skiing. In doing so, this research aims to provide a concrete understanding of context-



related learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing. The findings of this research are expected to serve as academic reference related to the potential learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing. Since cross-country skiing has been practiced in different contexts as a kind of sport, as a way of playing, as transport and for educational or recreational activities, by understanding experiences of learning cross-country skiing this research will contribute to understanding potential applications of learning cross-country skiing in different contexts and discourses.

In addition to the exploration of learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing, this research also compares cross-country skiing and water activities in order to explore learning experiences of outdoor activities in which humans interact closely with Nature. With this comparison, this research is expected to enrich our understanding of general learning experiences and opportunities in outdoor activities.

Last but not the least, in a broader cultural context, cross-country skiing can be seen as more than an outdoor activity, but also a phenomenon that reflects how people respond to natural affordances and benefit from their interactions with and experiences in and of Nature. From this perspective, this study of cross-country skiing may serve as an example of a positive relationship between human and Nature and encourage reflection and further research in human-nature relationships in different landscapes and natural environments.

### **1.3 Research Background**

This section introduces the author's background and experiences, and how I was motivated by my experiences of learning cross-country skiing and outdoor activities to explore the unique learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing.

I grew up in Taiwan, which is a warm region of tropical and subtropical weather, most of the time; snow in Taiwan can be seen only at the top of the highest

mountains. In other words, cross-country skiing, which is an activity usually practiced in large areas covered by snow, is not normally accessible for most Taiwanese people due to the limitations of the local environment and the climate. Therefore, my experience of cross-country skiing can be considered as experiences of a total beginner.

Without previous experiences, my first experience of cross-country skiing was provided through the study program of the Transcultural European Outdoor Studies (TEOS). Learning cross-country skiing and other outdoor activities such as hiking, canoeing and rowing was part of the TEOS program. For these outdoor activities, as a beginner, I felt I was challenged in different ways as learning different outdoor activities and encountering various conditions of Nature impose diverse demands. For example, while learning canoeing, I felt the need to conquer my fear of water so that I could learn canoeing techniques. As for cross-country skiing, the fear of height and of speed were the main challenges that I had to cope with while trying to become the skier that I aimed to be. In brief, learning different outdoor activities let me experience different challenges and learning opportunities in different outdoor activities.

One of these outdoor activities that was new to me, which inspired me a lot both physically and mentally, was cross-country skiing. My experiences of learning cross-country skiing inspired me to develop research questions to explore learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing, and to consider in what ways cross-country skiing may differ from other outdoor activities.

In addition to my own experiences, my motivation to explore themes and investigate research questions of this research is also rooted in theoretical concepts of learning in outdoor and cultural contexts, such as outdoor education and experiential learning. I became familiar with these concepts through lectures and outdoor excursions including hiking, skiing and rowing in the TEOS program, and understanding these concepts let me see the possibility that lived experiences of cross-country skiing may

enrich our understanding of these concepts by providing detailed and contextualized knowledge of an outdoor activity.

In brief, experiencing learning cross-country skiing and outdoor activities and realizing the potential of lived experiences as a contribution to understanding theoretical concepts of experiential learning and outdoor education motivated me to devote myself to work on this research.

## **1.4 Guidelines for Readers**

To explore the themes and research questions of this study, this research will proceed following the structure explained below.

First, reviewing the literature on cross-country skiing helps to identify the possibility of and the need for exploring values of cross-country skiing in a modern cultural context. Combined with the literature on experiential learning and outdoor education, the literature review presents the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of educational and developmental values in cross-country skiing and outdoor activities, and to examine and enrich concepts of experiential learning and outdoor education by analyzing lived experiences and obtaining contextualized knowledge.

Following the literature review, the theoretical framing explains the strengths of using qualitative methods to explore the research questions in this study, followed by a detailed discussion of qualitative methodologies and analytical themes that will be used for analyzing lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities.

The lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities discussed in this research will be analyzed separately but compared and discussed together to address the research questions of this study and present the findings of this research.

## 2. Chapter Two- Literature Review, Theoretical Framing, and Research Questions

### 2.1 Literature Review

#### 2.1.1 History and Transformation of Cross-country skiing

Reading about the history and development of cross-country skiing introduced me to the culture of cross-country skiing, which has undergone a transformation of the relationship between Nature, skiing and people. This transformation not only informs me different values of cross-country skis in history but also inspired me to explore values of cross-country skiing in modern days.

*Skiing Throughout History*, a book of Olav Bø (Bø, 1993), is a collection of information on artifacts and historical facts about skiing and provides an insight into the development of skiing equipment and activities in history. Through the writing of Bø we can understand various skiing activities practiced at different periods in history, and reflect on the relationship between people, the making of skiing equipment, the culture of skiing and Nature.

Bø's discussion mentions the shorter, arctic skis that are often used in the north and the longer ones commonly seen in southern Norway. While the shorter and wider skis worked well for rough terrain, the longer ones offered good gliding across open and relatively flat mountain plateaus. These examples confirm the close relationship between the culture of skiing and natural landscapes because the different lengths of skis display how skis were designed to suit the local terrain hundreds or even thousands of years ago.

In addition to the relationship between skiing and Nature, the designs and shapes of skis also reflect the relationship between skiing and people and the role skiing played

within a cultural context. One example is the Scandinavian type of skis of varying lengths. This Scandinavian type of skis has a longer left ski, which is used for steering and gliding, and a short right ski, which is used mainly for pushing. With features that can enable skiers to have good control and speed, this kind of ski, which was developed in the Scandinavian area, was tailored for the needs of the local society in which hunting on skis in Nature was an important cultural activity.

Another example is the Snåsa-ski, which was curved upward on both ends. In doing so, if a tip of one ski broke, the skier could reverse the ski and use the other end as a new tip. This invention shows how skis were designed to serve the human need to move longer distances without being worried about being hindered by a broken ski tip.

Different types of skis developed throughout history for journeying in different landscapes and cultural activities show that practical functions of skis play a key role in the history of cross-country skiing. One primary function is that skis allow humans to adapt well to the natural landscape in which they live. The examples of the shorter, arctic skis and longer skis from the south show that skis of various types enable local people to move on different kinds of snow-covered landscapes with less effort. Another practical function can be detected through the examples of the Scandinavian type and the Snåsa type of skis, which were invented to support cultural activities in everyday life. While the Scandinavian type of skis satisfied the needs of hunters to move agilely and quickly on skis, the Snåsa type of ski added extra security for skiers, in case they had to deal with a broken ski tip caused by an accident or by hunting and travelling over longer distances.

When serving as efficient transportation for different terrains of snow, skiing is a way of coping with challenging snow landscapes. However, when being used for hunting, skiing plays a more active role, which not only allows an individual to adapt well to the natural environment, but also facilitates cultural activities like hunting for

those people who live in areas where snow falls in the winter season. From this point of view, skiing is more than a way for people to get along with Nature, it is part of the culture that influences the interaction between people and Nature. Different functional designs of various types of skis confirm the close relationships between cross-country skiing, Nature and cultures.

As technological development makes it possible to travel across snow landscapes using modern transportation like the snowmobile, the importance of skiing as a way of transportation on snow, is reduced. However, the popularity of cross-country skiing in modern society does not seem to decrease with technological development; instead, a desire to be in or with Nature by skiing is increasing in modern society. While most people no longer need to work in Nature, including hunting or gathering food, to make a living, it is not uncommon to see people go cross-country skiing as a leisure activity or sport nowadays. Howell et al.'s research explores the relationships between nature connectedness and mental health by examining the correlation between nature connectedness and well-being. Their study results reflect a positive correlation between nature connectedness and psychological well-being and social well-being, which means that feeling close to Nature may relate to positive feelings of self and the social environment. (Howell, Dopko, Passmore & Buro, 2011) Howell et al.'s study may substantiate the inner motivation of human to be inclined to Nature.

The discussion above shows that the relationship between Nature, people and cross-country skiing has remained close throughout history until nowadays, even though actual activities of cross-country skiing practiced in daily life have undergone transformation within different cultural contexts. This phenomenon inspires this research to reflect on the new roles cross-country skiing plays at the present day.

## **2.1.2 Relationship between this Research, Experiential Learning and Outdoor Education**

This section examines this research through the literature of experiential learning and outdoor education and clarifies how this research on lived experiences can cooperate with experiential learning theories to obtain contextualized knowledge of learning experiences and opportunities in outdoor activities.

While some outdoor educators consider experiential learning a part of outdoor education, some theorists regard outdoor education as a way to facilitate experiential learning. To understand the core values of and relationship between experiential learning and outdoor education, an analysis from the team at the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) in the U.S. discussed definitions of these two concepts. (Adkins & Simmons, 2002) In this discussion, outdoor education may refer to learning in, about and for the outdoors, and has its focus on the outdoor environment as a space or context in which different learning experiences may happen. As for experiential education, the concept of experiential education emphasizes the process of learning from direct experiences. In my opinion, the definitions of outdoor education and experiential education presented in the discussion above imply a cooperative relationship between these two concepts. To explore how experiential learning works, the variety of outdoor environments provides opportunities to have various bodily, sensory and mental experiences, which can be examined as examples of hands-on experiential learning. To examine how outdoor education functions, the theories of experiential learning can be applied to understand learning experiences in the outdoors and identify elements that make outdoor education an effective way of learning.

The concepts of experiential learning and outdoor education bring about research questions regarding whether direct experiences can facilitate effective learning

and lead to long-lasting and transferable learning results, and whether direct and experiential learning can be facilitated in an outdoor environment.

Existing literature explores the effectiveness and persistence of experiential learning from the view of the psychological aspect. The study of Mackenzie et al. explores the relationship between psychology and experiential education through the self-determination theory and the broaden and build theory. (Mackenzie, Son & Hollenhorst, 2014)

Mackenzie et al.'s study draws on the self-determination theory, which claims that, compared to extrinsic motivation, the autonomous-supportive feature of intrinsic motivation results in more effective learning experiences. As experiential education tends to emphasize autonomous learning, the self-determination theory to some extent substantiates the effectiveness of experiential learning.

The same study also discusses how positive emotions may facilitate learning experiences through “the broaden and build theory”. The broaden and build theory claims that experiencing positive emotions broadens people’s attention and cognitive perceptions, and so different learning experiences, including intellectual, physical and social development that are built through this broadening, may last for the longer term and can be applied later in life. (Fredrickson, 2004) As positive emotions such as joy and contentment are likely experienced while acquiring and improving techniques and managing challenging situations of outdoor activities, this broaden and build theory supports the claim that outdoor activities may facilitate long-lasting learning.

As outdoor education is often considered experiential due to its essence of having direct experiences in and with natural environments, the psychological studies discussed above to some extent confirm the potentials of outdoor education to facilitate effective and long-lasting learning. Although concepts of experiential learning may help in understanding outdoor education, they do have their limitation. While theories of



experiential learning may uncover what types of experiences might lead to effective and long-lasting learning, natural and social environments around different outdoor activities, which may lead to different experiences, differ from one outdoor activity to another due to the diversity of outdoor environments and features of different outdoor activities. This situation makes it inappropriate and hardly possible to understand and explain experiences of learning different outdoor activities simply by means of theories. Under the circumstance, contextualized knowledge of specific outdoor environments and outdoor activities are needed for contextualized understanding of situations in the real practice of outdoor education. In other words, lived experiences in outdoor contexts can collaborate with the concepts of experiential learning to facilitate a contextualized understanding of outdoor education and learning experiences of outdoor activities.

Realizing the importance of contextualized knowledge for understanding learning experiences of outdoor activities, the existing literature adopts phenomenological and autoethnographic methods to generate contextualized knowledge because these research methods can grasp the lived experiences of participants in outdoor activities, which can serve as contextualized resources to understand learning experiences in the outdoors. Identifying the strength of phenomenological and autoethnographic methods and the importance of contextualized knowledge, this research aims to provide contextualized knowledge of learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing by investigating my lived experiences as a researcher and an observatory participant.

Phenomenological research on mountaineering and weather learning can serve as an example that reflects how place-based learning and environment-specific knowledge are developed through embodied experiences and how contextualized knowledge can be captured through lived experiences. Mountaineers participating in the research of the lived experiences of mountaineering and weather learning (Allen-

Collinson, Crust & Swann, 2018) described how their competence in perceiving and interpreting weather and terrain conditions and weather-induced sensations developed through experiences and analytical reflection on what was experienced in specific situations. For example, an experienced mountaineer described how past experiences of weather conditions made the amount of snow a meaningful unit for him to evaluate avalanche danger and the conditions of the trail. Another mountaineer explained how experiencing the feelings of cold and feelings of getting close to frostbite, which made movements slow and difficult, supported the mountaineers in differentiating them and avoid severe consequences of frostbite, such as losing fingers or hands. These lived experiences of mountaineers are concrete examples that shed light on contextualized knowledge of weather learning in the mountaineering context.

Other research conducted through autoethnographic self-study further illustrates a process of how detailed understanding of the lived experiences gained through autoethnographic study can be transformed into contextualized knowledge of outdoor activities. As a marathon swimmer, Thorsby's autoethnographic study describes how being familiar with features of water, such as water movement, resistance and buoyancy, makes her feel at ease while swimming in an unfamiliar area. This example reflects how lived experiences of water make marathon swimmers feel connected to the aquatic environment. In addition to mental experiences, her study also demonstrates how an activity-specific feature of marathon swimming, swimming in cold water, not only transforms her body's thermoregulatory system, which allows her to stay in cold water for longer, but also her perception of temperature, which allows her to evaluate what kind of swimming is possible based on her corporeal knowing of the aquatic environment. (Thorsby, 2013) In addition to mental and bodily perceptions, in another of Thorsby's ethnographical papers, she mentions how her experiences of water transformed her sensory perception using hearing as an example, describing how the

rhythm of hands tapping water and sounds of exhaled bubbles gradually became audible and an important part of her swimming. (Thorsby, 2015) Her lived experiences enrich our contextualized knowledge of how the features of water may conceive marathon swimmers' mental experiences, bodily sensations and sensorium and how the mental, bodily and sensory development facilitate each other within an aquatic environment instead of being developed separately.

### **2.1.3 Contribution of this Research to Research about Experiential Learning and Outdoor Education**

Examining the relationship between this research, experiential learning and outdoor education clarifies how this research, a phenomenological and autoethnographic study of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities, may enrich our understanding of experiential learning and outdoor education by providing contextualized examples.

Moreover, embracing the advantages of the hermeneutic phenomenological and the autoethnographic approaches, this research is expected to capture lived experiences and enrich our understanding of learning experiences in an outdoor context.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framing**

While the cross-country skiing and experiential and outdoor education literature clarifies how this research may enrich our understanding of learning experiences in the outdoors, the literature of the hermeneutic phenomenology provides an important theoretical framework that illustrates the strength and the need to explore the themes and research questions of this research through the hermeneutic phenomenological approach and lived experiences.

Exploring lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing is a direct way to understand what people may learn by journeying on skis, However, because lived

experiences, including personal reflections, feelings and emotions, are subjective, obtaining a reasonably complete understanding of them by generalizing objective facts is not possible. Furthermore, trying to identify personal experiences with a focus on reported learning results, which are gained through quantitative studies, may allow the researcher to grasp some main ideas, but details may still be ignored or stay invisible. For example, if ninety out of one hundred subjects confirm that they become more confident about themselves while improving their skiing techniques, one conclusion may be that mastering skiing techniques may help people develop better self-confidence. Nevertheless, the quantitative results may not be able to explain why this phenomenon exists and how it happens in a detailed manner.

To explore the relationships between skiing and learning experiences in a detailed manner, which includes both objective facts and subjective experiences, existing literature shows that the hermeneutic phenomenological approach may serve as an ideal method for researching people's lived experiences of learning to ski. As a qualitative approach, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach has its focus on researching lived experiences that are situated in contexts. According to Sloan and Bowe, descriptive and interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology are two methodologies developed from the philosophical concept of phenomenology. While descriptive phenomenology aims to serve as a means of identifying the essences of human experiences, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to uncover human experience as it is lived and situated in contexts. (Sloan & Bowe, 2013) As this research into cross-country skiing seeks to explore the meaning of learning cross-country skiing for skiing beginners, which refers to learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing as they are lived or experienced, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach will be applied in this research.

The following example from the research by Clark et al. demonstrates how the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is applied to a study of the lived experiences of Alpine skiing. The research by Clark et al. explored lived experiences in sport participation and used Alpine skiing as an example to demonstrate how the lived experiences of Alpine skiing might uncover certain natural and shared cultural knowledge of Alpine skiing and what Alpine skiing may mean to Alpine skiers. (Clark, Ferkins, Smythe & Jogulu, 2018)

In this research, a subject reported that his experiences of skiing included imaging how other people looked at or thought about his performance. Being approved by people he cared about was meaningful for him. His experience revealed parts of the culture of Alpine skiing in which body movements and their visual perceptions were meaningful experiences for skiers. This cultural feature to some extent differentiates Alpine skiing from cross-country skiing. While Alpine skiing resorts normally have lifts where people can sit and evaluate other skiers from above, cross-country skiing are often practiced in forests or mountains where the facilitation of skiing is often skiing tracks instead of lifts; such skiing environments do not encourage or facilitate cross-country skiers to look at other skiers the same way as the environment of Alpine skiing does. One subject in the same research of Alpine skiing described a desire to run fast on skis, but a fear of losing control of skis at a high speed on steep slopes stopped her from trying to run faster because pushing skis and snow in a wrong way at a high speed might cause crossed skis and make her fall. The subjective feelings of desire and fear on the part of the female Alpine skier show how the natural features that may be experienced by Alpine skiers, such as steep slopes and gravity, may influence the emotions of Alpine skiers.

The descriptions of two individual subjects in this research revealed the lived experiences of bodily movements and mental feelings in Alpine skiing within its

specific cultural and natural contexts. For cultural context, this research reflected the kinds of skiing skills and body movements that might be valued in Alpine skiing, as for natural context, this research showed what landscapes and snow conditions might be experienced while doing Alpine skiing and how these features might be perceived by Alpine skiers. These lived experiences may serve as materials from which learning experiences and opportunities of Alpine skiing may be inferred. Exploring skiers' skiing and learning experiences through different aspects, such as natural, cultural, physical and mental aspects, allows us to understand the meaningful experiences and potential learning opportunities skiing learners may experience during their learning process.

A similar concept, of using sensuous, embodied experiences and feelings as a medium to understand learning experiences and opportunities within a specific natural and cultural context, can be applied to this research on learning experiences of cross-country skiing. While the learning processes may exhibit similarities, the landscapes, the cultures, the equipment and the bodily techniques in which cross-country skiing evolves differ remarkably from Alpine skiing. Therefore, it may be assumed that there are natural and cultural knowledge and learning experiences specific to cross-country skiing that can be explored by interpreting the lived experiences of cross-country skiing.

As for why the hermeneutic phenomenological approach may serve as a proper approach to study learning experiences of skiing, Goulding's analysis and comparison of different qualitative research methods offers an explanation. (Goulding, 2005) According to Goulding, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach has its focus on extracting meaningful units from direct and subjective experiences, which can be further interpreted and synthesized to understand different aspects of the whole targeted subject. Goulding's concept explains how the hermeneutic phenomenological approach supports Clark et al.'s research of Alpine skiing (Clark et al., 2018) by serving as a unique research method that focuses on and extracts meanings from subjective lived

experiences of Alpine skiers, which include experiences of natural and cultural environments as well as experiences of bodily movements and personal feelings and emotions.

As the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing are not only based on features of the skiing types, the landscapes, and the culture of which skiing is a part, but also personal and subjective perceptions and reactions of these experiences, Goulding's concept of the phenomenological approach can be well applied to this research. By adopting this qualitative approach, this research can serve as a complement to other scientific research of cross-country skiing by providing in-depth understanding of subjective experiences in learning cross-country skiing. For instance, scientific research may be able to show which parts of muscles are important for achieving certain kinds of skiing techniques. However, it is difficult to capture the feelings and emotions of skiers by using scientific research methods, which are also important learning experiences that happen while skiers try to acquire new skills.

As the interest of this research is in understanding how cross-country skiing beginners may perceive, respond to, and learn from their experiences of cross-country skiing, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach will be the theoretical foundation for this research.

## **2.3 The Research Questions**

To explore the main themes of this research, which are intended to help understand learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities, the following research questions establish a basic structure for this research.

First, this research will explore the experiences that beginning learners of cross-country skiing may have of 1) Nature, 2) culture, and 3) self. To delve into a detailed understanding of lived experiences, the experiences of self will be explored through two

dimensions, body movements and emotions. This research question is expected to facilitate a deeper understanding of learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing.

Second, this research aims to discern similar and different learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities by comparing lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities. This research question is expected to uncover the unique learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and general learning experiences and opportunities in outdoor activities.



## **3. Chapter Three- Qualitative Methodology**

### **3.1 Researching Lived Cross-country Skiing Experiences**

Due to the influential natural and cultural affordances around the activity of cross-country skiing, it can be assumed that my personal experiences of learning cross-country skiing to a large extent overlap with experiences of other skiing beginners with a similar background. Therefore, by analyzing my lived experiences, which include personal perceptions and reflections, field observations and dialogues with other skiers, this research can provide insight into learning experiences and opportunities that may be experienced by other skiing beginners while learning cross-country skiing.

While lived experiences can be valuable for understanding learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing, these subjective experiences can hardly be measured in scientific ways and presented with statistics. To explore these relatively immeasurable learning experiences, this research will use qualitative methodology to analyze my lived experiences of cross-country skiing.

Firstly, this research will be based on the hermeneutic phenomenological approach by which the interpretation of lived experiences is used as a way to understand the world. (Kafle, 2011) In other words, by analyzing and interpreting my lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing, the lived experiences of learning how to ski will be used as the medium to understand the perceptions and reactions that skiing beginners may have while learning cross-country skiing. Secondly, to capture lived experiences, a narrative approach will be used through which my lived experiences, represented in written form, are studied as a story that is believed to carry meaning for myself and for others. (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008), In this way, I intend to gain a deeper understanding of what it means for skiing beginners to learn cross-country

skiing. In the case of this research, the modern natural and cultural contexts of cross-country skiing will serve as the field that generates data for understanding my story of learning cross-country skiing.

In addition to the hermeneutic phenomenological and the narrative approaches, this research will also be based on important features of the self-study approach. The research of Hamilton et al. discusses different methodologies used for studying stories or the lived experiences of someone and it refers to LaBoskey's ideas about important features of the self-study methodology, which include being self-focused and reflective. (Hamilton et al., 2009) Those features of the self-study methodology make it an appropriate approach for this research because it allows this research to explore deeper meanings of skiing experiences with a self-focused frame and reflective essence.

Combining the concepts of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach and the narrative approach, which emphasize the values of lived experiences, and the concepts of the self-study approach that values self-experiences, the lived experiences of cross-country skiing, which will be examined through the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the narrative approach, and the self-study approach, will be my lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing.

### **3.2 Research Design**

To explore the first research question regarding the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing, this research adopts qualitative methodologies, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the narrative approach and the self-study approach, as the foundation for exploring lived experiences. Based on the foundation of qualitative methodology, an analytical framework is developed to capture and analyze lived experiences and to understand learning experiences.

A comparative method is adopted to address the second research question regarding general learning experiences and opportunities of outdoor activities, which will be explored by comparing the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and the lived experiences of water activities.

Last but not the least, the findings gained through two research questions of this study will be examined in the contexts of experiential learning and outdoor education, thereby reflecting the manner by which this research can contribute to academic research of experiential and outdoor education.

### **3.3 Framework of Analytical Themes**

To understand the researcher's lived experiences of cross-country skiing, a framework consisting of four analytical themes has been created, including space and time, the social and cultural environment, body movements, and emotions. These four analytical themes have been inspired by concepts and models proposed in the literature of the hermeneutic phenomenological, narrative and self-study approaches and modified based on the features of cross-country skiing as well as my lived experiences.

Therefore, these four analytical themes are presumed to be able to capture the lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing. The following paragraphs will explain how these four analytical themes, which will be used to analyze my lived experiences of cross-country skiing, benefit from phenomenological concepts and research models.

To develop the analytical framework for capturing and analyzing the lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing, this research adopts concepts gathered from the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the narrative approach and the self-study approach.

First, the concept of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which stresses the values of lived experiences, lays the foundation for this research, the intent

of which is to explore learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities by analyzing lived experiences. Therefore, the analytical framework created for this research will include aspects that aim to capture different aspects of lived experiences, such as natural and cultural environments, bodily experiences and emotions.

Second, as my personal experiences will be used as lived experiences to be analyzed, the analytical framework of this research also adopts important concepts of the self-study approach, being self-focused and being reflective, to keep the analysis of my learning experiences focused on exploring meanings in my lived experiences.

In addition to the hermeneutic phenomenological approach and the self-study approach, Hamilton et al.'s comparison of different self-study methodologies references Clandinin and Connelly's conceptual framework of the narrative approach, which includes dimensions of temporality, sociality and place. (Hamilton et al., 2009) As time, social and cultural environments, and place and natural space carry important information that can be useful for capturing and describing lived experiences, the framework of Clandinin and Connelly provides a basic model for the analytical framework of this research. In short, the Clandinin and Connelly's framework inspires two analytical themes for the analytical framework of this research, 1) space and time and 2) the social and cultural environment.

However, due to fact that the essence of cross-country skiing is physical activity, I would like to combine the framework of Clandinin and Connelly with the framework proposed by Van Manen to create an analytical framework tailored to this research.

Rich et al.'s study of lived experiences and phenomenology discusses the framework proposed by Van Manen. (Rich, Graham, Taket & Shelly, 2013) Van Manen's framework is a theoretical framework consisting of four elements including lived body, lived time, lived space, and lived human relations. While three dimensions

of Van Manen's framework - time, space, and human relations – to some extent overlap with the framework of Clandinin and Connelly, which includes temporality, place and sociality, Van Manen's framework mentions another dimension, lived body. The concept of lived body is useful for exploring lived bodily and physical experiences. One example is the study of Rich et al, which explored the lived experiences of a childless woman through the concept of lived body. (Rich et al., 2013) The concept of lived body in Van Manen's framework well supports the study of the lived experiences of a childless woman, as the functional characteristics of women's body are important factors that influence the experiences of being a childless woman.

Regarding the functions of the body, the experiences of learning cross-country skiing also have a lot to do with body movements. Therefore, the concept of the lived body will be adopted in the analytical framework of this research. Combining both Clandinin and Connelly's and Van Manen's frameworks, three analytical themes, space and time, the social and cultural environment, and body movements, will be adopted in the analytical framework of this research. These three analytical themes allow this research to explore the natural, cultural and bodily experiences of learning cross-country skiing.

In addition to the dimensions of space and time, the social and cultural environment and body movements, emotions are another analytical theme adopted in the analytical framework created for this research. As skiing beginners are likely influenced by different emotions that include fear, frustration and joy while learning different knowledge and physical movements of cross-country skiing, emotions are an important part of their learning experiences. To sum up, the analytical framework of this research created for analyzing lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing will include four analytical themes, 1) space and time, 2) the social and cultural environment, 3) body movements and 4) emotions.

Due to the similarities between cross-country skiing and water activities, which include both being practiced in natural environments and with interactions with natural elements, both developing unique cultures around them and often involving physical movements and mental experiences, the same analytical framework will be used for analyzing and understanding the lived experiences of water activities.

### **3.4 Applying Analytical Themes to Explore Lived Cross-country Skiing Experiences**

The themes of space and time will be used to explore learning experiences of Nature, while the concept of space that applies here refers to physical and natural spaces where people engage in outdoor activities, the concept of time refers to the transformation of people's perceptions and experiences of natural spaces over time with technique development and learning progression. The theme of culture will be used to explore cultural learning experiences, and the concept of culture that applies here refers to a culture and a cultural environment developed from or around an outdoor activity. As for learning experiences of self, two themes, body movements and emotions, will be examined. Concepts of these two themes will be used to explore people's bodily and mental experiences. Examining these two themes separately is not intended to divide lived experiences of self into separate categories, but to explore different aspects of lived experiences in a detailed manner.

Lived experiences of cross-country skiing will be analyzed through these four themes, which include both external and internal aspects. In terms of external aspects regarding space and time, experiences of natural environments and experiences perceived at different time periods or stages of learning cross-country skiing will be examined. The themes of space and time are expected to provide insight into how learning experiences of cross-country skiing may relate to natural environments and

how learning experiences of skiing beginners may transform with their progression of learning. Another external aspect, culture, will examine learning experiences of culture, which include the culture of cross-country skiing and the cultural environment developed around cross-country skiing. The theme of culture is expected to uncover experiences of cultural learning in cross-country skiing. As for personal and internal aspects, including bodily movements and emotions, experiences of learning about oneself will be explored through these two themes. As learning to coordinate bodily movements and to deal with feelings and emotions may be experiences through which skiing beginners can explore their physical and mental strengths and potentials, exploring these two themes is expected to uncover opportunities of personal development in cross-country skiing.

### **3.5 Comparative Method for Understanding Learning Experiences of Outdoor Activities**

The comparative method will be adopted in this research as a way of analyzing and understanding experiences and meanings of learning outdoor activities that are uncovered by exploring lived experiences through analytical themes. The research of Rich et al., which applies Van Manan's lifeworld existentials to study the lived experiences of a childless woman, examines the advantages and challenges of using analytical themes for collecting qualitative data. According to Rich et al., analytical themes have their values in guiding analytical reflection; however, the way to analyze data collected through analytical themes, which will undoubtedly shape the analysis, needs to be carefully considered and decided upon. (Rich et al., 2013)

For this hermeneutic phenomenological study exploring experiences and meanings of learning cross-country skiing and outdoor activities, four analytical themes, space and time, the social and cultural environment, body movements, and emotions,

are applied, which support and guide this study in gathering holistic lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities. As the way to analyze and understand the experiences and meanings of learning cross-country skiing and water activities that are uncovered through lived experiences, the comparative method is considered useful. In the context of outdoor activities, similar and different learning experiences may be facilitated in specific natural and cultural environments. Comparing learning experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities has allowed this research to examine and clarify how similar and different learning experiences of outdoor activities may be facilitated by certain natural and cultural environments and elements, making it possible to identify the elements that facilitate unique learning experiences of cross-country skiing and uncover general learning experiences of outdoor activities.

### **3.6 The Researcher's Skiing Biography and Presumptions**

The following paragraphs will describe how the researcher's lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing are gathered through chronological time and explain why some lived experiences are considered meaningful and worth being analyzed and discussed in this research.

The author's lived experiences of cross-country skiing were collected through two winters in Norway. My first experience of learning cross-country skiing was in the winter of 2017. With self-organized and school trips, my experiences of learning cross-country skiing included skiing in different natural landscapes, such as forests and mountainous areas. At the end of that winter, in 2017, I made a digital story to record my experiences of learning cross-country skiing. I came back to Norway the next year, in the winter of 2018, and continued learning and practicing cross-country skiing. Meanwhile, with the plan to do this research in mind, I took notes to memorize my skiing experiences. By comparing my skiing experiences in different years, I discerned



that some experiences of cross-country skiing that occurred to me in 2017 recurred in 2018. As these experiences occurred frequently, it is presumed that these experiences may be encountered by many other skiing beginners or at least provide important insight that others might recognize or relate to.

The data collected in my digital story and field notes include my memories and reflections in forms of visual presentation, such as photos, and written words. These records were generated when I felt my understanding and knowledge of the world were broadened or changed through my skiing experiences of Nature, culture and myself. For me, these were meaningful experiences that reflected how my life was changing while learning cross-country skiing. In short, meaningfulness along with another feature mentioned above, frequency, which refers to how often these experiences occur to me, are two standards that I used to gather and select experiences to be analyzed in this research because it can be presumed that these experiences may probably happen to other skiing beginners and inspire them with new perspectives to understand the world.

### **3.7 Strengths and Limitations of this Study**

It may be assumed that it is hardly possible to grasp and understand the whole experience of learning cross-country skiing through a single analytical theme. However, discussing how cross-country skiing relates to each of these four analytical themes can serve as a foundation for understanding learning experiences and opportunities that people may have while learning cross-country skiing. Because experiences within each analytical theme interweave with experiences within other analytical themes, understanding unique relations between cross-country skiing and each analytical theme makes the interplay of these four analytical themes clearer, and the interplay of different analytical themes makes it possible to understand the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing from diverse aspects. By understanding how cross-

country skiing relates to different analytical themes and how each analytical theme relates to the other, a more complete picture of learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing can be developed.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration and Validity**

Due to ethical consideration, there was no intention to gather personal information while collecting data by spontaneously observing and interacting with other cross-country skiers, and the descriptions in this study do not provide specific or detailed personal information by which skiers and situations described in this research may be identified. In addition, the data collected for this research will only be analyzed as supportive information that helps me explicate my lived experiences of learning cross-country skiing.

In addition to the data collected by interacting with other skiers, the data analyzed in this research mainly include the researcher's personal perceptions and reflections. Some people may have questions regarding the validity of personal experiences gained through the self-study approach and wonder how much these experiences can contribute to a body of knowledge or certain research topics. As cross-country skiing is an activity that closely relates and responds to natural affordances, the perceptions and reactions of cross-country skiing beginners are believed to be largely influenced and guided by natural affordances, such as the shapes of terrains and the textures of snow. With similar or the same natural affordances, skiing beginners may undergo similar experiences that are facilitated by external factors. For example, beginners of cross-country skiing may have similar experiences of trying to figure out how to climb uphill and how to control speed while skiing downhill on a slippery snow surface. In addition to natural affordances, human nature may also lead to similar or the same emotional experiences. For instance, many skiing beginners may feel afraid of steep slopes due to the fear of falling from them and getting hurt. As natural affordances

as well as human nature play influential roles in the experiences of learning cross-country skiing and create similar learning experiences for skiing beginners, experiences gathered through the self-study approach are believed to be valuable references that can provide insight into general experiences of learning cross-country skiing.

In addition to the validity of personal experiences, for knowledge or insight gained through lived experiences within certain natural and cultural contexts, some people may also question to what extent we can generalize these understandings. To this question, generalizing research results from lived experiences is not the purpose of this research; instead, this research aims to enrich our understanding of learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing with contextualized knowledge. As the landscapes where people ski, the equipment people use, and the movements people work on for learning cross-country skiing have many similarities, one may argue that an individual beginner's experiences of learning cross-country skiing can provide contextualized knowledge, which to some extent can prospect the potential learning experiences of other skiing beginners. The situation mentioned above explains why an individual's experiences of learning cross-country skiing can provide meaningful and contextualized knowledge for understanding experiences of other cross-country skiing beginners.

The same concerns regarding the validity and the possibility of generalizing research results of lived experiences also apply to the lived experiences of water activities discussed in this research. As water activities are highly influenced by natural affordances, as is cross-country skiing, and this research has no intention of using the lived experiences of water activities as generalized data, in this research lived experiences of water activities will be examined as examples that represent real situations and provide contextualized insight into learning experiences of water activities.

## **4. Chapter Four- Lived Experiences of Learning**

### **Cross-Country Skiing**

This chapter responds to the first research question of this research, which is to explore learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing through lived experiences. First, a brief sequence of my experiences learning cross-country skiing illustrates how four themes of the analytical framework used in this research help to grasp and analyze my learning experiences of cross-country skiing.

In the beginning, I practiced basic techniques, such as gliding and stopping in a well-groomed snow park. The more time I spent on practicing, the more comfortable and confident I felt with my skiing techniques, which allowed me to ski in different spaces in Nature, such as forests and mountains, where the shapes of the terrains and the conditions of snow could be more unexpected. This transition, which involved the shift of spaces where I went skiing and my learning progression over time, created important learning experiences for me. In addition to spaces and learning progression over time, while learning cross-country skiing, I was immersed in the cross-country skiing culture, which enriched my learning experiences from a cultural aspect. Moreover, learning cross-country skiing provided me physical and mental challenges, which turned out to be important experiences for my personal development. Following my story of learning cross-country skiing, this chapter will explore how learning experiences happen and what learning opportunities appear while learning cross-country skiing through these four different but interrelated themes in the analytical framework of this research.

#### **4.1 The Aspect of Space and Time**

When it comes to the spaces of cross-country skiing, forests and mountains are the areas where I learned and practiced cross-country skiing. From my own experiences,

the fact that cross-country skiing can be practiced in different natural landscapes makes it an activity that offers diverse learning opportunities. For example, while skiing in hilly and winding forests demands a great variety of skiing techniques and knowledge of snow conditions, skiing in open mountain landscapes requires close attention to the natural environment and the knowledge to cope with deep snow and strong wind. Different natural environments and elements have characteristics that shape the ways people interact with them, in the case of cross-country skiing, different environments created by specific natural landscape topographies, the textures of snow and the weather conditions result in different learning experiences.

#### **4.1.1 Experiences of Natural Spaces in Cross-country Skiing – Forests and Mountains**

The following paragraphs discuss the relationship between cross-country skiing and spaces and how natural environments of different snow-covered landscapes may lead to different challenges and learning experiences for cross-country skiing beginners.

My own experiences let me realize that skiing in forests was largely influenced by natural and snow conditions. The variation of temperature and topographical features, such as uphill, downhill and curves, create various forms of snow, such as watery, icy and drifts of soft powder snow, and different textures of snow bring about different challenges and learning experiences of cross-country skiing. Different challenges that I encountered while skiing in forests encouraged me to learn different techniques and the knowledge needed to adapt to different situations. For example, I tried to use skate skiing techniques, such as the herringbone skate and the offset skate, to climb on icy and slippery snow and learned to pay special attention to little stones blended in watery snow, which might cause a sudden stop to my skis.

Experiencing how different natural and snow conditions in forests can be challenging, I tried to develop a proper understanding of natural elements, such as snow and slopes, various techniques of skiing and knowledge of waxes. This knowledge and these techniques helped me to choose adequate techniques, waxes, and skis for different situations and increased my level of safety while I was skiing in forests.

For instance, the slippery texture of icy snow creates less friction between snow and skis and makes it difficult for skis to move forward. To ski forward on icy snow, I tried to use skate skiing techniques to push my skis forward; however, due to my poor balance and immature skate skiing techniques, instead of moving forward, my skis slipped sideways all the time. Therefore, I had to try to apply Klister, a soft ski wax used to improve the grip of skis on icy surface, to my skis, which did not help me to skate ski on icy snow but help to increase the friction between snow and my skis. Additionally, the hard essence of icy snow also makes it difficult to climb uphill and ski downhill because it increases the difficulty having skis carve into the snow with the herringbone technique and the snow plow. To prevent potential dangers caused by losing control of my skis, which could happen during high-speed downhill gliding resulting from icy snow, I learned to be aware of this situation.

The processes of trying to find solutions to challenges in natural environments, such as trying to apply skate skiing techniques or Klister and being aware of the natural environment, increased my curiosity about how the natural world works and encouraged me to be observant of my natural surroundings. To fulfill the needs to apply appropriate techniques or assistant tools to secure my safety and to strive for enjoyable skiing experiences, I sensed myself becoming curious and observant to the natural environments around me. This tendency might be caused with a purpose to increase the level of safety, but it also allowed me to observe nature in a new, more detailed way.

To understand how curiosity may facilitate learning, Gurholt's discussion of children's curious play offers an insight. Gurholt's discussion illustrates how inner curiosity encourages children to explore unfamiliar objects and situations in Nature through sensory, physical and emotional experiences, which help them develop knowledge and physical skills. (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016)

Examining my learning experiences of skiing in forests with children's curious play in Nature, I realized that, as an adult, I overlooked my inner curiosity and thwarted my openness toward exploring the world, and my thoughts and mind were occupied by different tasks in life. The novel environments in Nature are not only full of knowledge and skills for me to learn as they are for children, they also increase my curiosity, an important drive for both children and adults to explore and learn about the world.

The discussion above demonstrates how I learned from my experiences skiing in forests. As different natural spaces and landscapes may endow cross-country skiers with different experiences, natural spaces like mountains provided me with different experiences of skiing, snow and landscapes. My experiences of skiing in mountainous areas were connected to skiing with deep snow and strong wind, which challenged my strength in a way I had not experienced while skiing in forests. The following example elaborates how my experiences of skiing in the mountains differ from my experiences skiing in forests.

Travelling through snow-covered mountainous areas, where there was deeper snow, was a new and meaningful experience for me. Within such a natural environment, where walking through the snow might take lots of time and energy because my feet might keep sinking into the snow, skiing provided me with the opportunity to experience and explore the natural landscape in its unique way. I was able to move across vast distances faster and with less effort and I saved energy to appreciate and be amazed by the natural environments that I experienced on my cross-country skis. This

experience brought me closer to the concept of environmental awareness. Before experiencing skiing in this kind of natural environment, my concern was about how it would be to ski there. However, after having had this experience, I felt myself caring more about the environment itself. The pleasure of enjoying the beauty of Nature encouraged me to think about what a balanced and positive interaction there could be between people and Nature.

My experiences of skiing in the forests and mountains show how features of different natural environments may facilitate different learning experiences. As learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing are not only composed of techniques and knowledge of skiing, but also the spaces where people ski. The fact that cross-country skiing can be practiced in different natural spaces adds extra diversity to learning experiences of cross-country skiing. For example, while mastering the herringbone technique and the snow plow is important for skiing on hilly slopes in forests, skiing without tracks or against strong wind are situations to be cared about when skiing in the mountains. Learning to deal with challenges from diverse landscapes and outer conditions broadened my perception and understanding of Nature.

#### **4.1.2 Experiences of Time in Cross-country Skiing**

In addition to spaces, the following paragraphs discuss what kinds of learning experiences and opportunities skiing beginners may experience with the progression of time, the accumulation of experiences, and the development of skills.

The concept of time can be understood from two different perspectives, which are natural time and perceived time. Becker discussed the perceptions of time within different contexts in his article about outdoor experiences. (Becker, 2008) In Becker's discussion, the natural and linear time is an objective concept in which time passes following the rule of the clock and the division of day and night into twenty-four hours.



In contrast, perceived time is a subjective concept by which our perception of time is contextualized. For example, our perception of time in daily life may be shaped by daily routines and tasks, which specify what must be done at what time and how long each task takes. However, when people go on a journey in Nature, our perception of time will be influenced by natural elements such as sunrise and sunset because these elements play important roles in a journey in natural environments. This example explains how our perception of time can be impacted by different contexts.

Within the context of cross-country skiing, learning cross-country skiing can be considered a journey with its focus on learning how to ski. From this perspective, skiing beginners may have their perception of time influenced by or focused on their progression of learning. Within this context, the natural and linear concept of time, past, present and future, can be transformed and perceived as different stages of learning cross-country skiing, which are before, in the process of, and after learning certain knowledge and techniques of cross-country skiing. Developing the knowledge and the skills of cross-country skiing with my progression of learning allowed me to interact with the natural environment, the snow-covered landscapes, in different ways, and my understanding of myself and natural environments was broadened during this process. In other words, the progression to develop relevant knowledge and techniques of cross-country skiing was learning experiences that created opportunities for me to evaluate myself and develop a broader understanding of natural environments.

Before I learned cross-country skiing, my eyes were caught by the landscape of snow-covered forests, and I did not pay much attention to the terrains of snow-covered forests in a detailed manner. At this stage, I was like a visitor to the snow-covered forests, and this natural environment felt like a distant world that I had never seen in its real appearance before. With time progressing, experiences of learning cross-country skiing brought me to a different stage in which I could ski further into Nature and had to

evaluate my own condition and skills, observe natural surroundings and discover new details, and see what I could and needed to do like an explorer. As a skiing beginner, I got used to paying attention to the trails and slopes that I skied, reflecting on whether my actions were well adapted to the natural environment and foreseeing problem that might happen if something went wrong. This problem-solving process encouraged me to strive for a broader and deeper understanding of the natural environment; at the same time, this process also facilitated my self-examination by reflecting on my own practice of cross-country skiing. These processes transformed my perception of the natural environment, snow-covered forests, from an unknown world to a new-found land where lots of new learning experiences were happening. With the learning progression continuing, I acquired relevant knowledge and learned different techniques of cross-country skiing, which endowed me with the confidence to try to ski on even more challenging terrains, or to learn and practice new skiing techniques like skate skiing. At this stage, in which the learning process continued, and some basic knowledge and skills had been developed, the snow-covered forests were turned from a new-found land into a playground, where I could explore and enjoy natural environments in a different way and have different learning experiences. In conclusion, the progression of learning cross-country skiing not only created opportunities for me to interact and explore Nature, but also provided opportunities for me to reflect on my personal strengths and development.

## **4.2 The Aspect of the Social and Cultural Environment**

Social and cultural learning is an important aspect for understanding outdoor activities because outdoor activities often reflect core values in certain social and cultural contexts in which they are developed. This section is devoted to exploring my cultural learning experiences of cross-country skiing in Norway.

#### **4.2.1 The Social and Cultural Environment in Cross-country Skiing**

Regarding the social and cultural environment of cross-country skiing, my learning experiences within this dimension come from my subjective understandings gained through observations and actions done by others from their contextualized positions. This section will present how my observations and actions of local skiers conceive the images of the modern cultural environment of cross-country skiing.

To explore the images of cross-country skiing in modern society, situations related to cross-country skiing that occur in society will be discussed in order to form a basic structure of the images that reflect the modern cultural environment of cross-country skiing. Upon this basic structure, subjective and lived experiences will be explored to capture actual practices embodied within this cultural environment, which provide details to the basic structure. With the images formed from lived experiences and current situations of cross-country skiing, this section aims to explore the contemporary cultural images of cross-country skiing and identify cultural learning experiences and opportunities that cross-country skiing beginners may encounter within the natural, social, and cultural context of cross-country skiing.

For the current situations regarding the cultural environment of cross-country skiing, one of them is that the activity of cross-country skiing is supported by different nongovernmental organizations whose work increases the opportunities and encourages the practices of cross-country skiing. For example, Skiforeningen (The Association for the Promotion of Skiing) marks the winter trails for cross-country skiing on trees and signposts in the forests around Oslo, while Den Norske Turistforening (The Tourist Association) marks trails in mountainous areas all over the country. The trail markings by both associations encourage people to do cross-country skiing in Nature because

these marks reduce the pressure due to possibly getting lost in forests or snow-covered mountainous areas.

One controversy of marking skiing trails may be whether these marks make cross-country skiing experiences less adventurous than before. While mastering some traditional navigation skills, including observing the natural surroundings, reading maps and using a compass, may still be regarded as helpful, these skills are no longer essential for survival on skiing trips that can be done by following marked skiing trails. For skiers who want to challenge themselves, it is still possible to explore or create one's own skiing trails by not following marks or going on skiing expeditions in the wilderness where there are no marks at all. However, some traditional skills mentioned above are no longer requirements for doing cross-country skiing in some natural areas.

In addition to the marking of skiing trails, another action that reflects how cross-country skiing is facilitated within the modern cultural environment in Norway is the making of skiing tracks. This involves logging, cutting down trees and branches and creating open spaces, thereby making movement on skis possible. Skiforeningen prepares and maintains different kinds of skiing tracks in the forests, including tracks on wider trails groomed by grooming machine and tracks on narrower areas groomed by snowmobile. These skiing tracks can serve as guidance for skiers to move straight on snow-covered landscapes especially for beginners, who have less control of skis. With the support of skiing tracks, it becomes easier for skiers with less skiing experiences to ski in forests. In other words, the efforts to make skiing tracks make skiing in forests possible for more people of different skiing experiences and techniques.

Trails marking and tracks making are examples of how the activity of cross-country skiing is supported by Norwegian society. While the marking of trails and the making of tracks are partly supported by municipalities and partly contributed by associations like Skiforeningen, according to the *allemannsrett*, the public right of

access law in Norway, all trails are free to be used by everyone and free of charge. (Friluftsløven, 1957) Although signposts for directions and skiing tracks may increase the opportunities for skiers of different skiing experiences and techniques to ski in Nature such as in forests or even some mountainous areas, one may still question cross-country skiing accessibility in the contemporary cultural environment in Norway.

Participation in skiing activities among different groups of people may be influenced by several factors. Genders, ages, ethnic or cultural identities, and economic status are all factors that may influence people's preferences and opportunities to participate in activities that they do or would like to do. However, in the case of cross-country skiing, accessibility plays a crucial role that determines whether one can participate in skiing activities or not. As the cost of doing cross-country skiing, including skiing equipment and transportation to the places where one can ski, can be more expensive than many other physical activities, such as jogging or hiking, accessibility to skiing areas and equipment plays an important role when it comes to the participation of skiing activities. While families of higher economic status can be active in skiing activities for cultural, health or recreational reasons, families of lower incomes may not be able to afford the cost for skiing equipment and travelling to places where they can do cross-country skiing.

The situation mentioned above shows that socioeconomic status can be a barrier that prevents some people, who would like to ski but cannot afford the cost, from doing cross-country skiing. To the issue of accessibility to skiing equipment and the places where cross-country skiing can be practiced, not only non-governmental organizations but also the public sector try to make doing cross-country skiing in Nature more accessible. For example, most counties and municipalities in Norway support the activity of cross-country skiing by making skiing tracks. With the efforts of local counties and the support from non-governmental organizations like Skiforeningen, there

are skiing tracks all over different areas of Norway that are free of charge and open to everyone. These cross-country skiing tracks increase the accessibility to places where one can practice cross-country skiing because they are free and often in forests close to residential areas, which minimizes the time and cost of transportation. As for accessibility to skiing equipment, non-governmental organizations like Skiforeningen lend out skiing equipment for free on public events that aim to promote physical activities in Nature, such as Markadagen (The Forest Day) or Friluftslivets dag (The Outdoor Life Day), so that many people who do not have their own equipment can experience cross-country skiing. In addition to the non-governmental organization, there is also a local county organization that contributes to increasing access to skiing activities and equipment. The outdoor organization in Oslo County, FRIGO, (The Outdoor Center in Old Oslo), organizes skiing trips for children and teenagers in winter and provides skiing equipment that everyone can borrow for free regardless of one's age or citizenship. Examples here show how non-governmental organizations and the public sector in Norway try to facilitate access to skiing equipment and skiing areas and promote physical outdoor activities and natural experiences during the winter season.

In conclusion, the examples of marking skiing trails, making skiing tracks and lending skiing equipment reflect the modern cultural environment of cross-country skiing in Norway. Within this cultural environment, both public and voluntary sectors in Norway put effort into engaging more people in doing cross country skiing in Nature by increasing opportunities to ski in natural environments, and accessibility to skiing equipment and areas where one can ski or learn to ski.

The discussion above presents the images of the modern cultural environment of cross-country skiing in Norway from a relatively objective perspective. In the following paragraphs, my lived experiences observing and interacting with cross-country skiers in Norway will be discussed to explore how local people perceive and respond to the

cultural environment around them and make themselves part of the cultural environment of cross-country skiing. In other words, the following section will focus on local skiers who are within and part of the cultural environment of cross-country skiing.

When I was skiing in Norwegian forests, one phenomenon that impressed me was the variety of groups of skiers active in cross-country skiing. There were mixed families of children and adults going on a skiing hike, the elderly enjoying strolling in the forests on their skis, children and youth groups learning and practicing cross-country skiing and experienced skiers having intense training for techniques and physical condition. This phenomenon showed me that the Norwegian cultural environment of cross-country skiing seems to be open and inclusive for skiers of different ages and intentions, including skiing for training or skiing as a leisure activity. In addition to the phenomenon mentioned above, the following examples reveal the perceptions and attitudes that local skiers may have toward the cultural environment of cross-country skiing through my experiences interacting and talking with them while skiing in forests.

Among many skiing trips in forests, I was able to ski with Norwegian local skiers several times and I listened to them sharing their knowledge and stories of cross-country skiing. One of the skiers with whom I skied was a physical therapist. We started our conversation because he noticed that I tried to ski but my movements were not well balanced, which were the result of a lack of proper technique and a twist of my ankle. While we talked and skied together in Nordmarka (The North Forest of Oslo), he showed me the areas where the old Norwegian king, Olav, used to ski wearing a smile on his face. Along the way, he also tried to teach me how to maintain good balance and glide in a rhythmical way, which are basic moves in cross-country skiing. “Many people focus on kicking the skis back to move themselves forward, but good gliding is equally important,” he said. His enthusiastic sharing of the story that the Norwegian king skied in the forests reflected that he appreciated the cultural environment within which it was

possible for people of different titles and employment to do the same activity, cross-country skiing, in the same trails. Besides, his coaching of cross-country skiing techniques for me not only showed his kindness but also how he valued the competence of being able to move efficiently in snow-covered landscapes on skis, which was based on skills and knowledge developed in the natural environment.

Another Norwegian local skier with whom I skied was an elderly man in his seventies who was skiing in forests. We were both skiing alone and heading in the same direction, so we accompanied each other and shared our story of cross-country skiing. He told me that he had some problem with his knees, so that his daughter thought he should stop skiing to protect his knees. However, he really enjoyed doing cross-country skiing; therefore, instead of stop skiing, he put more wax under his skis to increase friction, which would slow his gliding phase but help him walk uphill. His story showed his passion for skiing and how cross-country skiing has become an important part of his life, which could not be easily given up without losing much of his identity and quality of life. In a broader context, being in Nature and skiing, which is appreciated in the cultural environment of cross-country skiing, had been deeply adopted and embodied by him.

Images resulting from the Norwegian cultural environment of cross-country skiing are embodied and understood here through an insight into how public and voluntary sectors facilitate the cultural environment by increasing the opportunities and accessibility for individuals to do cross-country skiing in Nature in self-organized ways. Moreover, the perceptions and reactions of local skiers who have lived within this cultural environment for decades reflect the phenomenon that skills and knowledge of cross-country skiing are valued in the cultural environment of cross-country skiing.

In earlier times, snow covered some areas in Nordic countries, for example Oslo, for around four to five months, and even longer in the north and mountains. Under the



circumstance, the ability to be able to move on a snow-covered landscape on skis was a valued competence within this natural environment. Although the number of days with good snow conditions for skiing have been reduced due to climate change during the last three to four decades, physical techniques of skiing as an outdoor skill and knowledge of Nature are still valued. In the cultural environment of cross-country skiing, these competences make it possible to enjoy Nature all year, even in winter.

Reflecting on my learning experiences of cross-country skiing from a cultural perspective, I realized that my experiences of cross-country skiing went beyond learning skiing techniques and acquiring knowledge of natural environments. In fact, I developed a deeper understanding of the relationship between cross-country skiing and its natural and cultural environments by experiencing how the culture of cross-country skiing is inextricably linked to natural environments and valued in its cultural environment.

### **4.3 The Aspect of Body Movements**

Body movements include different elements such as strength, flexibility and balance, which influence how people can move and support their bodies. Learning cross-country skiing can be good training for leg-strength and balance of body. As cross-country skiers must shift weight between both sides while kicking and gliding the skis, skiers are encouraged to develop strength and balance to maintain a stable position for shifting their weight smoothly. Beyond the physical development of body movements, my experiences in learning cross-country skiing also encouraged me to reflect on the relationship between human body movements and Nature. While learning cross-country skiing, I developed a body awareness to reflect on how my body movements were shaped by natural elements, such as the shapes of landscapes and the textures of snow in the context of cross-country skiing, and how the medium through

which I interacted with Nature, which referred to skis in the context of cross-country skiing, influenced my body movements in a natural environment.

#### **4.3.1 Experiences of Body Movements in Cross-country Skiing**

The following paragraphs pertain to my bodily experiences of learning cross-country skiing. My bodily experiences of cross-country skiing consist of two main factors, natural environments and skis, the medium connecting Nature and me. While the features of cross-country skis facilitate certain corporeal movements, the variety of natural environments encourage different ways to maneuver skis, which brings about corresponding bodily experiences of cross-country skiing.

To improve my cross-country skiing techniques, in addition to finding my balance on skis, I tried to conduct powerful and effective gliding. To achieve more powerful gliding, I learned to use my body weight to press the skis down to the snow for more friction. Besides, to increase the pushing force, I learned to push the ski poles with my body weight instead of only with the strength of my arms. Practicing these bodily movements improved my control of body weight and movements. Moreover, to have these bodily movements work effectively, I tried to do these movements at the right moment in the rhythm of skiing. During these learning experiences, I felt that my body was coordinated and integrated with the skis and my bodily strength was transferred to the skis through my body movements.

In addition to the experiences of learning how to ski, my bodily experiences of cross-country skiing also come from learning to use skis to adapt to different natural environments. For example, I learned the herringbone technique to climb uphill; however, when the trails are too narrow to point both skis outward, my skis started sliding backwards. To deal with this situation, I learned to walk upwards sideways, with both skis leaning upwards on narrow slopes. These two different ways to ski uphill let

me realize that I could use different bodily movements to ski in different ways that are adapted to different natural environments.

For example, when using the herringbone technique, the inside edge of both feet needs to be pressed out to carve both skis into the snow and push skiers upwards, but to walk up sideways, skis have to stay parallel and carve into the snow with their edge that is higher on the slope, which means that the ski, which is higher on the slope, carves into the snow with the outside edge and the ski, which is lower on the slope, carves into the snow with its inside edge. Depending on the terrain, a skier's body may face different directions; therefore, the inside and outside edge of both feet can be used for walking uphill sideways.

These examples above shows how I learned to take advantage of the power of skis and use skis to adapt to natural environments by developing control of my body position, body weight and even minor bodily movements such as edging the feet.

In addition to the whole or partial body movements mentioned above, skiing in natural environments like forests also helped me develop the balance and strength of my body. For instance, when the temperature was warm and there was not much snow, the skiing trails could be icy and there might be dents in them; or after a windy day there might be leaves, branches, and pinecones on the trails, to prevent skis from losing control on slippery icy snow or getting stuck in dents or being stopped by stuff on the ground, I learned to lift one ski that might encounter these situations and glided through the area that had a better condition for skis on another ski. Over time, I felt that trying to ski over certain areas on one ski strengthened my leg muscles and improved my bodily balance.

In conclusion, learning how to use cross-country skis and exploring natural environments by skiing provided me with the opportunities to explore my body, including body movements, body coordination, control of weight transfer, use of certain

muscles, muscle strength and body balance and so on. Moreover, through practicing cross-country skiing, I was enabled in combining nature awareness with body awareness, which refers to the ability to carefully read and feel natural elements, such as the textures of snow and the shapes and conditions of slopes, and to react accordingly with my body movements.

#### **4.4 The Aspect of Emotions**

This section will explore emotions that may be experienced by doing cross-country skiing and how these emotions may be learning opportunities for skiing beginners. People's emotions responding to similar situations may differ from person to person. For example, failing to achieve a goal may make some people feel desperate, make others calm down and reflect on themselves, or make still others get motivated and passionate to work harder. However, people's emotions also have similarities due to human nature. Plutchik's research examines emotions through an evolutionary approach and suggests that emotions serve practical functions in the lives of individuals. Therefore, the emotion of fear, which may keep humans from danger, is believed to be human nature that is developed and may be triggered to deal with challenges for survival. (Plutchik, 2001) Besides, referring to Zuckerman's concept of sensation seeking, which indicates the part of human nature that seeks excitement in order to experience novel, pleasurable and positive feelings, and Elias and Dunning's concept of the quest for excitement, which indicates how modern society, which is relatively safe and controlled, suppresses the human nature of seeking excitement, Breivik's research identifies the need of risk taking in modern society. (Breivik, 2007) Further examining the concept of the quest of excitement, Thing's study discusses how sports serve a societal function in modern society by providing a free space for the outlet of emotions

and loosening self-restraint. (Thing, 2016) The phenomenon discussed in Breivik's and Thing's studies manifests the part of human nature that seeks excitement.

To keep the discussion here relevant to cross-country skiing and meaningful for skiing beginners, the emotions discussed here will be those facilitated by doing cross-country skiing and triggered by the human nature, here referring to emotions most skiing beginners may experience while learning cross-country skiing.

#### **4.4.1 Experiences of Emotions Provoked by Learning Cross-country Skiing**

Emotions that I experienced while learning cross-country skiing are facilitated by two factors mentioned above in the discussion of bodily movements, the skis and the natural environment. While learning to use skis to explore and adapt to natural environments, fear and excitement are two opposing emotions that are believed to be triggered by human nature according to the studies of Plutchik, Breivik and Thing, and they turned out to be developmental experiences that were of value to me.

When it comes to fear, I was insecure about my ability to be in control and balanced on skis in the beginning, which made me feel afraid of falling. In addition to the fear resulting from the insecurity of my skiing abilities, natural elements like frozen lakes to some extent also made me feel afraid because I might fall into a lake and get stuck under the ice if the ice layer was not solid enough to bear my weight. Although my sense of insecurity in my skiing ability and unpredictable situations in Nature created fearful moments in my skiing experiences, these moments let me realize that being afraid of unknown things is normal. The feeling of fear did not always have to stop me from trying new things; instead, it encouraged me to learn from challenging situations that skiing brought me into by evaluating situations and trying to develop proper reactions.

For example, falling while skiing may hurt, but to what extent the falling hurts depends on various factors including speed and terrain. Understanding this situation, I tried to slow my skis down while skiing on steeper slopes and kept the center of my body weight lower to better adapt to uneven bumps on skiing trails. As for skiing over frozen lakes, knowing the potential risk of falling into lakes made me be cautious and aware of this kind of landscape and encouraged me to learn relevant knowledge about natural environments. For example, I learned how to read the landscape and find out where streams came into the lake or ran out of it - as these points made the ice become weaker and unsecure, and I learned to consider how the seasons and temperature influence the conditions of lakes. Evaluating and understanding these situations made me feel safer and daring to try things outside of my comfort zone and helped me to turn fearful moments into learning experiences. In short, the feeling of fear encouraged me to evaluate situations around the experiences, which often led to a cognitive development.

I experienced the emotion of excitement when I managed to cope with challenging and fearful situations in skiing by acquiring new techniques or knowledge. Achieving goals that heretofore seemed to be impossible for me, gave me a sense of achievement, which made me believe in my learning ability and feel motivated and excited to explore my potentials and learn new knowledge and techniques. Failures and depression also happened to me while learning skiing; however, these situations ended up being important learning experiences that made me feel excited about obtaining better self-understanding. An examination of these experiences can be further developed through Loynes' study, which identifies similarities between outdoor adventures and Campbell's stages of "The Hero's Journey", whereby a hero returns with treasure after undergoing a transition that involves crossing a threshold. According to Loynes, the uncertainty in outdoor adventures, which is also an important element of the threshold

in The Hero's Journey, may create an unknown space where a transition may occur. (Loynes, 2008) Loynes's study shows how stages of The Hero's Journey may be applied to examine and understand experiences of outdoor adventure.

While examining my experiences of learning cross-country skiing through the stages proposed in The Hero's Journey, I realized that skiing techniques and knowledge of snow-covered landscapes represented several thresholds that I had to face before being able to ski confidently. Confronting the threshold and learning about elements that were unknown to me before, such as skis and snow, were experiences that challenged me; however, overcoming challenges rewarded me with an increased confidence in my personal and learning abilities and the motivation and excitement to further explore my potentials. For instance, being able to ski down a gentle slope without falling encouraged me to challenge myself with steeper slopes and to explore my potentials.

In addition to the experiences of crossing a threshold, the threshold itself, which involves failures and depression, was also rewarding and exciting for me. Confronting a threshold that I could not cross immediately made me feel depressed but also excited, as I had to figure out how I could manage to cross the threshold by improving my self-understanding. For example, failing to make a powerful hockey stop, a skiing technique to make a stop on skis, without having my skis crossed and falling was a threshold I encountered while learning skiing. Excited to cross the threshold, I tried to identify the weaknesses that prevented me from mastering this technique, and my strengths, which might help me cross the threshold. The process of trying to learn the hockey stop technique let me realize my weakness, which was that I was not able to lift, turn and edge my skis with the right timing, and my strength, which was my courage to try and practice again and again.

Another element, which led to my experience of excitement, is exploring the natural world by skiing. One time, I was trying to explore the situations and feelings of skiing at night. It was a night with a full moon and a clear sky, and so I expected to see the trail with moon light. I was able to see the trail's direction, but the brightness made a big difference on identifying ice and contour and so the bumps were barely seen at night, which created many unexpected falls. Scratches from these falls hurt but I felt joyful and excited because I experienced a situation that was unknown to me. This experience made me feel humble, open-minded, excited and eager to explore the natural world.

In short, the emotion of excitement plays an important role in my learning experiences of cross-country skiing. When overcoming challenges, the excitement of achievement allowed me to believe in my competence and explore my potentials. In difficult situations, the excitement of learning about how I could manage to acquire new techniques or knowledge and deal with novel situations in natural environments encouraged me to understand my strengths and weaknesses. Confronting Nature, the excitement and joy of learning new things encouraged me to keep on exploring the world.

The discussion above shows that fear, depression, excitement and joy are emotions that I experienced while learning cross-country skiing, which facilitated my personal development.



## **5. Chapter Five- Lived Experiences of Water Activities and Comparison of Cross-country Skiing and Water Activities**

This chapter will explore learning experiences and opportunities of water activities through the same analytical framework and four themes used above and compare the lived experiences of water activities with my experiences in cross-country skiing. This comparison responds to the second research question of this study, which is to understand general learning experiences and opportunities of outdoor activities.

### **5.1 Lived Experiences of Water Activities**

#### **5.1.1 Natural Spaces and Time in Water Activities**

An important reason to compare cross-country skiing with water activities is that people are exposed to different natural environments while learning different outdoor activities. While cross-country skiing is commonly practiced in forests and mountains, water activities are often practiced in seas, rivers and lakes. This section will explore what people might experience while learning water activities in a natural environment and how learning experiences in natural environments of water might transform with the progression of time and technique development.

When it comes to learning experiences of water activities, the sea is a space where many people learn water activities. Therefore, this research aims to uncover how people may experience and learn from the sea by exploring the lived experiences of sea surfing. In Loynes' research on oceanic learning, an outdoor educator mentioned that surfers tend to develop global awareness and consider global issues important because oceans make surfers feel connected to the whole globe, which is physically true as waves on one side of the world can be generated from weather systems of another side

through oceans and surfers tend to pay attention to this kind of event to predict waves. (Loynes, 2010) This example uncovers a potential learning experience of the sea.

In terms of how time progression and technique development may transform learning experiences of water activities, the lived experiences of a free diver, which reflected the process of her learning to dive deeper and feel the sensation of freefalling, can serve as an example. (Strandvad, 2018) The free diver was scared and could not dive as deep as she wanted in the beginning; however, learning to dive slowly and to calm herself reduced her stress, which made her oxygen last longer. Acquiring these techniques created enjoyable free diving experiences for her and allowed her to recognize the sensation of freefalling, which was new to her. Reflecting on her own learning experiences along a time progression, the free diver described her experiences as a learning process to produce, recognize and enjoy sensations. From this description, it can be inferred that the experiences of free diving provided the free diver opportunities to produce, recognize and enjoy new experiences of water while developing free diving techniques over time.

### **5.1.2 The Social and Cultural Environment in Water Activities**

In this section, cultural experiences of water activities will be examined to explore potential cultural learning of water activities, which may include cultural artifacts, technical skills and cognitive knowledge of cultures and Nature.

Experiences of sailing with a wooden tall ship let me realize an inextricable link between the culture of tall ship sailing and Nature. For example, planks used to build wooden ships are made of trees and the paint used to prevent them from rotting due to humidity can also be extracted from trees. Moreover, as winds provide the force to drive tall ships, the culture of using sails to drive tall ships developed to take advantage of the

force of winds. Also, the teamwork and shifts on board are part of the culture of tall ship sailing, which developed to respond to unpredictable situations in voyages on the sea.

In addition to tall ships, in examining canoes as cultural artifacts, the construction of canoes also reflects a close relationship between the cultures of canoeing and natural environments. Examples can be seen in Heizer's study of the Chumash Indians' canoes in Santa Barbara. The Chumash canoe was a frameless plank canoe, which seemed not to be as solid as canoes with a frame and ribs, but it worked in the calm water of the Santa Barbara channel. For the Norther Chumash, who lived on a rough seacoast other different types of canoes developed in their culture. (Heizer, 1940) This phenomenon exemplified how the construction and the cultures of canoes were related and adapted to local natural environments.

In addition to the relationship between Nature and culture, which is reflected through the construction of canoes, the lived experiences of a canoeing trip recorded by Mullins and Maher (Mullins & Maher, 2007) further illustrate how the outdoor water activity, canoeing, provides opportunities through which canoeists can experience and explore the relationship between the culture of canoeing and natural environments. To navigate and paddle a canoe through rivers and open lakes, the canoeists on this canoeing trip needed to read the direction of currents, identify the size and location of rapids and understand how wind, rain, cloud cover and air temperature influence the movements of water. These situations encouraged the canoeists to see, hear and feel various water landscapes and experience how the culture of canoeing is related to natural environments. In other words, canoeing, as an outdoor activity, can be a medium through which canoeists can experience and learn about the culture of canoeing, which not only involves paddling skills but also an understanding of the close relationship between the culture of canoeing and natural environments.

### **5.1.3 Body Movements in Water Activities**

In this section, body movements of water activities will be discussed to explore bodily experiences in outdoor water activities.

Andersson and Östman explored body movements in water environments through a transactional approach, which emphasizes the process for acquiring tacit knowing. (Andersson & Östman, 2015) The process includes encountering problematic situations, identifying the gap between an individual's ability and desired movements, and looking for ways to bridge the gap. Their study exemplified this process by analyzing a girl learning to steer a dinghy boat without a rudder by moving and placing her body weight in the boat to use the force of water. The girl's lived experiences uncovered the process in which she experimented with and experienced how the course of a dinghy boat on water corresponded to her body's leaning movements.

The lived experiences of learning dinghy sailing not only present the kinds of bodily movements that may be experienced by learning this water activity, but also encourages a reflection on how our bodily experiences are influenced or facilitated by equipment used for specific outdoor activities. Since the equipment serves as a medium connecting our practices and natural environments, it is an important element that shapes bodily experiences in outdoor activities. For example, while dinghy sailing may encourage sailors to coordinate their body to steer the rudder, place their weight and control the rope and sail, tall ship sailing may require teamwork or using special tools to maneuver such bigger and heavier vessels, which can facilitate totally different bodily experiences.

### **5.1.4 Emotions in Water Activities**

Emotions people experience while learning outdoor activities can be triggered by features of different natural environments in the outdoors. For water activities,

various features of water such as depth and the temperature of water, darkness, pressure and the necessity of holding breath in the water may lead to certain emotional experiences. This section will explore emotions that may be experienced while doing outdoor water activities, using scuba diving as an example.

Among many water activities, scuba diving may provide experiences very different from land-based outdoor activities, as scuba divers get themselves immersed under water, which is a totally different physical environment than the world on land. Therefore, exploring the lived experiences of scuba diving may uncover emotional experiences that are involked and facilitated specifically by an aquatic environment.

Straughen's research on the lived experiences of scuba divers discusses how emotions may be mobilized by sensations, which are experienced through an interaction with a material environment. (Straughen, 2012) In the case of scuba diving, because sound waves in the air cannot be transmitted well into water, a distinctive feature of the aquatic environment is silence. Combined with the rhythmical breathing developed to maintain buoyance, scuba divers in Straighen's study described how they experienced a meditative state and felt calm, relaxed and a sense of well-being in an aquatic environment. Straighen's research shows how the silence in an aquatic environment and the rhythmical breathing of scuba divers facilitate emotional experiences of calmness, which may have therapeutic value.

## **5.2 Comparison of Cross-country Skiing and Water Activities**

This section compares learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and water activities uncovered by lived experiences, and this comparison will follow four themes used for previous discussion, space and time, the social and cultural environment, body movements and emotions.

For the aspect of space and time, in terms of spaces, my experiences reveal how the diverse natural landscapes of cross-country skiing, such as forests and mountains, encouraged me to be curious and observant about Nature and allowed me to develop environmental awareness while learning to deal with unexpected situations encountered in the outdoors. For water activities, the example of surfing shows how experiences with the sea may facilitate global awareness. The examples of cross-country skiing and sea surfing exemplify how outdoor activities may facilitate learning experiences and opportunities from or indirectly derived from different natural spaces.

When it comes to the concept of time, my learning progression in cross-country skiing gave me the opportunity to evaluate my own abilities and broadened my understanding of natural environments with newly-acquired knowledge and techniques. Similarities can be found in lived experiences of water activities, as the free diver in the example above explained how acquiring new techniques allowed her to produce, recognize and enjoy new experiences. With these examples, it can be assumed that acquiring knowledge and new techniques of different outdoor activities may enrich participants' self-understanding and enables them to gain new experiences and understanding of natural environments.

For the aspect of the social and cultural environment, my experiences showed how learning cross-country skiing facilitated my understanding of the relationship between cross-country skiing and its natural and cultural environments. Similarly, the examples of water activities, tall ship sailing and canoeing, uncovered how different outdoor activities and the equipment for different outdoor activities can be cultural artifacts through which participants can experience and understand the relationship between the culture of an outdoor activity and Nature.

For the aspect of body movements, by comparing my experiences of cross-country skiing and the lived experiences of dinghy sailing, it can be seen that different

ways of moving and coordinating the body may be learned and developed through different outdoor activities. This difference reflects the fact that equipment developed and used to adapt to different natural environments and outdoor activities requires and facilitates different body movements, which creates unique opportunities provided by different outdoor activities to explore body movements.

For the aspect of emotions, some challenges I encountered while learning cross-country skiing were fearful and frustrating; however, they facilitated my understanding of myself and motivated me to explore and understand different situations in natural environments by giving me a sense of excitement, achievement and joy. In other words, emotions provoked by cross-country skiing facilitated my personal development. The lived experiences of scuba diving reflect how different emotions may be provoked by features of different outdoor environments by revealing how an aquatic environment and the features of water may provoke a feeling of calm, which implies potential therapeutic value of scuba diving.

While the emotions I experienced through learning cross-country skiing, fear and excitement, may also be experienced by people learning water activities, the comparison of cross-country skiing and water activities reflects that different outdoor activities may facilitate different emotional experiences provoked by specific natural environments, and different emotional experiences may carry different values, such as developmental or therapeutic values.

### **5.2.1 Examining Similar and Different Learning Experiences and Opportunities in Cross-country Skiing and Water Activities**

Through the comparison above, we can identify similar learning experiences and opportunities in cross-country skiing and water activities. In terms of spaces, the experiences of both outdoor activities provide opportunities for developing knowledge

of natural environments where an outdoor activity is practiced. Moreover, in both outdoor activities, the learning progression resulting from acquiring new knowledge and techniques over time broadens participants' self-understanding and their perceptions and knowledge of natural environments within which they do outdoor activities.

Another common trait of outdoor activities can be seen from the social and culture aspect, exemplified by my experiences exploring the cross-country skiing culture by means of skiing and the lived experiences of canoeing in Nature. These examples demonstrate that outdoor activities may not only be ways to learn about cultures around a specific outdoor activity, but also provide unique ways through which people can experience and understand the relationship between cultures of different outdoor activities and Nature.

In addition to similarities, the comparison above also uncovers different learning experiences and opportunities that derive from different environments and equipment of different outdoor activities. In the examples of cross-country skiing and water activities, outdoor activities enable participants to gain a deeper and broader understanding of spaces involved in an outdoor activity and concepts related to these spaces, such as the natural awareness developed from my experiences of skiing in forests and mountains and the global awareness developed from experiences of sea surfing. Besides, outdoor activities often encourage participants to explore body movements that are important or necessary for learning specific outdoor activities. However, experiences of spaces and body movements explored through different outdoor activities can be different due to different natural environments and elements, such as forests and sea or snow and water, and the equipment involved in activities, such as skis and a dinghy boat.

Moreover, some differences in learning experiences and opportunities may also result from different natural environments and different ways people understand and benefit from their outdoor experiences, which can be illustrated by comparing emotional



experiences in cross-country skiing and water activities. While my experiences show how the fear and the excitement I experienced through cross-country skiing facilitated my personal development, the scuba divers mentioned in the previous discussion described how an aquatic environment made them feel calm, which can be understood from a therapeutic perspective and associated with well-being.

### **5.2.2 Examining the Results of the Comparison through an Ecological Approach**

Comparing of similar and different learning experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities demonstrates a phenomenon that learning experiences of outdoor activities are situated in contexts. That is, all kinds of factors, including natural landscapes, social environments, equipment and personal perceptions can influence the learning experiences of outdoor activities.

This phenomenon calls for an approach that examines learning experiences of outdoor activities from a broader context. Mullins's study proposes examining learning experiences of outdoor activities through the participatory ecological approach, which regards humans as participants in a dynamic environment. (Mullins, 2014) Recognizing that the dynamic interrelationship between personal perceptions, skilled actions, natural environments and other ignored factors may create different experiences, this ecological participatory approach manifests the importance and possibility of understanding the learning experiences of outdoor activities through different contexts or perspectives.

Moreover, this ecological participatory approach identifies the importance of recognizing and understanding that the learning experiences of outdoor activities discussed in this research are explored through an educational and developmental context in which the experience of learning is the focus.

### **5.2.3 Examining the Results of the Comparison through Experiential Learning Theory and Psychological Research and Their Implications**

In an educational and developmental context, the learning experiences understood through the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities can be further analyzed through the experiential learning theory of Dewey. The study of Ord and Leather discusses the concepts of transaction and continuity in Dewey's theory of experiential learning. (Ord & Leather) This study illustrates the concept of transaction in which an individual interacts with the environment through two major experiences, trying to act upon to understand the environment and undergoing the consequence. Through a reflection, which may happen during or after the transactional experience, meaning is constructed as the consequence of the trying and undergoing an experience. The same study also discussed another concept of Dewey's experiential learning theory, continuity, which claims the meaning of our present experience is influenced by previous experience and will influence future experience.

Similarities can be seen between these two concepts in Dewey's experiential learning theory and the elements of effective and long-lasting learning experiences discussed in Mackenzie et al.'s research in the literature review. Mackenzie et al.'s research discusses the autonomy in the self-determination theory, which leads to effective learning, and the broadening process in the broaden and build theory, which facilitates long-lasting learning experiences. (Mackenzie et al., 2014)

For the concept of transaction, as a transactional experience involves trying, which is often an autonomous action, a transactional learning experience can be considered autonomous and an effective learning experience. Although one can be passively asked to try something, lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities show that outdoor environments may facilitate autonomous trying. For example, various snow conditions in the forests intrigued my curiosity, which motivated

me trying to explore the forests, and the feeling of calmness facilitated by the silence under the water motivated the scuba divers discussed above to try to dive into the water.

For the concept of continuity, while the meaning of present experience is shaped by previous experience, it can be assumed that the meaning of previous experience may also be broadened by present experience, which is a process that may lead to a different kind of broadening. These two kinds of different broadening processes can be illustrated by the lived experiences of time progression and technique development in cross-country skiing and water activities.

In the broaden and build theory, the broadening process happens while people experience positive emotions. Taking my experience of skiing as example, the joy and excitement that I experienced when acquiring new knowledge and techniques encouraged me to further explore natural environments and the potential of my abilities, which broadened my perceptions and understanding of environments and myself.

The assumption that present experience may influence the meaning of previous experience, which is inferred from the concept of continuity in Dewey's experiential learning theory, may lead to another kind of broadening. This kind of broadening process can be exemplified through the lived experience of freediving discussed in this research. With improved diving techniques, the free diver experienced freefalling and realized that this sensation did not exist in her previous freediving experience. In other words, this new and present experience of freefalling broadened her understanding of her previous experience of freediving.

The discussion above illustrates how the concepts of transaction and continuity in Dewey's experiential learning theory can help to understand how the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities analyzed in this research can be meaningful, effective and long-lasting learning experiences. The processes of transaction and continuity in Dewey's experiential learning theory can be well

associated with the concepts of autonomous and broadening learning experiences, which are substantiated by psychological research as per the self-determination theory and the broaden and build theories to lead to meaningful, effective and long-lasting learning experiences. As the processes of transaction and continuity in Dewey's experiential learning theory can be embodied in lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities, these experiences can be assumed to be meaningful, effective and long-lasting learning experiences.

Examining the concepts of the autonomous trying and the broadening process, which are believed to lead to meaningful, effective and long-lasting learning, in a broader context of outdoor activities, the comparison of cross-country skiing and water activities shows that both the autonomous trying, which may be initiated or facilitated by features of a natural environment, and the broadening process, which may happen during technique development, happen in the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities. In other words, the comparison demonstrates that the autonomous trying and the broadening process may be common features of many outdoor activities and implies the great potential of outdoor activities to facilitate meaningful, effective and long-lasting learning experiences.

## Chapter Six- Conclusion

Inspired by hermeneutic phenomenology, this research has explored the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities through lived experiences, and the main findings in response to the research questions for this study are presented below.

For the first research question regarding the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing, my skiing experiences embodied the unique opportunities provided by cross-country skiing to experience diverse natural environments and the unique skiing culture, which, exemplified by my learning experiences, are believed to directly and indirectly lead to a broader understanding of natural and cultural environments around cross-country skiing, increase self-understanding and facilitate personal development.

As for the second research question about general learning experiences and opportunities in outdoor activities, which is developed through the comparative method, the comparison between cross-country skiing and water activities demonstrates the following findings. First, learning an outdoor activity tends to increase participants' self-understanding and their understanding of the natural and cultural environments around the engaged-in activity. Second, outdoor activities allow people to experience Nature physically and emotionally in different ways, which are facilitated by natural and cultural environments and the equipment of specific outdoor activities. Such experiences may bring new perspectives in understanding the relationships between people, cultures of different outdoor activities, and Nature.

In addition to exploring learning experiences and opportunities of outdoor activities, the participatory ecological approach helps situate lived experiences explored in this research in an educational and developmental context in which the learning

experience is the focus. To further examine learning experiences of outdoor activities in the educational and developmental context, this research explores the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities through Dewey's experiential learning theory, the self-determination theory, and the broaden and build theory, and illustrates how outdoor activities may facilitate effective, long-lasting and meaningful learning.

In addition to the findings discovered through a cross-examination between learning theories and lived experiences, the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities discussed in this research share the common trait of self-transformation, which is believed to be an important learning experiences in outdoor activities. The lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities uncovered how an outdoor environment may transform people's body sensations, ways of thinking and self-understanding through bodily, cognitive and emotional experiences. As experiences of learning outdoor activities may lead to bodily, cognitive and mental transformation, which influences people's perceptions, reflections and actions in daily life, the lived experiences of cross-country skiing and water activities uncover the potential of bodily, cognitive and emotional experiences that are facilitated through outdoor activities to be transferred and applied to situations in life.

In conclusion, this research has explored the learning experiences and opportunities of cross-country skiing and water activities from an educational and developmental perspective. It has helped to illustrate how learning experiences may be facilitated in outdoor activities through theoretical analysis and an examination of contextualized examples of cross-country skiing and water activities. Moreover, this research also identified the possibility of exploring the values of cross-country skiing and outdoor activities from other perspectives, such as their therapeutic or recreational values, in order to stimulate future research.

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