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# Children and Families' Sensemakings of Having a Dog in a Norwegian Context

Master's thesis in Childhood Studies

Supervisor: Linn Cathrin Lorgen

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# Abstract

This thesis is about understanding more of children's and their families' everyday life by delving into their sensemaking of having a dog, in general and during childhood. The thesis is written with a childhood studies lens, taking as its starting point that children are active social actors worth being studied in their own right. The project comprises how a number of families in Trøndelag make sense of the phenomenon of having dogs in a Norwegian context, as well as what role the dog has in the family structure and everyday life of the families. The findings indicate that the dogs are most commonly viewed as family members, and joy, company and unconditional love are concepts frequently emphasized when talking about dogs. The concept of dogs as binding agents is fruitful to understand how dogs can impact family relations. Other important aspects highlighted by participants comprise strengthened development of empathy and responsibility through dog keeping. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute with more knowledge on children and their families' everyday lives through exploring the meaning of having a dog, since children frequently mention pets when asked about who matters to them.

The research is of qualitative character in which the sample includes six families, with children and youth between the ages of 5.5 to 17 years old. Most parents participating were women, except for one family where a man also participated. In total there were 17 participants, therein 10 children, 7 parents, in addition to 9 dogs. The qualitative research methods used were walking interviews and family interviews. This is a way of capturing both the children's perspective by doing walking interviews solely with the children when possible, but also a family perspective when interviewing the family as a unit. The theoretical framework emphasizes intergenerationality, social constructionism and sociomateriality. Relationality is incorporated into all of those perspectives.

# Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven handler om å forstå mer av barns og deres familiers hverdagsliv gjennom å utforske deres meningsskaping rundt det å ha en hund generelt og gjennom barndommen. Masteroppgaven er skrevet med en barndomsstudielinse, og tar utgangspunkt i at barn er aktive sosiale aktører som har rett til å bli gjort forskning med som de er. Prosjektet omhandler hvordan et utvalg familier i Trøndelag skaper mening rundt det å ha hund i en norsk kontekst og ser samtidig på hvilken rolle hunden har i familiestrukturen og hverdagslivet til familiene. Funnene indikerer at hundene oftest blir sett på som et familiemedlem, og glede, selskap og ubetinget kjærlighet er begreper som hyppig blir fremhevet når deltakerne snakker om hundene. Hunder som bindemiddel er videre et fruktbart begrep for å forstå hvordan hunden påvirker familierelasjonene. Andre viktige aspekt enkelte deltakere setter søkelys på omhandler utviklingen av empati og ansvar, og hvordan hundehold bidrar til å styrke denne utviklingen. Denne masteroppgaven har som mål å bidra med mer kunnskap om barn og deres familiers hverdagsliv gjennom å utforske hvilken mening det å ha en hund innebærer, fordi barn ofte nevner kjæledyr når de blir spurt om hvem som betyr noe for dem.

Forskningen er kvalitativ og utvalget består av seks familier, hvor barna og ungdommene er mellom 5.5 til 17 år. De fleste foreldrene som deltok er kvinner, med unntak av én familie hvor en mann også deltok. Totalt var det 17 deltakere, bestående av 10 barn og 7 foreldre, i tillegg til 9 hunder. De kvalitative forskningsmetodene som er brukt er gående intervju og familieintervju. Dette er en måte å fange opp både barnas perspektiv gjennom å gjøre gående intervju alene med barna der det var mulig, men også et familieperspektiv når familien ble intervjuet som en enhet. Det teoretiske rammeverket tar for seg intergenerasjonalitet, sosialkonstruksjonisme og sosiomaterialitet. Relasjonalitet er inkorporert i alle disse perspektivene.

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# List of Acronyms

UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
SSB	Statistisk sentralbyrå (Central Bureau of Statistics)
NRK	Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian Broadcasting Company)
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
NKK	Norsk Kennel Klubb (Norwegian Kennel Club)

# 1 Introduction

Growing up I always wanted a dog. When realizing how common it is to have one or multiple dogs while growing up, my curiosity grew towards exploring this on a deeper level. The topic of children, their families, and dogs in a Norwegian context might raise questions about the meaning and value of having a dog in general and during childhood since this applies to so many. How families view having a dog can provide insight into contemporary constructions of the meaning and value of having a dog in a Norwegian context. The meaning also spans how the dog's role in the family impacts the everyday lives of the different families. Personally, I did not have a dog during childhood, but felt a very strong desire to, and I remember the frustration with not being allowed. It most likely had something to do with my sensemaking of the meaning of having a dog. I viewed having a dog as the key to happiness, and as filling a void in my life. I was under the impression that all my friends who had dogs seemed so happy, and that their dogs were the reason for this. Nevertheless, I did have guinea pigs. I had three guinea pigs when I was about 8 years old, and then two more when I was 13 years old, which all passed away within a few years. Still, this never felt quite the same as I imagined having a dog would feel like. I was convinced that there were great differences between having guinea pigs versus having dogs, and I was certain of this because of how people talked about their dog. They made sense of dogs as companions, emphasizing the relationality and the closeness of their relationship. Not to mention the possibility of bringing one's dog on vacation for example. It is not quite as easy checking in a guinea pig at the airport.

Furthermore, I wondered why my parents both grew up with a dog but decided not to bring one into my childhood, and what that would, or could, mean for me and my childhood and sensemaking of reality. While this has been in the back of my mind, a motivation for delving into the meaning of having a dog appeared. These questions and the topic of dogs during childhood and in general are also of interest in the larger academic field and for the Norwegian society. A reason for this is because the topic in addition to comprising children and dogs, also spans familial and relational aspects of having a dog. In this thesis the relationship between parents and dogs, as well as children and dogs are explored, and families and dogs are represented by children and their parents in Trøndelag, Norway. More research on children, families and dog keeping is essential because there is a lack of sociological research on the topic in the field of childhood studies. As discussed below, there is quite a bit of research done on how dogs perceive humans and children (Huber, 2016; Wanser et al., 2021). What I aim to contribute with, is how children and their families make sense of having a dog from a relational, sociomaterial, intergenerational, and social constructionist perspective. By exploring children's and parents' sensemakings on the meaning of having a dog the aim is to provide a deeper insight in, and understanding of, children's and their families' everyday lives.

When I started the master program in Childhood Studies, I discovered new perspectives and views on children and childhood, many of which I was not aware of before. I learned about different theories that changed the way I see the world, through for example learning about social constructionism, or even theories pertaining to colonialism and how one still can see repercussions of colonialism today. When I learned about the new

sociology of childhood, it inspired me to conduct research on the topic of dogs not only from a family perspective, but mainly from the children's perspective because of what I had learned about children and views on them. The new sociology of childhood comprises how the view on children has changed from becomings, to beings, to both beings and becomings simultaneously (Uprichard, 2008). This means that children should not merely be viewed in terms of what they are to become, as a future adult, but also as what they are here and now, in the present. As Hardman (2001) accentuated, one can highlight children's voices by paying attention to them as they are. The view on children went from passive, to viewing them as active social actors (Prout, 2011), meaning that they were recognized as making meaningful contributions too. This led to a strengthening of the importance of children's voices as mentioned above, and giving them more rights, more accurately participation and provision rights and not only protection rights. A more respectful view on children slowly arose, viewing them as more capable, knowledgeable people with competence worth paying attention to. This means that what children have to say matters, and that they are experts on their own lives. By being experts on their lives, I am here referring to them knowing best what is going on in their lives. Moreover, children are holders of context dependent exclusive rights. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) states that children have a right to be heard in matters affecting them, weighted according to age and maturity (art.12), and that decisions should be made in conjunction with what is in the best interest of the child (art.3). From this view, it is not necessarily possible to know what is in the best interest of the child without asking the child.

It is new views and perspectives like those above that has made it possible to study children and childhood through new, different, and more complex lenses than I had been able to before. I am bringing to light children's rights due to the centrality of them in contemporary childhoods and laws in the Norwegian context. Delving into the Norwegian context I may thus explore the meaning of having a dog during childhood in a given space and time, which childhood studies has given me the tools, and inspiration, to do.

## 1.1 The context of Norway

The context of this thesis is Norway, more particularly Trøndelag. Norway may be viewed as a country with quite a liberal and democratic system of values and cultures. For example, there is freedom of speech, and a heterogenous society with many different cultures and religions represented. A characteristic of this Norwegian culture is the commonness of having a pet during one's upbringing, and research shows that dogs as pets are seen as very crucial (Lund et al., 2010) by Norwegian dog owners. Interestingly, the majority of pet owners are families with children, according to journalist Leander (2008) in the newspaper article "Hvert tredje hjem har et kjæledyr" (translated: "Every third home has a pet"). Thus, many families with children have pets, but why is that? According to NRK (Norwegian broadcasting corporation), Norwegians tend to acquire more pets when in crisis (Thomassen & Hussain, 2020), and according to Thomassen and Hussain (2020) there was a record number of people acquiring pets during the covid pandemic. In addition to this, approximately 1 out of 3 households have a pet in Norway, wherein cats are the most common, followed by dogs (Leander, 2008).

Common for childhoods in Norway is to a large extent participation, autonomy and children being viewed as competent (Kjørholt, 2007). This involves that children are to have a bigger say in matters affecting them than before. In contemporary times it is more acceptable for them to negotiate and take part in the decision-making of the family

(Brembeck et al., 2008). This can entail taking part in decisions about their own lives, and not only being decided upon without having a say. The partaking in decision-making is also about taking children's views more seriously and seeing them as social actors (Hanson, 2016), making active choices in their lives, having their own views on matters and that these should be respected on the same level as adults views and opinions, at least to a certain extent. It is clearly evident through this view how the Norwegian society is permeated by the mindset of UNCRC. Ultimately, partaking in decision-making is about how children are a part of society too and should therefore also be heard, and listened to (Kjørholt, 2005). Decision-making can also be connected to autonomy and to participate in having a dog and adjoining responsibilities. It is likely that the older the child gets, the more responsibility it may be granted. More responsibility can mean going for walks on their own with the dog, being able to bring the dog for a hiking trip and other events. For example, in a study done by Kerry-Moran and Barker (2018) in the US, 80% of the children participating in the study regularly exercised their dog. Kjørholt (2007) emphasizes the outdoor space as important in Norwegian culture, and for Norwegian children, in addition to the importance of being in sync with nature. She furthermore addresses what is considered a "good" traditional childhood, weighting play, and leisure time where children move around somewhat freely.

Trøndelag is a county with many different seasons throughout the year and even in one day. In Trøndelag, and possibly especially in Trondheim, it can both be sunny, rainy, snowy, cloudy, and even hail in one day. During wintertime it can also get quite cold, stormy, and slippery. The climate in Norway in general is cold, and distinct differences are visible during the four seasons (Nordbakke, 2019). However, this does not stop Norwegians from spending time outdoors, nor from walking their dogs. During wintertime there are plenty of activities one can do with dogs outside. Activities such as skiing, hiking, and sleigh riding are just a few of the possibilities.

One could claim that one of the common Norwegian perspectives on childhoods is characterized by innocence, helplessness, and the need to be taken care of, as opposed to many other contexts in the world. It is important to mention that Norwegian ideals about childhoods also spans the idea of the robust child (Nilsen, 2008). The robust child is expected to be capable of handling any kind of weather and navigate through wild nature (Nilsen, 2008). Moving back to the caretaking view on childhood, a typical ideal childhood model in Norway includes "one-way caregiving obligations from parents to children" (Ursin et al., 2022, p. 2). This means that parents in a western perspective are commonly expected to give their all to their children, whilst they cannot really expect anything in return. Children in western contexts do not necessarily have any responsibilities or expectations regarding having to take care of their parents when they age, as opposed to what might be more prominent in many southern contexts. What is interesting regarding pets in the western culture, on the other hand, is that according to Melson (2001, in Muldoon et al., 2015), having a pet today may be the only way it is culturally approved for most children located in the west to be caretakers and not only care receivers. In Tipper's (2011) research, children viewed themselves as inheriting special agency and authority in connection with pets. This is interesting because in other parts of the world taking care of others is a part of the culture, whereas in the western culture, it is not usually allowed should one be a child. What makes it allowed, is when the care receiver is a pet. In the analysis chapter I will pick this up again as tendencies of this caregiver-and care-receiver-phenomenon is visible in some of the participants' statements.

## 1.2 Research gap

When I took interest in the topic of dogs, children and their families, I noticed that there was quite a lot of research on the topic in general. However, the research available was mostly viewed from a psycho-developmental perspective and not a socio-cultural one. Hence, there is a need to explore children's relationships with animals in a different way than only through a psycho-developmental lens (Tipper, 2011). A psycho-developmental perspective has traditionally viewed different phases of children's lives as universal. It has contained stages in which children are supposed to be at a certain level psychologically to be considered as developing "normally" (Woodhead, 1999). Additionally, most of the research contained adults' perspectives and not children's. Thus, there is a clear gap forming regarding what having a dog means for children in their everyday lives. There is reason to believe that there is a need for more research on the connection between dogs, children and their families, and this is emphasized by several authors such as Tipper (2011) and Malone (2016), as well as other researchers and specialists, according to Pearson (2022).

Research has also been done on dogs' cognitive skills and on how they view and interact socially with children in the family that they are part of (Wanser et al., 2021). Even though this is very interesting, this is research conducted with the aim of dogs' perspectives and not the children's perspective. Thus, it explores dogs' social relationships with, and responses to children and their actions but not vice versa. By the same token, plenty of research has been done on the relationship between adults and pets, but not as much on children's relationship with pets (Tipper, 2011).

Some authors (Malone, 2016; Tipper, 2011) stated that often researchers and people in general can ask children questions about what matters to them, and many children mention their pet, or animals. However, this is usually as far as it goes since this topic rarely has been explored in depth due to a lack of continued questions about the pets and animals and in what way they matter (Morrow, 1998). Thus, several scholars (Morrow, 1998; Tipper, 2011) argue for more research on this topic of pets to understand more of children's everyday lives.

What is interesting is that adults may view the relationship between children and animals in a certain type of way, whereas children often make sense of their relationship with animals in a different way (Tipper, 2011). In a study done in England, Tipper (2011) found that many children felt competent around their pets, feeling like the relationship was less formal than with adults, and that they could play with their pets in a way they could not necessarily play with adults. Additionally, their size and age could also matter as to the social world in which they made sense of their place (Tipper, 2011). During interviews in Tipper's (2011) study, adults that mentioned their animals as part of the family often tried to laugh to draw some attention away from the fact that they mentioned their pet as part of family, and were a bit hesitant to express deep emotional connections to their pets. The children on the other hand, showed no shame in this, but rather expressed the connection in a serious manner without joking about it. Why they reacted so differently when mentioning their pets is hard to say, but it might have something to do with the constructions of pets and what is viewed as an accepted social action (Burr, 2015). It is possible that the adults who referred to their pets as significant, viewed it as embarrassing and perhaps unusual to do so, whereas the children did not seem to share those interpretations. However, this may also vary from context to context, as will be shown in the analysis chapters where the parents did not seem to be embarrassed when talking about their dog(s) in the abovementioned ways.



Tipper (2011) argues that by giving greater attention to "...children's own perspectives on their connections with animals, it is argued that these relationships can also be understood within the social and relational context of children's lives" (p. 145). This means that through exploring children's views on their relations with their dogs, one can grasp more of the context children are living in. For example, by delving into how children and their parents view the meaning of having a dog in general and during childhood, one can also understand more of the social and relational context of Norway, or more particularly, Trøndelag. Furthermore, Tipper (2011) argues that a relational perspective on the relationship between animals and children may drastically improve one's knowledge of the everyday lives of children. Tipper (2011) emphasized how this relationality between children and animals may lead to new thoughts regarding animals' position in the lives of both adults and children. That is what I aim to contribute with; exploring the relationality between children, parents, and their dogs to hopefully contribute to new knowledge about dogs' position and meaning in their lives.

### 1.3 Research aim and questions

The aim of the thesis is to explore how children and their parents make sense of the phenomenon of having a dog in general and during childhood. It is about what they feel like it means for them to have a dog and whether they think it makes a difference in their lives. The methods used to explore the research aim and questions are walking interviews, and family interviews with the family as a unit. I have conducted 6 walking interviews with children between the age of 5.5-17 years of age and 6 family interviews where the family was gathered as a unit. When there were several children participating in one family, I interviewed them together. There are three research questions for exploring the overall aim of this project:

The first research question is: *How do Norwegian children and parents describe the meaning and value of having a dog?* To attempt to answer the first research question, both of the interview types are significant. From the two kinds of interviews, I have received descriptions from the children and parents. These descriptions have provided a basis for exploring what meanings and values that are added to having a dog. The first research question thereby seeks to explore the meaning of having a dog, as how one makes sense of a phenomenon will vary according to context and time (Burr, 2015).

The second research question is: *What role does the dog have in the family structure and everyday life of the family?* To answer the second research question both walking and family interviews are of relevance as a way conducting statements and subjective interpretations to explore how the dog impacts the everyday lives of the families and the role it plays in their everyday lives and family structure. The walking interviews were fruitful to get an impression of the children and youth's everyday lives whilst being on a walk. Questions like "what kind of role does the dog have in the family?" were asked to see how the families made sense of the dog's role in the family. The research question thus also explores the division of responsibility between the different family members in relation to the dog(s). This also spans the dog's role in their everyday lives by them mentioning who walks the dog and feeds the dog, and also how the dog participates in routines and practices. Nonetheless, the relational aspect is explored by among other questions, delving into how the dog impacts how the family members feel.

The third research question is: *How is the phenomenon of having dogs during childhoods constructed within families in a Norwegian context?* Again, the family- and walking interviews are essential in answering the third research question. How the family

members described what it means for them to have a dog, is part of how they make sense of dog keeping. We also get insight into how knowledge around dogs' meaning in everyday life is built, in thread with social constructionism found in Burr (2015). This is interesting for the field of childhood studies because it directly investigates both children's own perspectives but also an intergenerational perspective on dog keeping by doing a family interview as well. Thus, the thesis seeks to expand on knowledge regarding the everyday lives of children and their families. The focus on sensemaking of dog keeping also aims to provide more insight into the meaning of animals in children's lives. The sociomaterial aspect is significant here, as many family members makes sense of dog keeping in a way that aligns with non-human and humans co-constructing meaning (Taguchi, 2014, in Sørenssen et al., 2021). Hence, the agency of dogs is promoted and explored in relation to the family and their dynamic.

## 1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first part is the introduction chapter, followed by background, theoretical framework, methodology, analysis part I and II, and lastly concluding remarks.

This chapter is the first and is an introduction to the thesis. It provides some essential context information related to the topic, followed by in which areas there is a research gap. Lastly, the introductory chapter presents the research questions and how to attempt to answer them. The aim of the thesis is elaborated on, in addition to this overview of the different chapters.

The second chapter addresses the background. Here is essential information about the topic and context of Norway, more particularly Trøndelag. The chapter also addresses some previous empirical studies to get a brief overview of the field and what has been researched before. The background moreover describes characteristics of Norwegian childhoods and some of the historical developments in Norway. The commonness of having a dog in Norway is explored and discusses who usually acquires a dog.

The third chapter is about the theoretical framework, starting with presenting the field of childhood studies and how it has shifted. Furthermore, it comprises an overview of the intergenerational perspective, and therein also a relational perspective, followed by social constructionism as well as a sub chapter about social constructions of dogs, and dog as social actors. Some relevant concepts are also presented, as is a sociomaterial perspective to be found within Actor-Network theory.

The fourth chapter pertains to the methodology and methodological approach taken in the thesis, presenting the methods used in the project and the researcher role(s) I was inspired by and attempted to enter. Moreover, choices made regarding transcriptions from both the walking interviews and the family interviews are presented. The recruitment process is elaborated on as to how I recruited participants through Facebook. Ethical considerations in research with children are also provided, and lastly, the ways of producing and interpreting data are presented.

The fifth and sixth chapter discusses the analyses of the walking interviews and family interviews. However, the different chapters focus on different research questions and themes connected to those particular research questions. This fifth chapter focuses on dogs as family members and relational actors and explores concepts such as family and actor.

The sixth chapter entails how having a dog can be seen as an essential childhood experience, comprising the themes of the right to have a dog as well as quality of life. The chapter delves into concepts related to responsibilities, empathy, joy, unconditional love, and company and ways in which those are connected to the dogs.

The seventh chapter summarizes the main highlights of the thesis and aims to answer all the research questions concisely. The most promoted aspects from the analysis chapters are lifted to repeat what the main findings indicate. The final chapter also contains some concluding remarks of this master thesis as well as strengths and limitations of the thesis. At the end, suggestions for future research are provided, to further continue expanding the knowledge on this topic in the field of childhood studies.

## 2 Background

This chapter begins with presenting some previous empirical studies to get an overview of some of the relevant research that has been done on the topic of humans and dogs, and to clarify in which areas I may contribute. The chapter addresses some of the historical developments of Norwegian society, such as the institutionalization of childhood, which is important as it reveals an increase in supervision of children, and thus may say something about the view on childhoods and a difference in growing up than before. Furthermore, it presents some characteristics of typical Norwegian childhoods and Norwegian culture wherein nature is seen as essential. This is knowledge that is relevant to have in the back of one's mind when reading through the other parts of the thesis as it impacts the view on children and youth, childhoods, and dogs. Having some background information on the context helps with understanding the participants better due to being familiarized with the context, thoughts, ideas, values, and norms in Norway.

### 2.1 Previous empirical studies

One of the most relevant studies to this project that has been done on the topic of dogs and children is the study of Becky Tipper (2011). The study has, unlike most research on the topic, a focus on a social and geographical perspective, and not a psycho-developmental perspective. Her study is mentioned quite a few times in the introductory chapter of this thesis, but the scope of her research is worth investigating further. Tipper (2011) refer to previously work done on the topic of human and animal relationships, where the relationships are viewed as context-dependent, socially constructed and the traditional taken-for-granted constructions are questioned. She focuses on children's perspectives on how they make sense of their relationships with animals, with an emphasis on "... the social and relational context of children's lives" (Tipper, 2011, p. 145). She also investigates how this can improve the understanding of the everyday lives of children, and which position the animals have in people's lives. I also explore how the children make sense of their relationships with their animals. An important distinction is that my project is exclusively about dogs and not animals in general. My project delves into the meaning of having a dog in general and during childhood, so it is slightly more defined than just making sense of the relationship, when delving into the meaning of having a dog.

Emma Power (2008) has done a group study in Australia with new dog owners from 2006-2007. The methods she used were interviews and diaries (Power, 2008), and through those she explores more-than-human families and how the daily life is impacted upon when a dog is included in the family. She investigates what family is and what is promoted when considering the dog's role in the family. This is highly relevant for the research of this thesis due to its exploration of the concept of family, and the impact of dog keeping on the families' everyday lives. What is noticeable is similarities between how Power's participants define what family is to how the participants in my study do so. What Power (2008) delves into as the main aspects of becoming more-than-human families are dogs described as "furry children", interacting with dogs as pack animals and lastly the agency of dogs (p. 535). Cohabiting and interacting with one another is

emphasized as crucial, and the agency of dogs includes how this influence family dynamics and home (Power, 2008). I have drawn a lot of inspiration from Power's study and utilized it frequently throughout the analysis chapters as I have found it to be very fruitful in analyzing the findings in this thesis. This is because I also focus a great deal on the agency of dogs and how this impacts the family relations and the life quality of the families.

The article by Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2006) spans kinship with animals, and provides interesting insights into how pets can be part of the family and kinship in a Danish context. It entails stories about people acquiring a dog and experiences and meaning making regarding that. Ultimately it comprises how and why animals show up in stories about childlessness, and what that tell us about humans relationships to each other and to animals (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006). She elaborates on how humans think in terms of animals and therein explores connections between humans and animals, which are relevant to this thesis as I also explore similar connections. The difference is that the participants in my study are not childless, but rather families with children and at least one dog. Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2006) also explores the limits of this kinship, wherein she exemplifies on the one hand, the normality of viewing one's pet as a child or a close friend (see Greenebaum, 2004; Sanders, 1999, respectively), and on the other hand, the abnormality of viewing one's pet as a boyfriend/girlfriend or as a father. The last examples are not constructed as normal in Denmark, nor in Norway I believe, and would cause many frowns and astonishments (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006). Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2006) presents many interesting ideas, also regarding the expansion of pets and pet-related activities and consumer patterns in the western society in modern times. I discuss this further in sub chapter 3.3.1.

Philo and Wilbert (2004) have written *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places*. They have a sociological lens on their research, and they write about interactions between animals and humans. They explore the relationships regarding love and empathy, albeit also pertaining to cruelty. Philo and Wilbert (2004) investigate how the relationships may differ according to culture, and thereby context and time. Nonetheless, they do have a great focus on place, meaning for example that place can gradually change from being "...a 'natural' place where the gorillas remained relatively undisturbed by humans, have become, variously, the scientist's site of fieldwork, the naturalist's site of biological conservation..." (Philo & Wilbert, 2004, p. 2). Philo and Wilbert (2004) thus show how places and "inhabitants" in places gradually might change. What is of interest in this thesis is their investigation on the different kind of animal-human relations. Philo and Wilbert (2004) also advocate for looking beyond how animals are imagined or represented among humans, and also focusing on non-human agency. This includes to what degree animals "...destabilise, transgress, or even resist our human orderings, including spatial ones" (Philo & Wilbert, 2004, p. 5). Non-human agency can for example be about how dogs make their own decisions and decide not to listen to humans, not wanting to participate or walk away from a room. Examples of such non-human agency are explored more in depth in the theoretical framework as well as in the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Donna Haraway (2003) has written the book *Companion Species Manifesto*, which is partly about taking the relationships between humans and dogs in a more serious manner, and understanding more of significant others, namely key individuals (or in this case, dogs) in a person's life. It explores stories about worlds between dogs and humans

and how history is an important part of the inseparable connection between culture and nature. Emphasis is placed on how dogs have been here from the beginning, and how they are tightly connected to human evolution (Haraway, 2003). The emphasis on that inseparable connection is very highlighted. It is the connection between history, nature and culture that is of relevance when categorizing previous knowledge done on the subject of dogs. The ways dogs and humans live together can be seen as a kind of kinship, which is visible through their relationships, among other things (Haraway, 2003). According to Haraway (2003) how dogs and humans develop and co-live in "mutually constitutive" ways are disclosed through their relationships (in Tipper, 2011, p. 148). Such ways of living are described and explored further in the analysis chapter through how the participants makes sense of their relationship with their dog. Additionally, Haraway's book is about the significance of others, that bond between dogs and humans, and she accentuates how the book is about more than the relationship between people and dogs and that the two form their own universe (Haraway, 2003). Tipper also mentions Haraway's book, and describes it to be about "the ways in which humans and dogs create personal, intimate and mutual relationships through their daily engagements" (Haraway, 2003, in Tipper, 2011, p. 148). Through different stories about dogs and humans, Haraway thus gives an insight into relationships and connections between dogs and humans, which resembles what I have aimed to do in the analysis chapters as well.

Muldoon et al. (2015) might have more of a psycho-developmental lens than a sociological lens, but still makes applicable points regarding children and their relationships to dogs. Their research explores children's sense of responsibility and care towards family pets. What makes Muldoon's research relevant for this thesis is the emphasis on children's sensemakings connected to family pets as well as bringing in concepts of agency and culture. An example from Muldoon et al.'s study is how "play was typically viewed as the child's role in caring for the family pet" (2015, p. 207). Hence, the example shows how play can be related to caretaking. Sometimes, children can also be hesitant towards having too much responsibility; "Children may want to take more responsibility, but their feeling of not being allowed or being blamed may culminate... in them feeling they are not competent enough to care for pets" (Muldoon et al., 2015, p. 213). The reason for hesitating to take responsibility therefore seems to be quite complex at times. There is a sub-theme in the analysis chapter in this project that is about responsibility, which culture is tightly connected to. In that sub-theme the thesis scrutinizes how some children and their parents' make sense of responsibility and care related to their dog(s). It thereby provides a relational aspect in addition to an intergenerational one due to the power relations between parents, children and how they take care of the dog in the family.

Malone's (2016) study focuses on post-humanism, the nature-culture relationship and does not view only children as able of showing agency, but also the dogs. What is noticeable is how Malone's study thus have resemblances with the other studies both in relation to agency and also to the nature-culture relationship. Malone aims to do what Tipper encourages, namely to explore children's everyday lives through "...their *own* views on their relationships with animals" (Tipper, 2011, p. 149). Malone brings to light non-human actors, and builds partly on Actor-network theory (ANT), which is presented more in the theory chapter in this thesis. However, this thesis only draws inspiration from ANT, and does not use it as a main perspective per se. Malone (2016) elaborates on intra-action and how this comprises how agency come to exist through co-emerging

between for instance a human and non-human actor. Malone (2016) did research in La Paz, Bolivia, in a slum area, and describes that there are about 500 000 dogs in La Paz. She found that there existed quite intimate relationships between children and dogs there, relationships "... not afforded to human adults" (Malone, 2016, p. 395). Why this is, is hard to say, but it might have something to do with time spent together. After three hours of school, the children co-existed with the dogs out on the streets (Malone, 2016), thus spending quite some time together. Through disposable cameras the children were given, it became evident that things happened with and between children and dogs, as well as in the space between them (Malone, 2016). I find it quite interesting that it is possible to have such intimate relations to exist between children and dogs and not between children and adults. This is interesting to my research since I am exploring relationships like the abovementioned, except that this is in a Norwegian context, as well as that I am investigating what such relationships means for children and their everyday lives. Additionally, my research is centered around families and the home as an arena, not to mention that the dogs included in my study are domesticated and not street dogs. Malone (2016) emphasizes how the children and dogs protect each other and develop this mutual, caring relationship, learning how to cope with the challenges and dangers of their surroundings as well as their camaraderie.

Sanders (1999) has a sociological lens on the relationship between humans and dogs and on the uniqueness of those emotional connections in his book called *Understanding Dogs: Living and working with canine companions*. He focuses on adult dog-owners. What is emphasized in Sanders (1999), is "... the common and emotionally significant interactions we have with dogs and other companion animals" (Sanders, 1999, p. 2). He states how this is important, also because there has not been a great focus on it before, which he highlights is a gap in the field of sociology regarding understanding aspects of people's everyday lives. He further explores how pets can function as a prolonging of the owner and who he/she is, as well as how pets can add to who we are as humans. He also scrutinizes the communication between dogs and humans and how the owners understand their dogs as social actors, having their own personalities, being considerate, and understanding emotions (Sanders, 1999). Sanders (1999) brings to light the involvement of dogs in the household and family dynamics, and illustrates how dogs are included in traditions and daily practices. This is relevant to my research project given that this thesis among other things, investigates what role the dog plays in the family structure and everyday life of the family, therein routines and practices.

Still, what one may notice after reading these previous empirical studies, is that many of them merely focus on adults' sensemaking's of their relationship with dogs. Much of this research is starting to age, thus requiring new and fresh research to expand on the knowledge available about children and their families' sensemakings of the meaning of having a dog, with a socio-cultural lens.

## 2.2 Developments in Norway

In 1814, Norway obtained its own constitution, with its constitution day the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. Norway gained independence from Sweden in 1905, and is therefore seen as a quite "new" nation (Gullestad, 1997). In the past Norway was in union with Sweden for a century and ruled by Denmark for four centuries before that. Due to the war fronted by Napoleon, Sweden won Norway from Denmark (Gullestad, 1997). In the 1800's, Norway was characterized by a rural and egalitarian way of living, with a love for nationalism (Gullestad, 1997). This implied worshipping the "... simple ways of life among free farmers

and egalitarian farmers, rather than urban refinement or military power" (p. 23). Egalitarianism lays as its foundation that all human beings have an essential worth and that everyone therefore should be treated equally. With that as its basis, egalitarianism entails getting rid of socioeconomic differences and promoting equality (Afolayan, 2015). The Norwegian society also focused on what is still important today, namely the passion for all natural, for example farming, children and childhood, nature and what is straightforward and uncomplicated (Gullestad, 1997).

The institutionalization of Norwegian childhoods first started with early childhood care institutions and education being available to those who needed it the most, followed by turning into something to be provided and available for everyone (Gambaro & Stewart, 2014, in Ellingsæter & Gulbrandsen, 2007). The way the shift happened was through The Day Care Institution Act of 1975 that emphasized that all parents who want a childcare service should have that available. Kjørholt (2007) states that there has been an increase in adults controlling and organizing children's activities, which means that children do not necessarily have as much time to themselves and by themselves with friends anymore. This may also be seen as threatening children's possibilities of an unrestricted and genuine childhood, hindering them of evolving on their own through their activities in a non-restricted way. Making schooling compulsory already happened in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely in 1739 (Nilsen, 2010). However, this obligation only applied to the rural schools. It was not until the cities had a shared school law in 1848 that schooling was made compulsory for everyone (Nilsen, 2010). This has been one of the main linchpins of Norwegian evolvement after World War II, according to Thuen and Volckmar (2020). They state that schooling has developed from being compulsory to attend for seven years, to ten years of compulsory attendance. This means that children in Norway now must attend school between the ages of six to sixteen years of age. Nonetheless, it is also strongly recommended to keep educating oneself and attend high school since it might be hard to get a job, at least a dream job with only ten years of schooling. Another reason for why this may be hard is because more people are pursuing higher education now than before (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021). Consequently, even with higher education it can be difficult to obtain a dream job as the new normal is about pursuing higher education.

The Norwegian welfare state's job is "...the provision of goods, of services and/or resources necessary to a life..." (Torgersen, 1987, p. 117). This means that the state should provide what people need to live a decent life. However, the concept of the welfare state may be hard to grasp and can at first glance appear as somewhat vague. Nonetheless, there are four realms that function as overarching themes in the Norwegian Welfare state, namely housing, pensions, health and schooling (Torgersen, 1987). Within this lies that if a family for example cannot afford to rent a house, they are to be provided help to do so. Additionally, one could claim that making school compulsory have influenced Norway a great deal. Norwegian childhoods have changed, but so has the family lives and the Norwegian perspective on children's role in the family. Before schooling was made compulsory, Norwegian children worked too. The thought of merging working and children in contemporary Norway is quite uncommon (Solberg, 2015). Today, Norwegian children are not allowed to work until they turn fifteen, or thirteen if the jobs are only light, short time-spanning work (International Labour Organization, 2022). Light jobs can for example be contributing to the household by taking the dog for walks or help making dinner. However, the abolishment of child labour The International Labour Organization (2022) is aiming to accomplish, is quite contested. Abebe and Bessell (2011) advocate for viewing children's work more holistically, and seeing it from



a socio-cultural and political-economical perspective rather than merely from a work-free perspective. Solberg (2015), too, aims to break out of the traditional Norwegian view on children and work, and rather focuses on seeing what children can do and are. The reason for why I am mentioning child labour is because it can be connected to the degree of responsibility the children are given towards their dog(s) or considered to be able to handle. This amount of responsibility can mirror some Norwegian views on childhoods as to how much responsibility children should be given and at what stage of life. I discuss this further in the analysis chapter.

## 2.3 Childhoods in Norway

Childhoods can be so diverse, and span so many different aspects. What childhoods are, will depend on many dimensions. Values and views on childhoods are for instance shaped by social, political, economic and cultural aspects wherein context and historical factors are relevant (Abebe, 2019). Abebe (2019) argues that the life stage known as childhood is characterized by different scenarios in life. In a Norwegian context, such scenarios are for example birthdays.

Gullestad (2006) states that it is often taken for granted that a "good" environment to grow up in, in Norway, should consist of a stable family with married parents and at least one sibling. However, up until recently there were approximately 30 000 children annually experiencing parents getting divorced, whereas this has now decreased, with no certain explanations as to why this is (Stolt-Nielsen, 2018). Furthermore, it is seen as unfortunate if a child has to move frequently throughout the childhood due to the instability this causes (Gullestad, 2006). One can therefore claim that an ideal of a "perfect" childhood in Norway is to live in the same house throughout the upbringing, as well as having parents that do not divorce, which is a bit odd given the high divorce rate, as well as having at least one sibling. Even the reproduction rate in Norway is declining (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019) and is now at a record low level, with only 1.56 children per woman, which means that most likely a lot of children are in fact growing up without a sibling.

To bring the focus back to nature, the common saying of "getting fresh air" (Gullestad, 2006, p. 43) is very typical, and as Gullestad (2006) states, Norwegian children are outside playing almost regardless of the weather, and are brought up that way. There is reason to believe that every day Norwegian children are encouraged to go outside to "get some fresh air", as we are taught it is so good for us and for our health. Even in the kindergartens children are getting dressed in accordance with the weather and always spend some time outside daily, whether if it is stormy, snow, rain or sunny. This resonates with my experience from working as a substitute in various kindergartens. As Gullestad (2006) explains, once the children have learned how to walk, they play outside by themselves in any kind of weather from quite early on. Thus, it is reasonable to claim that the same applies for walking one's dog, as this also has to be done regardless of the weather. The exemption is perhaps hurricanes, or warning notices sent out due to stormy weather.

Children's leisure time in Norway has changed over the last decade, and Nordbakke (2019) has found three changes in the way children's participation takes place in activities out of the house. Childhoods in Norway have become more institutionalized (Kjørholt, 2007), which means that children spend a larger part of their childhoods in institutions such as kindergartens or day care centers, as well as school and after school activities than they did before. There is a growth in the number of children participating

in leisure activities that are organized (Nordbakke, 2019). Children participating are now younger than before when they first start attending the activities and the degree in which they are participating in those structured activities have escalated (Nordbakke, 2019). Furthermore, more supervision of outdoor playing is taking place, as well as less children visiting the houses in which their friends live (Nordbakke, 2019). Thus, it seems like children are being more directed by adults and spending less time at friends' places but rather replacing that time with organized activities in their leisure time instead.

It is not to hide that most childhoods of the western world have also become extremely digitalized compared to last century. A neuroscientist recently stated that youth between the ages of 9 to 11 years old will spend about 11 years of their lives watching a screen (Hirsti, 2022). It is reasonable to claim that this is an outrageous amount of time, but nonetheless says something about how important social media and the digital world have become for probably both new and older generations. According to Livingstone et al. (2016) as much as one out three internet users are children. More than 50 percent of Norwegian children between the ages of 9 to 11 are on social media, states a survey done by the Norwegian media supervision (Medietilsynet) (Hirsti, 2022). This implies that many children start spending time on social media from quite early on.

### 2.3.1 Norwegian culture

When writing about Norwegian culture, Gullestad (1997) accentuates equality by bringing attention to "sameness' (likhet), 'peace', 'quiet', 'nature', 'home' and 'independence'" (p. 21). These are very prominent features of Norwegian culture and when growing up in Norway it is very common to be taught those ways of life. With the themes of sameness and quiet there is reason to believe that this points to not standing out in the crowd, at the same time as Norwegians may be viewed as quite modest and shy people at times. This can be quite visible in public transport for instance, where most Norwegians try to spot a free seat section to avoid sitting next to another person. Many people also choose to stand instead of sitting next to someone they do not know. Moreover, Gullestad (1997) stresses boundary-setting and contends that Norwegians are passionate about boundaries and that they are important in their day-to-day lives, in mass media and also in politics. She highlights areas such as disputes about upbringing. For example, boundary setting can be about not bringing one's phone to the dinner table. "Nature" is elaborated on above, whereas the concept of home may pertain more to Norwegians enjoying spending time at home, or the odd "rules" of children having to ask their parents if their friends can have dinner at their house. There is even a commonness of not being offered dinner whilst hanging out with friends at their place and thereby having to wait in the friend's room for them to come back from dinner. Another example of Norwegian "home" culture is the early dinner time. Usually, Norwegians tend to eat dinner quite early, and this is commonly done between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. (Myhre et al., 2015), which is reasonable to claim is a lot earlier than other European countries. One of the latest dinner times is to be found in Spain, where they usually eat dinner as late as 10 p.m. (Lopez-Minguez et al., 2019). Norwegians are usually quite "homey", meaning that they commonly enjoy spending plenty of time at home. Maybe that is connected to the early dinner time, as Norwegians usually go straight home after work.

The next concept Gullestad (1997) mentions is independence. With independence comes making decisions based on what is best for the individual as well as a focus on self-realization (Kjørholt, 2002), rather than the family-oriented view which is more common outside of the west. However, in a historical perspective, the Norwegian state has been defined through egalitarian individualism (Berggren, 1993; Eriksen, 1993; Gullestad,

1997, in Kjørholt, 2002). Egalitarian individualism is characterized as an intimate connection between "...the individual's right to self-realization and self-determination on the one hand, and on equality and collectiveness on the other" (Kjørholt, 2002, p. 68). Hence, it seems like Norway throughout the years have been somewhat collectivistic as well. Still, "The individualistic orientation, valuing unconditioned personal freedom, is a core value in Nordic culture" (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997, in Kjørholt, 2002, p. 68). Having the ability to decide freely without conditions can therefore be viewed as crucial in the Nordics. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to claim that with a dog comes responsibilities and perhaps less room for being spontaneous. One cannot spend all day away when having a dog, as having a dog includes certain obligations that attach one to the home to a larger extent than without a dog. Perhaps this is also why, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, most people with pets are families with children as they are already tied to the home. This might illustrate one of the ways in which egalitarian individualism is present today, as dog keeping requires a balance between the individual right to self-realization and self-determination, and equality and collectiveness.

In the introductory chapter, the notion of the competent child was briefly mentioned, and according to Brembeck et al. (2008) this is a great part of the Nordic culture and view on children. There is reason to believe that adults' authorities are decreasing. As a result, adults are less powerful and in charge than before, due to children being more acknowledged, and allowed to express themselves to a much larger extent than in previous decades. The children of today have a bigger say than they probably ever have had before, and with this bigger voice, comes new challenges. This can be challenges such as how much children should be allowed to decide, and when their increased decision-making is no longer in the child's best interest (Brembeck et al., 2008), or in other words; when it is no longer in the children's best interest to decide. With this new respect for children's input, many adults find it hard to know where to draw the line, both in school settings but also in the home environment. What is justifiable regarding how big decisions children should make? Should they make the decision on moving for example? Or if a child is being rude in the classroom, how should the teacher handle it? According to Brembeck et al. (2008) the notion of the competent child is in close relation to "... modern democratic values, children's equal rights and value, and children's perceived ability to take responsibility for themselves" (pp. 8-9), wherein they are all tightly embedded phenomena in the Nordic countries. This means that the phenomena mentioned above are thus very common for Norwegian childhoods.

Solberg (2015) argues that families, at least in a contemporary Norwegian context, to a certain degree contributes to shaping certain childhoods, such as in relation to views on age and independence for instance. She furthermore states that children can be part of deciding and shaping what it is like to be a child in a specific context (Solberg, 2015). This is partly done by deciding what tasks everyone in the family should have and how they want to structure their everyday lives (Solberg, 2015). This can for example pertain to tasks to walk the dog(s), feed the dog(s) or loading and unloading the dishwasher. Solberg (2015) furthermore describes the phenomenon of negotiating, which is a quite prominent part of many Norwegian childhoods. The child's role in the family is for example of importance, as is the degree of the child's agency (Muldoon et al., 2015). Agency can be viewed as a contested concept with many different views on what it might entail. Nonetheless, one way of describing agency can be as making self-governing choices within the given context and structures (Abebe, 2019). With children gaining a bigger voice due to the structures and contexts making that possible they are co-deciding more. With more co-deciding comes greater negotiations. Many Norwegian children in

contemporary Norway therefore challenge their parents a great deal due to disagreements or wanting to gain more freedom. Solberg states that the children "... are in a position to influence the outcome of the negotiating process in directions which they perceive to be favourable to themselves" (Solberg, 2015, p. 112). Thus, one could argue that children are gaining a larger degree of agency and may be viewed not only as the competent child, but also as the negotiating child.

Norway is considered a western country with its own sets of values, norms and perhaps expectations. Being a western country can indicate that a proper childhood contains a focus on the individual, independent and neoliberal citizen. The aspirations of many western societies involve being autonomous, concentrate on self-realization, self-expression, independence, individualism, and the welfare state. Neoliberalism encompasses how there has been an economization of everything (Moss & Roberts-Holmes, 2022), which means that everything revolves around economics. According to Thorsen and Lie (2006) neoliberalism is "...a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which most prominently and prototypically include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty, as well as strong private property rights" (p.14). As mentioned above the individual person is promoted, as well as the state interfering as little as possible and only regarding securing the market economy (Thuen, 2010) and private property rights. Neoliberalism also comprises free trade and a free market run by competition as well as offer and demands (Thorsen & Lie, 2006). Thuen (2010) further elaborates and states that strictly speaking, the state's role, legitimately is limited to secure the individuals freedom as well as the abovementioned. What is interesting though, is how the individual is held accountable and responsible for the decisions and choices made, as the state in most cases will not interfere (Thuen, 2010). An example that illustrates just that, is concerning Anne, to be found in Solberg (2015). Anne made her own sandwich for lunch before school every day ever since she started elementary school at the age of six. If she forgot to make lunch, or forgot to pack it, she was the one who faced the consequences. What is interesting is how she thinks this made sense and was fair. There are of course varieties between families as well, as in other families the mother made the sandwiches for everyone in the family (Solberg, 2015). Still, the example of Anne can show how neoliberalism is increasingly ingrained in ways of thinking, as Anne finds it fair that she is the one to suffer if she, as a six-year-old forgets to pack her own lunch. Consequently, the way of raising Norwegian children is very self-oriented, with an "each to its own" kind of thinking. Children are encouraged to think for themselves about themselves and what is best for them, individually (Kjørholt, 2013).

The Norwegian word "trygghet" is also a quite outstanding concept and part of Norwegian culture. As Gullestad (2006) states, there is not really an English translation of the word that has the exact same meaning, and it may therefore be difficult to provide a good explanation and translation of the concept. Nevertheless, a combination of similar meanings of the concept might give some insight. "...security", "safety"... "protection" (Gullestad, 2006, p. 43) are examples of similar concepts, albeit something Gullestad (2006) underlines as still not coinciding with the term "trygghet". One could state that "trygghet" is like a state or/and a feeling, a feeling of being safe, taken care of and being in good hands, and a state as in safe and stable life conditions, not being worried about life or what is to come. It can also be about living in the present because there is no need to worry about the future due to knowing, or at least feeling confident that it will work out. "Trygghet" is about not being afraid, but rather having this feeling of calmness from within. "Trygghet" in relation to children thus emphasizes stability and some specific

kinds of protection, and does not apply to protecting children from playing too rough (Gullestad, 1999). The fact that "trygghet" is incorporated into the Child Protection Act (Barnevernloven, 1992), illustrates the centrality of this concept in the Norwegian context. The concept can be a foundation for how to view childhoods in Norway, and an important feature when measuring Norwegian childhoods, as §1-1, which describes the purpose of the Child Protection Act, comprises that children and youth should be met with "trygghet" (safety/security), love and understanding (Barnevernloven, 1992).

### 2.3.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

As has been established, Norwegian childhoods are influenced by a Western worldview, in which the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is of relevance. The UNCRC is produced with a western lens, and not necessarily with the consideration of how the rest of the world's views, values and norms are constructed. The UNCRC was ratified by Norway the 8<sup>th</sup> of January in 1991 (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2022) and stepped into force as part of Norwegian law in 2003 (United Nations Association of Norway, 2022). The UNCRC is a law made to secure the rights of children in the areas of protection, provision, and participation, also known as the three P's. The UNCRC contains different rights children have that are to secure that they have good lives. It builds on four general principles that are to be taken into consideration when viewing or using any of the articles (1989). The main articles are article 3, 4, 6 and 12, respectively, that the best interest of the child should be a main consideration when making decisions affecting the child, that children have a right to non-discrimination, meaning the right not to be discriminated in any way. Article 6 pertains to the right to life, survival and development, whereas article 12 is about the right to participation, and the right to participate is weighted according to age and maturity (UNCRC, 1989). The reason for why I am mentioning the UNCRC is because it is incorporated not only into several Norwegian laws such as the constitution, but also into the Norwegian society's ideals and values.

## 2.4 The commonness of having a dog

In 2021, 37 314 dog breeds in Norway were registered in the dog interest organization (hundeeinteresseorganisasjonen) called NKK (Norsk Kennel Klubb or in English; Norwegian Kennel Club) (Darrud, 2022). This entails an increase in over more than twenty seven percent compared to the previous year (Darrud, 2022). Even though the concern about covid-19 is complete in Norway, the desire to get a dog has not decreased. The most popular dog breed in Norway at the time is border collie (Darrud, 2022). In 2013, there were approximately 500 000 dogs in Norway (Strømsheim, 2013) and since then there has been an increase in the number of people acquiring dogs. The number is therefore probably somewhat higher today.

Blouin (2012) refers to Keith Thomas' work from 1983 when discussing what a pet is. Drawing on that, the difference between one's relationship with an animal contra a pet is that a pet is "...allowed into our homes, they are given names, and they are never eaten (Keith Thomas, 1983, in Blouin, 2012). In addition to this, there is an emotional layer to pet keeping. Having a pet is not limited to what is mentioned above. The contact with the dog continues, for they are also fed, walked, and have a relationship with the family in which they live. Thus, the character of the emotional bond is important. People's choices to acquire a pet is also of relevance, as this often is due to their parental side kicking in since pets can be perceived as somewhat childlike (Blouin, 2012).

There is reason to believe that having a pet, or more particularly a dog, in the context of Norway is seen as very common, and something many people aspire to have. This is reflected in the prevalence of Norwegian tv-shows about dogs. This is among others, shows about having a dog in Norway, how to raise your dog, help with changing the behaviour of a dog who has some behavioral issues, whether this is an anxious dog scared of car rides, a dog that refuses to go on walks without getting a large amount of ham midway, or even aggressive dogs. The examples about changing the dog's behaviour are from a show called "*Fra bølge til bestevenn*" or in English "*From bully to best friend*", and as explained above is about changing the dog from a "bully", with bully not necessarily meaning bully in its literal sense, but rather regarding whatever its challenges are, into the owner's best friend, a true companion. The show is very family friendly and popular. There are also shows directed even more towards children, where one of them is called "*Dyrevenn*", or in English "*Animal friend*", where the camera team visit different children with pet animals, and this could be dogs, pigs or nearly any animal (NRK Super, 2010-2021). Additionally, shows about finding "*Superdogs*" or in Norwegian called "*Superhundene*" is about helping disabled people finding their superdog, to help them in their daily lives with the obstacles they face, such as picking up a pen, helping put on and remove socks. Dogs and shows about dogs and pet animals can therefore be reflecting the centrality of dogs in the Norwegian context.

Having an own Instagram or TikTok account for one's pet, in particular cats and dogs is also a very common hobby or even a profession many places in the world, including Norway. This means that for example the owner of the dog has made an Instagram (or TikTok) account on behalf of the pet (Maddox, 2020). Dogs and cats can get famous overnight through posts on those platforms. It is reasonable to claim that TikTok is a big platform for promoting or showing videos of one's pet, in particular funny videos, or videos of for example your dog and cat being friends and playing together. However, not much research has been done on this platform yet due to its recent origin, as opposed to Instagram. Nonetheless, TikTok can contain videos like putting an ice cube on the pet's stomach and seeing if it reacts, and there are always trends going on that pet owners then get inspired to try out. How this might impact the pet is another story. There is also a phenomenon called "pet influencers" which may be explained as an Instagram account that only gives prominence to a/some specific pet(s) (Hänninen, 2021). According to Hänninen (2021), the most popular pet influencer accounts on Instagram have approximately 10 million followers. This speaks to how the significance of pets are growing, not only in Norway, but also worldwide. Pet influencers are among other reasons, used for marketing purposes, as the marketers are convinced this catches the attention of the consumers (Hänninen, 2021). Hänninen (2021) found indications that pets are often seen as a child and an equal member of the family, therein incorporated into the family roles. Consequently, Hänninen (2021) indicates how pets are increasingly seen as equal to humans in contemporary pet culture. This is very interesting as this implies that pets have been afforded a higher status than before.

## 2.5 Summary

In this chapter an overview of some previous studies concerning relations between humans and pets, and/or other animals have been presented. The overview showed that most empirical studies had been done on adults and pets, and also to a large extent with a psycho-developmental lens. Thus, the need for more research on children, their family and dogs are clearly evident. Another aspect that was introduced was historical developments in Norway. This revolved around the constitution and independence of

Norway, as well as the welfare state and the laws making school compulsory. What was also of interest was the institutionalization of childhood(s) and how children are increasingly under supervision in contemporary Norway. The UNCRC has briefly been discussed with mentioning of the four guiding principles, followed by some of the characteristics of Norwegian culture. Such characteristics included the love for nature, the prominent independent-oriented view but also the emphasis on "trygghet". The chapter delved into Norwegian childhoods and commonalities of such childhoods, where again nature and institutionalization are brought to light. Today, this institutionalization is visible through an increasingly organized leisure time, as well as a focus on growing up in a stable family home. Moreover, the digitalization of childhood was mentioned, highlighting how important social media have become today. Lastly, some relevant information regarding the commonness of having a pet was presented, where it was brought to light that as many as 500 000 dogs or more are living in Norway today, and that the number of dogs registered yearly in NKK have escalated. Even social media celebrities in the shape of pets and how this has become increasingly popular worldwide were elaborated on. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter begins with an introduction to the new sociology of childhood within childhood studies while also touching upon critiques regarding the new sociology of childhood. The critiques are important because they show that the field is not fully developed, as it is dynamic and in constant need of change and further research, also in interdisciplinary ways. The critiques bring to light what has been questioned in childhood studies, and thereby highlight the importance of critical awareness. The theoretical perspectives that will function as a basis for this research are an intergenerational perspective, sociomateriality and social constructionism. A central aspect found within all three perspectives is a focus on *relationality*. In intergenerationality, relationality is visible through the relationship between generations, and in social constructionism and sociomateriality, relationality is prominent in connection to the ways reality is continuously shaped and created between human and non-human actors. When using the perspective of social constructionism, social constructions of dogs are discussed, and dogs as social actors is explored when explaining sociomateriality. Relevant concepts to include in this research are relationality, generation and generational order, agency, discourse, and interdependence. The concepts will be defined, and the way they have been used in this particular thesis detailed.

### 3.1 The new sociology of childhood

This thesis is grounded in the field of childhood studies. By the new sociology of childhood, I refer to the field when it first was established, around the 1980's and 1990's (James & Prout, 2015). The new sociology of childhood arose because of critiques relating to tendencies in existing and dominating research about children, in example psychological narratives of child development (James & Prout, 2003). Such critiques are connected to the traditional ways of conceptualizing and coping with children and childhood in social sciences (James & Prout, 2003). With the new sociology of childhood it was no longer possible "... to see childhood simply as a common and universal biological phase in the life course" (James & James, 2001, p. 25). This entails that children's voices and opinions matter, and that children contribute to shaping their worlds and everyday lives, as well as being shaped by their surroundings. Previously, there has not been a lack of interest in children, but rather a silence that has characterized childhood, as children has been a "muted group" (Hardman, 2001; James & Prout, 2015). This means that children, similarly to women, were a group that was often ignored or not included as participants in research. They did not have a say, and neither of the groups were viewed as equal to men. A key point in the new sociology of childhood is how children understand different aspects of their worlds, such as culture, space, social aspects and materiality (Abebe, 2019). One of the ways children can express themselves, is through their agency. Agency can be viewed as a highly contested concept with no one right way of defining it. One of the views on agency, however, is regarding children as social actors, which addresses the "agency-turn" away from a universal perspective regarding children and childhood, to a view where every child is seen as competent and responsible to make decisions on their own (Abebe, 2019). Such decisions may include children co-deciding in getting a dog for example. To sum up, the new sociology of childhood



advocated for a recognition of viewing childhood as a social construct, as well as acknowledging the rights and agency of children and youth (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

James and Prout (2015) proposed six key features to denote the main points of the new sociology of childhood. The first key feature pertains to understanding childhood as socially constructed (James & Prout, 2015). This means that childhoods are not a universal phenomenon, but rather distinct from context to context, as well as time to time. The second key feature is about childhood as "...a variable of social analysis" (James & Prout, 2015, p. 7), meaning that childhood can never be viewed as an isolated phenomenon. One cannot view childhood without taking into consideration other factors such as gender or ethnicity. The third key feature comprises that children are worthy of being studied in their own right, which includes social relations as well as cultural aspects, without taking adults' opinions and views as the main consideration (James & Prout, 2015). This entails that children are worthy of being studied as they are, they are competent as they are and have valuable information about what it is like to be a child as they are children. The fourth key feature pertains to how children are taking part in shaping the social constructions around them as well as making decisions in their own lives, and are not only being impacted upon (James & Prout, 2015). Therein, they play an important part in shaping the structures around them instead of only being shaped by the structures. The fifth key feature is about how ethnography is considered a specifically advantageous methodology when studying childhood (James & Prout, 2015). James and Prout (2015) state that ethnography makes the voices and participation of children more direct in the data production than for example a questionnaire. The final and sixth key feature is regarding childhood as "...a phenomenon in relation to which double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present" (James & Prout, 2015, p. 7). Double hermeneutics means that it works like a two-way process. In other words, if one talks about a new sociology of childhood, one has to show engagement regarding the processes of childhood and the constant reconstruction of childhood, therein the processes around childhood. Consequently, this sixth key feature is about interpretations and meaning making regarding childhoods.

The new sociology of childhood has also been critiqued for numerous matters. One of the most prominent critiques revolves around the continuation of colonialism. What this means is that the features of childhood studies are not necessarily adapted to fit the majority world (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). The majority world is where most of the world's population are located, and this part of the world might have different social, political, cultural, and economic values than many places in the minority world. The minority world is what can be categorized as the western world, where fewer people live. Not only this, but many people working in the majority world have also questioned the concept of agency of children and youth (Tisdall & Punch, 2012) as the degree of children's and youth's agency will vary depending on the context due to different values, structures and cultures. This vagueness and contestedness regarding the concept of agency is emphasized by several scholars (Hammersley, 2017; Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). Moreover, many families in the majority world have a more interdependent view on the dynamics of family lives than families in the minority world necessarily have (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). This means that making a decision, therein exercising agency, is not necessarily done individually, but rather collectively. The minority world might be described as having an individualistic perspective on children and their rights, which may collide with the collectivistic perspective that is prominent in the majority world. The UNCRC is made with a western, individualist-oriented lens, and "the images of childhood

favoured in the industrial North have been exported to the South" (Boyden, 1997, p. 199), where the "North" signifies the minority world and the "South" is referring to the majority world. How can one then expect the UNCRC to be applicable in the majority world when the North's view simply has been exported without taking into consideration the view of the Southern world? These debates are presented here because they bring to light the importance of thinking contextually and relationally, as is a great part of this thesis.

### 3.2 An intergenerational perspective

The origin of an intergenerational perspective began with the aim of looking at the dynamics of the social relations across generations (Alanen, 2009). As part of understanding an intergenerational perspective, it is essential to clarify what the concept of generation can mean, as well as in what way it is used in this thesis. This is important because the concept itself can have different meanings depending on the context (Vanderbeck, 2007). One of the ways in which one can understand generation is through systems of kinship, this being for example between parents and their children (Vanderbeck, 2007). In other words, "...to designate a position within a family lineage" (Vanderbeck, 2007, p. 203). This can among others be a child, parent, grandparent or even a great grandparent. Viewing generation through these systems of kinship thus means looking at generation through for example the relationships between different generations. Another possible way of understanding generation is as a group of people born the same year. This can be understood through generational orderings, used to describe age groups or cohorts (Alanen, 2009). Alanen stated that according to Mannheim, age cohorts can for example be a group of people born the same year, experiencing historical and social happenings, in which a common consciousness evolves (Alanen, 2009). Alanen summarized that as follows: "...a generation is a historically positioned age group whose members undergo a similar socialization process which brings about a shared frame of experience and action and makes them into an 'actual', active generation" (Alanen, 2009, p. 164). Seeing it this way, children the same age with similar experiences regarding for example dogs might be viewed as a generation too if they have undergone socialization processes with experiences that resembles one another. However, it is the first definition of generation that is used in this thesis. Consequently, generational relations is therefore what Alanen signifies as relationships between people in dissimilar stages of life (Alanen, 2009), and in this thesis this pertains to children and their parent(s). Now that generation has been defined, intergenerationality can thus be described as "...the relations and interactions between generational groups" (Hopkins & Pain, 2007, p.288, in Daniel et al., 2020, p. 2). In this research and perspective, it is the relations and interactions between parents, children, and their dog(s) that are of relevance. What is further interesting, is that Hopkins & Pain (2007, in Daniel et al., 2020) advocate that "... identity is produced through social interaction and through generational "differences and sameness" and call these "relational geographies" of age" (p. 2). This means that through the relational geographies of age, different identities evolve. I will mention this further in sub chapter 5.3.1 in the analysis.

An intergenerational perspective can be explained as "... the interactivity between generations" (Daniel et al., 2020, p. 1), or in other words, as the activity between people from different generations. For example, Tipper (2011, in Muldoon et al., 2015) emphasized the interwovenness of the intergenerationality within the relationship between children, their parents and pets. Children Muldoon interviewed explained that if

they did not treat the pet well, they could get “into trouble” (Muldoon et al., 2015), and that they could even feel “... mistreated if the parent spent more time with the pet than them” (Muldoon et al., 2015, p. 203). This shows how the relationship between the children and their pets also influences the children’s relationships with their parents and vice versa, as how much time a parent for example spend with the family dog can impact the relationship with their child. Thus, there is a relationality present within this intergenerational perspective as the interactivity between children, parents and their dogs are influenced by the relations they have. Another study to illustrate this relational approach is for example one done by Russo et al. (2017), that explored how parents perceive their children’s relationship with their pets. One of the findings was that most parents viewed the relationship between the children and their pet as being a positive encounter (Russo et al., 2017). Intergenerationality can be a part of relationality, likewise, relationality can be a part of intergenerational perspectives. One can also connect interdependence to this example. In this thesis, the chosen definition of interdependence comprises how people influence each other (Maggetti et al., 2013), so it focuses on the social and relational aspects of influencing each other. In the first example above, one could claim that the family is interdependent, due to them influencing each other and being influenced by each other depending on their relationship with one another. Furthermore, interdependence is also about standing “... in a relation of mutual constitution- they reciprocally presume each other” (Alanen, 2009, p. 161). Thus, children and parents mutually influence one another, in addition to them influencing the dog(s) and being influenced by the dog(s).

The concept of generational order is also highly relevant in this thesis, with the definition being “... a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other” (Alanen, 2009, p. 162). It is reasonable to claim that for many people, the word generation implicitly refers to humans. If this had not been most humans’ associations, I would have argued for bringing the dog into a generational perspective, as the definition does not say anything about the network having to comprise human beings, and thus, might have included dogs. The parents and children are daily interacting with each other, having relationships with each other, as well as being from different generations. They also have to be considerate of each other to make the dynamic of the family household work, thus one could claim that a family unit of this kind can be viewed as a generational order. Age and generation can impact research a great deal, and as Punch (2020) advocates, it should be considered a variable to the same degree as ethnicity and gender are, as childhoods cannot be viewed without taking generation into consideration. Without a parent, there is no child and vice versa. They are mutually dependent on each other. However, critiques have been put forward regarding only focusing on humans, as this is not the only actor impacting upon humanity. One of the critiques is from Donna Haraway (2003), who “... points to the ways in which humans and dogs create personal, intimate and *mutual* relationships through their daily engagements” (in Tipper, 2011, p. 148). It is reasonable to claim that humans would not have been able to create these kinds of relationships with dogs if dogs were not actors, actively making decisions and contributing to co-constructing meaning and practices in these relationships. What Haraway (2003) further advocates is how these companion relationships across species “... reveal how humans and other species evolve and co-exist in mutually constitutive and symbiotic ways that might be conceived of as ‘kinship’, collapsing stark binaries between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’” (in Tipper, 2011, p. 148). The characteristics of the relationships between humans and dogs seems to be of a kind resembling kinship, therefore in some way still

intertwining the dog into the concept of generation. I will argue that such relations might also include non-humans such as dogs. Even though the dog is not a human, one may argue that it is still a part of the structured network as it is part of the daily dynamics involving feeding, walks, stimulation, and play, to mention some. Thus, it might be a part of the network viewed from a sociomaterial perspective (see sub chapter 3.3.). To bring to light the mutually constitutive-ness of the relation: There is no dog owner without a dog, and no dog as a pet without an owner.

Another important aspect to include within the intergenerational perspective, is agency. Agency was described in the beginning of this chapter, and Punch (2020) is one of the scholars arguing for viewing agency in connection with generational order as they will influence each other. For instance, the agency of children is likely to be affected by the generational order and the position they have in the family. It is reasonable to claim that parents' agencies are more substantial than their children's agencies due to their position in the families. This is because one acts within the social structures in which one is a part, and the parents and children "... are positioned differently in the social order" (Qvortrup et al., 2009, p. 27). Thus, their degree of agency depends on the relations as well as where they are positioned in the social order (Punch, 2020). Hence, agency is dependent on multiple factors where some of those can be generational order, structures, power relations and interdependence.

The families in this thesis are living together, either part time or full time, depending on school or family situations such as divorces and boarding school. Hence, there is an ongoing activity between people from different generations as the parents are from one generation, and the children from another. However, usually research either spans the older generation or the younger generation, whereas it is more rare to find research comprising both the younger and older generations (Vanderbeck, 2007). This thesis seeks to grasp perspectives from both generations. What is interesting about the interactions of generations, is how these practices function. Alanen's (2001) perspective on generationing spans "...the complexity of social processes through which people become (are constructed as) "children" while other people become [...] "adults"" (p. 143, in Vanderbeck, 2007, p. 205). This cast light on how agency and structure is present as well as the interplay between them as "...individuals and groups negotiate, challenge and (re)construct generational identities and structures" (Vanderbeck, 2007, p. 205). Those negotiations, challenges and (re)constructions influence how the dynamics change in the families, how the norms and ways of living within the family changes, which again can affect how the next generation grows up, due to this constant negotiation in the family household affected by agency and structure (Punch, 2016; Vanderbeck, 2007). This not only impacts on the norms, but also the identities and structures within the family, so how are the family members' ways of living made sense of when having a dog in the household?

An intergenerational perspective, nonetheless, is not limited to include interactions between generations. There are multiple relevant concepts that can be part of or intertwined with an intergenerational perspective. Power relations are such a concept as parents usually possess greater power than the children (Vanderbeck, 2007). When a dog is added to the picture, one could argue that another layer of power relations evolves, as the children will have more power than the dog(s). The parents can for example decide that the children have to walk the dog, but the children might decide when to undertake the walk as well as the route. With the increasing institutionalization of childhood where children spend less time unsupervised, it is frequently proposed that

there is a greater need for children to “find themselves” by spending more time being autonomous (Kjørholt, 2003; Vanderbeck, 2007). However, this is a very western way of viewing childhood, as this implies an assumption that the children are completely different from their parents and thereby need to be autonomous to “find themselves” (Kjørholt, 2003). What is of relevance in this project, is how autonomy is partly connected to the amount of responsibility the children are given towards the dog(s) in the family. This can speak to the increasing institutionalization, and how the children who are allowed to walk the dog by themselves are also in that way spending more time unsupervised and gaining more autonomy than the children who are not given such permissions. In my project, I am not saying that the children are completely different from their parents, rather I am arguing that we get both the parents and children’s perspectives on dog keeping through the family interviews. The intergenerational perspective is therefore very fruitful to use in this thesis to explore both children’s and parents’ views on the meaning of having a dog, both in general and during childhood.

### 3.3 Social constructionism

Social constructionism evolved in the 1980’s and 1990’s when new ways of studying humans as “social animals” gradually took form (Burr, 2015). Such branches were for example “critical psychology’, ‘discursive psychology’, ‘discourse analysis’, ‘deconstruction’ and ‘post structuralism’” (Burr, 2015, p. 1). Today, the similarities between several of those perspectives is frequently called social constructionism (Burr, 2015). Social constructionism entails “... how categories are constructed, how bodies of knowledge are built up and how childhood and adulthood are seen and understood in any given society” (Montgomery, 2003, p. 46). Social constructionists believe that different types of realities are constructed among people culturally and socially (Burr, 2015). However, according to Kehily and Gallacher (2013) it is not enough to simply *state* that childhoods are socially and culturally constructed, but there is a need to *investigate how* they are socially and culturally constructed. Thus, through doing research with families, the families’ sensemaking of having a dog will become visible. Sensemaking is highly connected to social constructionism because social constructs are about how people make sense of the world and therein different practices, norms, values, and phenomena. As different contexts will have different understandings not only of childhoods, but also of what a child is, this means that a child is not a universal category either but will differ from context to context (Hammersley, 2017).

There is not one specific definition on what social constructionism entails, as this may vary to a certain degree. According to Burr (2015), the approach can be called social constructionistic if it approves of at least one of the expectations presented in the next paragraph. Social constructionism is highly relevant in this thesis in exploring how the children and parents make sense of having a dog during childhood and in general. Social constructionism can also provide insight into how dog keeping, childhood and adulthood is seen and understood in a Norwegian context. Such perspectives often emphasize that humans navigate through notions and utilize cultural ways of understanding to give meaning to everyday life and different phenomena- like having a dog. Similarly, Montgomery (2003) states that how people view children varies due to the dependency on the “... social, cultural and historical context” (p. 46). This means that how children are viewed can be different from context to context, and that this research thus will explore a small part of a Norwegian context. Therein, Norwegian sensemakings of a phenomenon are explored.

Burr (2015) emphasizes that "...social constructionism argues that the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific" (p. 4). She writes about understanding people in conjunction with a given time and context. This is because how a given context is culturally and socially constructed will change over time (Burr, 2015). What one may co-construct today in one context, is thus not necessarily the same as one would co-construct in the exact same context at a different time. Burr (2015) also emphasizes how one should not take for granted that one's own sensemaking of the world is superior to other people's assumptions. Neither of those comprehensions can be said to be any less accurate than the other as this is how they make sense of the world. Nonetheless, how we make sense of the world is not quite individual and arbitrary - we navigate through and make use of certain ways of thinking and talking that circulates in our own history and cultural context.

Another important aspect of social constructionism is the emphasis on ideas about children, and not universal facts applying to them (Montgomery, 2003). This means that every childhood is different and thus one may not assume that a certain type of childhood applies to every child. This is also what is meant when writing about childhoods in plural, due to many social constructionists rejecting universal ideas about what children and childhoods are and should be (Montgomery, 2003), and that one therefore can write about it in plural, namely, childhoods. This can be connected to Burr's (2015) underlining of questioning taken-for-granted-ness. One of the assumptions making a perspective social constructionistic comprises questioning taken-for-granted knowledge (Burr, 2015). This includes being critical to the world we see and how common ideas about the world are like. It seeks to be sceptic of social and psychological phenomena as every world view is made sense of differently (Burr, 2015). This can be linked to questioning universal knowledge as this encompasses similar issues. Consequently, the research done in this thesis aims to explore children's and parents' sensemakings of having a dog, and not a priori assuming what kind of sense they make of it due to it being of social constructionistic character.

The third assumption is about how knowledge is constructed between people instead of already "being there". It is about a rejection of knowledge being discovered- knowledge is not seen as neutral but created and shaped by certain ways of thinking and concepts. There is no unproblematic "truth" to uncover as all knowledge is shaped through social processes and interactions (Burr, 2015). The communication and ways of communicating between people may thus be considered what makes the knowledge in societies. For example, knowledge regarding pets are today constructed in a way that describes pets as more tame than before, as well as people starting to refer to their pets as their "fur babies" (Blouin, 2012). To refer to one's dog in that way may lead to certain new interpretations about what it means to have a dog, due to comparing one's dog with a baby. This may speak to how constructions of having a dog have changed, and about the significance a dog can have to people today compared to certain constructions of dogs previously. According to Blouin (2012) it is likely that it is 12 000 years since people started keeping pets, and this first concerned wolves, then 9000 years ago pigs and cows were also incorporated into pet keeping, followed by cats 3-4000 years ago. What is most commonly believed is that hunting communities brought wild animals' infants into their communities, followed by reproduction of the most tame and non-aggressive animals of the same breed (Blouin, 2012). This supposedly gradually started a process where the animals physically changed, and where the domesticated animals had more tame attributes than their "wild counterparts" (Blouin, 2012, p. 858), and was according

to Budiansky (1992, in Blouin, 2012, p. 858) described as "docile, curious, non-territorial, and less distrustful of other animal species". This can imply that as the animals physically changed, many people's sensemakings of them also changed. Until the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, household animals were usually seen as used for a purpose (Blouin, 2012). However, the elite of many European contexts, such as for example Greece, were the exception, as they kept animals as pets (Blouin, 2012). It was not until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the middle class to a much larger extent started keeping pets in Europe (Ritvo, 1987). Ritvo (1987) makes an interesting point regarding why it was this late that ordinary people started having pets of their own. She states that up until recently it was a common view that poor people did not have the resources necessary to acquire a dog. Thus, the upper class was the only group seen as "capable" of providing for a dog due to them being wealthier. What is interesting about this particular time period is that plenty of extreme changes in "... the general relationship of human beings... to the natural world" (Ritvo, 1987, p. 161) took place. For example, wildness was more appreciated in literature and art, instead of being viewed as unsightly (Ritvo, 1987). More importantly was, among others, the new compassion for points of views, therein animals' points of views due to an increase in sympathy towards them (Ritvo, 1987). Supposedly, pet owners made sense of "the non-human world as a less threatening and more comfortable place" (Ritvo, 1987, p. 160). Ultimately, a shift in the relationship between nature and culture and attitudes that humans had pertaining to nature, were necessary to turn into a view on keeping pets as being more acceptable and approved. According to Ritvo (1987), a larger degree of urbanization, as well as scientific and economic evolvment resulted into nature being viewed as less threatening. As humans understood more of nature and science, they gained more control (Ritvo, 1987), making it less scary acquiring a pet. This is one example of how knowledge has been constructed between different people over the time.

The fourth assumption is regarding how "Constructions of the world ... sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others" (Burr, 2015, p. 5). How the world is viewed and made sense of, makes some actions seen as acceptable, whereas others are considered unacceptable or less acceptable. An example is who has the right to lecture a child, as this may vary from context to context. However, these constructions are also connected to the aspect of power, as what is considered acceptable behaviour will also have consequences for how groups of people, such as children, are treated in society (Burr, 2015). This is highly connected to the concept of discourse, which is essential in social constructionism. Discourses make it easier to think about childhoods through different lenses and not simply as a universal phenomenon (Kehily & Gallacher, 2013). Kehily and Gallacher (2013) refer to discourses as "...systems of thought, which are made up of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices" (p. 229). Discourses therefore pertain to how one thinks about a phenomenon, and this is affected by the context and given time in which one lives as this will influence one's ideas, attitudes, beliefs, actions, and practices. Similarly, Burr (2015) describes discourses in the matter of how we speak about and depict the world through "...written texts, pictures and images" (p. 21) and how those form the ways we encounter the world. She furthermore argues that "It is the structures of our socially shared language that are seen as producing phenomena at both the social and personal levels" (Burr, 2015, p. 21). Hence, the shared structures of our common world views are what create notions.

Power relations are also worth mentioning in this section. Foucault argued that how humans "talk about and think about, for example, sexuality and mental illness, and the way they are widely presented in society, brings implications for the way we treat

people" (in Burr, 2015, p. 20). He furthermore stated that those sensemakings included certain power relations since "...as a society we think of people who hear voices as mentally ill and refer them to psychiatrists and psychologists who then have power over many aspects of their lives" (Burr, 2015, pp. 20-21). Similarly, if the society believed that people with dogs were mentally ill, this would probably create a power asymmetry between dog owners and non-dog owners. This is because this would give the society some power over the dog keeping aspects of the dog owners' lives. Thus, different constructions will uphold certain patterns of what is accepted and what is not. This means that "Our constructions of the world are therefore also bound up with power relations because they have implications for what it is permissible for different people to do, and how they may legitimately treat others" (Burr, 2015, p. 5). Consequently, one can argue that the majority's constructions of a matter may influence a phenomena, meaning that everyone possess some kind of power. For example, Woodhead (2006) writes about how certain parental styles are prominent and featured as the "right" way to raise one's children, and how these discourses about what a "normal" childhood should be like fails to take into consideration the diversity of the world's constructions of childhoods, beliefs, values and cultures. I argue that there is no one right way to construct childhoods. I can only write about how the childhoods and phenomenon of having a dog in general and during childhood are made sense of in a selection of families in Trøndelag. To draw a link between social constructionism and this research project, I seek to explore children's and their families' sensemakings of having a dog and how these worlds are made sense of among and between the family members, utilizing a sociological lens. Social constructionism is thus fruitful to use in this thesis, and particularly in the analysis chapters when delving into discourses and cultural understandings of having a dog, as well as the dogs' roles in the families.

### 3.3.1 Social constructions of dogs

Montgomery's definition on social constructionism described previously, implies that one has to look at how the category of dogs is constructed, seen, and understood in the Norwegian context. However, as Kehily and Gallacher (2013) advocated, stating that a phenomenon is socially constructed is not enough, but we have to explore the ways in which it is constructed, the *how* of it. Therefore, some of the ways in which the category of dogs is constructed are provided below.

According to Tipper (2011), "Relationships with animals take place within the social context of children's lives" (p. 160). This means that children make sense of their relationships with animals in different ways depending on how the phenomenon of having dogs as pets is constructed in their cultural context. How the society is socially constructed varies with time and place, and therein also the children's ways of relating to other humans and animals (Tipper, 2011). In the minority world, dogs are commonly viewed as pets, as something lovable, whereas in the majority world, it is not unusual that dogs are seen as filled with diseases and being despised (Bryce, 2021). This is because of how the view on dogs is constructed. When I was in Bali, there were loads of wild dogs wandering around by themselves all over the island, and this seemed to be normal custom there. However, after reading about it, I learned that many of those "wild" dogs, probably did in fact have owners, but were seen as "semi-wild". This was because they would usually wander around by themselves during day time, and then go home during night time (Widyastuti et al., 2015). According to Widyastuti et al. (2015) the dogs wandering around by themselves are respected due to cultural reasons. What is furthermore interesting is that dogs that were kept on a leash, were viewed as being too



aggressive, whereas in Norway, keeping dogs on a leash is legally binding certain times of the year according to §6 in The Dog Act (Hundeloven, 2003) and is also usual when walking one's dog. Even though the mentioned paragraph is there to prevent hunting or harming of other animals, it is part of the social construct of dog keeping in a Norwegian context. In addition to this, there are different laws made to secure the welfare of dogs in Norway, and organizations working to secure that they are treated in a loving way, and this is all due to how contemporary accepted ways of dog keeping are constructed in this context.

Some of the most essential factors that impact the relationship between people and their dogs pertain to people's general stance and degree of empathy towards dogs (Ellingsen et al., 2010). In Norway, the view on dogs has shifted from them being used for a purpose such as guarding the farm or used in hunting, to more often being companion animals- providing company (Lund et al., 2009). Consequently, in Norway (and Iceland), the biggest reason for acquiring a dog is a desire to have a dog of one's own in addition to most commonly viewing the dogs as family members (Lund et al., 2009). Similar to children, dogs have also gone through a shift from being considered as objects, to valuable, individual subjects (Lund et al., 2009). They are utilized as service dogs for blind people, assisting ill or disabled, contribute in the military or rescue organizations such as the red cross, as well as in customs and the police (Lund et al., 2009). Lastly, dog owners acquire dogs for the purpose of company and pleasure as well as for work and hobbies (Lund et al., 2009). All of the above give an insight in how dog keeping is constructed in a Norwegian context and show that dogs are acquired for several different reasons. As Lund et al. (2009) accentuate, as much as 80 percent of the respondents view their dog as a family member, and what is furthermore emphasized is that this might be an indicator of the value and status the dog has in the family. Social constructionism is thus useful in this thesis to explore how family members make sense of the phenomenon of dog keeping. One can argue that the families' everyday lives are impacted upon to a large extent, due to the high value that it seems like the dogs have because of their status as a family member and companion animal.

The biggest expectations the respondents in the study of Lund et al. (2009) had regarding dog keeping mostly pertained to company, exercise/outdoor life, usefulness and hobby, respectively. What is interesting, is that animals have become more central both as objects but also as actors in the western world, and this is prominent through people's ways of thinking about animals, their social life, self-understanding and fellowship (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006). Animals are increasingly being incorporated into families' rituals and social activities, and it is becoming more usual that dogs get birthday- and Christmas presents, toys, clothes, and even get to stay at hotels with the family, having birthday parties, participating in family photos, have funerals and are being grieved (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006). Dogs are to a much larger degree actively contributing to both the conflict and harmonic moments of the family life (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006). As this is findings from Nordic countries with similar ways of living, and are in close proximity to Norway, one may argue that parts of this can also be applicable for Norway due to the similarities between the countries.

Another example to give insight into the social construction of dogs in Norway, or western countries in general is the commonness of day care centers for dogs. As some dogs do not necessarily like being by themselves whilst the owners are at work or have separation anxiety, there is a possibility of delivering your dog in a "dog garden". A dog garden is like a kindergarten except that it is for dogs. Sending one's dog to dog day care

can say something about the owner's sensemaking about leaving its dog alone for a full day of work. In 2019, thirty-four day care centers for dogs existed in Norway (Holme, 2019). One of the reasons for sending one's dog to day care is "tidsklemma" (time crunch) (Holme, 2019). The concept is more thoroughly described in the methodology chapter, but in short comprises time deficiency in a hectic day-to-day-life. This means that if the owner does not have enough time to be with the dog as much as the dog requires, an option is to send it to dog day care. However, sending one's dog to dog day care is quite expensive. Doing this merely once a week has the price tag of between 1000-1800 Norwegian kroner per month (Holme, 2019). This is a substantial amount of money for most people. Nonetheless, the fact that there exists a number of day care centers for dogs in Norway reveals the normality of having measures like that and means that people are indeed utilizing those services. It also discloses the increased emotional value added to dogs and might point to that certain ideals about dog keeping are reserved those with affluent financial resources, similarly to the elites during ancient times mentioned previously. Perhaps dog day care is not seen as normal to everyone in Norway, but there is reason to believe that it has become more common as there exists that many day care centers for dogs. The day care centers have schedules that the dogs have to follow every day, where set routines for example include nap time, and play (Holme, 2019). Day care centers for dogs hold many similarities to kindergartens, and there is even a direct link between the two as the title of the article is "Hundeeiere sender bikkjene sine i "barnehage"", in English "Dog owners are sending their dogs to "kindergarten"". This says something about the status of dogs, as they seem to be increasingly treated in similar ways to children. This does not merely include sending dogs to day care, but also involves the set routines in the day care as they have many of the same routines as in a kindergarten, as is mentioned above.

### 3.4 Sociomateriality and Actor-Network Theory

The possible changing meaning of having a dog is interesting, as one can discuss if the category of "pet" or "dog" is starting to change as well. This is for example due to people having relationships of more intense character than before with their pet dogs (see Schaffer, 2009, in Blouin, 2012). In a social constructionist perspective, the role of the dog can be seen as in a process of reconstruction. The emotional bonds between the families and pets are growing tighter, and a number of families are referring to their dog as part of the family and as a family member, and not merely as a dog or a friend (Power, 2008). However, I also find it helpful to draw on insights from a sociomaterial approach to get a wider perspective on childhoods (Sørenssen et al., 2021). Within sociomateriality we can find relational ontology, which implies that abilities arise in meetings between actors, and is not inhabited in any of these actors beforehand (Sørenssen et al., 2021, p. 264). Such actors can for example be human and non-human. I argue that dogs can be considered non-human actors. Power brings to light a framework that facilitates a "recognition of an active non-human presence in family, allowing non-human agency to emerge as an outcome of everyday interactions and encounters between family members" (Hichmore 2003, 2004; Lorimer, 2005; Whatmore, 2006, in Power, 2008, pp. 537-538). Thus, sociomateriality highlights not only the socially constructed world, but also how materiality is partaking in constructing practices and meaning (Sørenssen et al., 2021). To elaborate further; from a sociomaterial approach "... it is not merely human interactions that impact how 'the child' or 'childhood' is enacted" (Sørenssen & Franck, 2021, p. 695). This means that from a sociomaterial perspective, dogs are part of constructing the way the world is functioning too. According to Taguchi (2014, in Sørenssen et al., 2021) human and non-human are

seen as mutually dependent on each other, where meaning making is co-constructed when the human and non-human actors meet. This leads us to Actor-Network Theory (ANT) where sociomateriality and relational ontology are asserted.

ANT promotes a view that the divide between the duality of human and non-human is artificial, and rather focuses on what it is that takes place in those meetings between the actors (Sørenssen et al., 2021). In Sørenssen et al. (2021), three characteristics of ANT are emphasized. I will only mention one of these, as this thesis draws inspiration from ANT but does not use it as one of the main theoretical perspectives per se. One of these aspects entails the non-human as actors, and not merely as a neutral object nor as a tool to be utilized by humans, which means that non-humans are active actors (see more about this in sub chapter 3.4.1 about dogs as social actors) and thereby influence the other actors. As exemplified in Sørenssen et al. (2021) non-human actors can limit or enable what is possible for other actors to do with them. For instance, a dog can limit the freedom of the family members by not being able to be alone for several days. Nonetheless, it can also enable them to pet it, or walk it. What ANT highlights is thus that it is not only how people communicate that impact practices and sensemakings, these are also impacted by limits and possibilities entailed within the acting actors (Sørenssen et al., 2021). Moreover, this might mean that by having a dog, the identities of the family members might differ from what they would have been like without a dog due to for example the differences and sameness's between the family members, including the dog. Another reason for this is because the dog has its own identity, and therefore will affect and be affected by the identities in the family as well, which can therefore be connected to relational geographies of age (see sub chapter 3.2.).

To sum up, ANT contributes to highlighting that dogs are indeed a part of the relational networks that together shape everyday life and phenomena in society. In the analysis chapters I draw on sociomateriality when exploring the concept of family and how dogs are increasingly seen as family members. Sociomateriality is also fruitful when exploring the relationships between the dogs and the different family members as well as regarding the dogs' roles in the families and the everyday lives of those families.

### 3.4.1 Dogs as social actors

Tipper (2011) writes about how work in animal-human studies have proposed understanding animals as agentic creatures that "matter *in their own right* in academic considerations of social life" (p.149), thus writing about them as subjects. Philo and Wilbert (2004) exemplifies this by writing about when animals transgress boundaries humans have set for them, and in this way exercising agency. This could be when dogs do something they are not allowed to or do something other than what they are taught or told to do. What is furthermore interesting is how, according to Sanders (1999) many pet owners talk about their pets as humans. He writes about how the owners express having a mutual relationship based on emotional, intimate and durable aspects (Sanders, 1999). This supports Tipper's (2011) study where according to her, there is a need for acceptance of this fact, that dogs and cats in particular "... are capable of the kind of 'minded interaction' and intersubjectivity which constitute social life" (p. 148). This means that dogs are supposedly capable of understanding humans as well as interacting with them. If this is the case, one may claim that this impacts the family structure and everyday life of families to a large extent. Tipper (2011) also states that "When these pets anticipate shared routines or seem to appreciate others' intentions or feelings, they can be seen as social actors engaging in a shared social life" (p. 148). This implies that pets have the ability to follow the structures and routines set up in the family life, and

that by doing this they prove to be social actors. Additionally, it means that pets are able to recognize and understand other people's aims and feelings. James and Prout (2015) describe that children are "... active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live" (p. 7). One can argue that when pet dogs adapt to the family's routines and understand their feelings, they are taking part in constructing their own lives as well as the lives of the family in which they live. In this way the dogs decide to follow the family's way of living in addition to sometimes refusing to, which is also a way of being a social actor.

One may also differentiate between an actor and an agent. Mayall (2002, p. 21) scrutinizes the concepts and explains a social actor as someone who "does something, perhaps something arising from a subjective wish" (in Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 255). As it is reason to believe that dogs may do something based on a subjective wish, as has been exemplified previously, one may according to Mayall's definition categorize dogs as social actors. She describes a social agent, on the other hand, as more multilayered than a social actor. A social agent is someone who enters "... negotiation with others, with the effect that the interaction makes a difference- to a relationship or to a decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints" (Mayall, 2002, p. 21, in Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 255). One may question whether dogs enter negotiations with its family members and if this impacts the relationship or affects a reached resolution, expectations, or restrictions. This can depend on how the person assessing it makes sense of what a negotiation is, and how grand it has to be, as well as how one defines impacting a relationship for instance. If one reaches the conclusion that the dog does negotiate and impact something, one might categorize the dog as a social agent, too. Still, one may argue that a dog rarely is partaking in big decisions such as when to go on holiday, where to go, or if the family should move, albeit that does not seem to be a requirement. In decisions regarding whether to go for a walk maybe they do have a say. Hence, maybe dogs can be viewed as social agents, or perhaps it might be more suiting to view the dog as a social actor, but not a social agent per se.

Most respondents in a study done by Arahori et al. (2017) in Japan believed that their pet(s) was capable of feeling primary feelings, which among others are sadness and happiness, with the exception of disgust. The pets included in the study were cats and dogs. Even though this is in a different context than Norway, it reveals something about how a number of people construct knowledge regarding their pets. This can strengthen the argument about dogs being social actors, as there is reason to believe that one has to have a varied set of emotions to make active decisions. Additionally, a number of respondents also believed that their pets' emotional repertoire included secondary feelings such as pride and shame (Arahori et al., 2017). Another argument that strengthens the belief of dogs' abilities' to understand feelings is from a study done by Virginia Morrow in England, where many of the children clearly stated that the dogs "knew" when they were upset and that the dogs were good listeners (Morrow, 1998). Consequently, children are more likely to turn to their pets when sad, and both children, youth and adults with dogs are more likely to seek their dog when in need of support due to being upset (Cassels et al., 2017). The context of England is in closer proximity to Norway than Japan is and might thus be more applicable to this context due to more resemblances in norms, values, and culture. If the dogs' do sense when something is wrong, and are good listeners, this might reveal something about how the phenomenon of dog keeping is experienced in the everyday lives of children and their families. Moreover, it is clear that even though dogs are not humans and cannot fill all the roles

and positions of humans, they are still actors in the everyday life practices of the families in which they live and are a part of (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2006).

### 3.5 The common thread of the perspectives

In this chapter three different perspectives have been presented. These are an intergenerational perspective, sociomateriality, and social constructionism. Within all of these perspectives, relationality is inherent. I use these perspectives to cast light on how parents and children describe the children's relations with their dogs, and the meaning of having a dog. I also investigate how the dog possibly might influence the relations between the family members and their everyday lives and what role the dog has in the family structure and everyday lives of the families. By exploring all of the above, I make great use of intergenerational perspectives when talking to different generations, and social constructionism when scrutinizing meaning making about the phenomenon of dog keeping. Sociomateriality is present through exploring the co-construction of meaning making between the dogs and different family members, and how the dogs' non-human agency become present in those meetings. Within all sensemaking and the character of the different relationships, the relationality also becomes present as this thesis to a great extent revolves around the relations between the different family members and their dog(s).

### 3.6 Summary

This chapter first introduced the field of childhood studies, as well as how it originated. James and Prout's six key features that summarizes the new sociology of childhood is presented, wherein how childhood is a social construct is one of them. The importance of children being studied in their own right as they are active social actors, and no longer viewed as passive beings is also of great importance. The view on children as only becomings, shifted to viewing them as both beings and becomings. Furthermore, critiques of the new sociology of childhood have been briefly discussed, where some of these address the views on children and childhood being very individualistic and not really taking into consideration the majority world's view. The chapter has provided insight on intergenerationality and how this is about interactions between generations. It also described other relevant concepts linked to intergenerationality and the intergenerational perspective. Actor-Network Theory was moreover presented to bring to light the importance of interactions between human and non-humans as this also shapes the practices and meaning making of the world. The chapter has delved into social constructionism and how this requires at least one of the four key assumptions to be categorized as social constructionistic, where one of these is regarding cultural and historical specificity. Essential concepts relating to social constructionism has been presented, where discourse, social actors, social agents, and social constructions of dog are among these. The next chapter comprises the methodological approach taken in this thesis, as well as describing the recruitment process, methods, and ethical considerations.

## 4 Methodology

The methodology chapter starts with elaborating on the methodological approach chosen in the thesis. The researcher role(s) I tried to enter are addressed, which can be explained as eclectic as I drew on Corsaro and Molinari (2008), and Christensen's (2004) roles, "atypical" and "unusual", consequently. I was also inspired by the "friendly" role in Abebe (2009). Furthermore, the chapter addresses methodological choices made throughout the research process, in addition to the methods used in the research which are walking interviews and family interviews. One of the choices was about expanding the age span of the participants due to more diverse age groups wishing to participate than I had anticipated. The recruitment process, challenges and how I recruited people through Facebook is explained, and I also discuss some of the ethical dilemmas encountered throughout the project. The dilemmas are regarding voluntary participation and withdrawals, ensuring confidentiality, and privacy. Lastly, I provide information about the process of analysis, where I conducted a thematic analysis using qualitative data analysis software.

### 4.1 Methodological approach

The master thesis has a qualitative approach that seeks to explore various nuances on different "... aspects of the interviewee's life world" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 33). Thus, I seek to explore how the participants view and describe their lives and realities. Life world can be described to be "... the world as it is encountered in everyday life and given in direct and immediate experience, independent of and prior to explanations" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32). The life worlds that this research seeks to explore are the parents' and children's life worlds connected to how they make sense of their dog(s), their relationship with their dog(s) and how their dog(s) impacts their everyday lives.

There are two distinctive metaphors when being an interviewer and these are as a "miner" and as a "traveler" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Before delving into what those metaphors entail, it is first relevant to define ontology and epistemology as those form a basis for the methodological understanding. Ontology is about what reality is, and epistemology comprises what and how we can know reality (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The miner and traveler demonstrate two contrasting "... epistemological conceptions of interviewing as a process of *knowledge collection* or as a process of *knowledge construction*, respectively" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 57). The interviews I conducted are grounded in the interviewer as a traveler, which is a metaphor for knowledge production where knowledge is shaped in the interview. The traveler is the metaphor I relate most to and that I view as most compatible with a social constructionist perspective. This is because the conversation often is of interest in the traveler-metaphor, where new knowledge might be produced, "... as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs..." (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 58). When doing interviews from a traveler perspective, being open-minded when entering the scenery of the interview process is common (Ritchie et al., 2013). Thus, being open to what knowledge is being co-constructed between the interviewees and the interviewer may be regarded as important features of a traveler.

#### 4.1.1 Researcher role(s)

When conducting research, I wanted to appear as kind-and -friendly looking, which hold many similarities to the "friendly role" described in Abebe (2009). The reason for this is because I wished to be viewed as a friendly adult that the children felt that they could trust and confide in. For example, I aimed "...to minimize my power by not exerting authority over the children" (Abebe, 2009, p. 458). I wanted the children to feel comfortable. Consequently, I aimed at informalizing the interviews to a certain degree by trying to strike them as a kind and friendly adult. Before I went out in the field, I sat down and wrote about what I had to remember for the first meeting, such as what to present regarding the project, how to carry it out as well as how to behave to radiate the intended feeling. What I first realized was that I wanted to radiate a good feeling so that the families and especially the children would feel like they genuinely wanted to participate. One of the main components of being a friendly adult is in fact "expressing a positive feeling" (Holmes, 1998, in Abebe, 2009, p. 458). If I had not been perceived as kind and friendly-looking, perhaps the children would not want to participate due to the possibility of not feeling safe or comfortable. What was also important to me was to respect their decisions, in which I mean that not wanting to participate was something I of course had to respect. And so, I reflected on what I thought seemed like a good role to enter, in addition to the "friendly role", when diving into the field. Corsaro and Molinari (2008), and Christensen (2004) immediately came to mind, in which the roles they entered are now presented.

Christensen's (2004) researcher role is called the "unusual type of adult". Christensen (2004) strongly emphasizes viewing children as "fellow human beings" (p. 165). Focusing on this was also important to me by listening to the voices of the children and viewing their opinions as important and as valid as anyone's else. Furthermore, Christensen (2004) described her research as including what the children's perspectives were, presenting it to the children in a way that signified the importance of their opinions and them joining the research. This is also what I tried to do. When meeting the families, I explained what the research was about, and how I wanted to explore the children's sensemaking of the meaning of having a dog, in general and during childhood. I tried to mediate that I wanted to hear their views on the matter, and to emphasize that their opinions were a main interest. Thereafter, I asked them what they thought after hearing what the research was about and the methods to be used. I also wanted to be respectful of the children and youth and sensitive to what they had to say, as emphasized in Christensen (2004), through letting them finish their track of thoughts even if it was a digression from the topic. This also included if the children were distracted. For example, they sometimes found the tape recorder to be very interesting and could grab it. Part of me then wanted to ask for it back, but when I started reflecting on it, I decided to let them investigate the tape recorder so it would not seem as unknown or scary, but rather familiarize them with it. Some children asked me questions about the tape recorder, which I then answered as well as I could. Others asked if they could press start on the tape recorder when the interview was about to begin, which I granted them permission to do. Some even paid close attention to how long the interview had lasted and regularly updated us by saying aloud for example "four minutes and three seconds!" directly into the tape recorder. Allowing such digressions and distractions can be important to ensure that the children feel listened to and that their opinions matter, because they do. This also entails respecting if a child chooses to be silent or ignore a question, as doing so is also a way of expressing oneself, and might even provide more information on the child's perspective or voice (Spyrou, 2011). Being silent can also be a way of gaining power

over the situation through the child deciding what to share and what not to share. I tried to understand the children's perspectives on the meaning of having a dog and was very interested in grasping how the children made sense of their worlds. I asked follow-up questions, paid attention to what the children said and listened to them. I did not pretend to be a child when it was obvious that I am not and the children would most likely see through this (Christensen, 2004). By this, I am referring to the least adult role that Mandell (1988) tried to enter by imitating the children's language, playing in sandboxes with them and trying to be a child whilst in fact being an adult. The least adult role is of course an interesting and somewhat unusual role to enter, but not one I saw fit for my research purposes. I furthermore aimed to not overshadow the conversations and interviews, but rather let there be natural pauses and silences. This was done as an attempt to give the participants space and time to think in case they suddenly remembered something or wanted to say more.

Other scholars I drew inspiration from are Corsaro and Molinari (2008) and the "atypical, less powerful adult" role that is recommended by several researchers, according to Corsaro and Molinari (2008). This is similar to Christensen's unusual type of adult that is described in the paragraph above. Since I did not do longitudinal ethnographic research in preschools, I did not have the opportunity to test out every aspect of the atypical, less powerful adult role the way Corsaro did. However, there were some parts of the role that I could enter; during the family interviews I tried not to intervene if the children did something they were not supposed to and made sure not to interrupt them when they were talking as well as not trying to steer the activities they were doing but rather going along with it, to a certain extent at least. For example, when I was conducting a walking interview with one of the children, he all of a sudden wanted to head over to the field to eat some grains. He told me that he had done this with his family many times and that it was perfectly safe and very good, and so I went along with him towards the field. Still, when we had reached the field, he noticed that the grain did not look like it usually does, and we therefore decided that we should not eat it. Even though this was a digression, I thought that it was important not to decline the ideas he had, but rather go along with it to a certain degree unless it seemed to be dangerous. However, Corsaro also cautioned the children when he was worried something might become ruined (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008), and I also decided to do that. An example of this is when one of the children found a sheet metal and wanted to bring it home. Subsequently, I suggested that perhaps it was there for a reason, and that the owners of the property on which the sheet metal was laying possibly were going to utilize it for something. This he agreed on, and therefore left the sheet metal where found.

Doing walking interviews instead of regular individual semi-structured interviews was a way of trying to make myself a less powerful and atypical adult. Going for a walk with a child and their dog in areas they are familiar with whilst I am not, may have been a way of balancing out the power asymmetry to a certain degree due to them both being in charge of where we walked, but also competent relating to the areas where we did the walk. I can be slightly disoriented when I walk in completely new areas, and so it happened regularly that I either asked "are we going here or there?" or walking a bit slower, hesitating, so that I could see if the children/youth made a left, right or kept walking straight ahead. It was very clear that they were competent about the areas as they immediately replied, "we are going here, we are going back now", or "we are going that way because we are going there!", which might have been a given to them, but not to me. Walking whilst talking is "... intended to make the setting more inviting" (Eder & Fingerson, 2003, p. 36). The aim with walking interviews was thus to make the



atmosphere less formal (Eder & Fingerson, 2003) and thereby ease the conversation. Interviewing children whilst being on the move may also help with gathering more instinctive and genuine replies (Eder & Fingerson, 2003) since it might be more relaxing than sitting in a one-on-one interview. By walking around in their neighbourhoods, the children might recall memories or other details that they otherwise would not have thought of, such as the example mentioned previously of the one child recalling eating grains from the field and therefore wanting to go back there.

## 4.2 Fieldwork information

Information about the fieldwork process is presented in this sub-chapter and includes the research site, participants, and the recruitment process.

### 4.2.1 Research site

The research site was Trøndelag, and four of the family interviews happened in the participants' homes since they were comfortable with that. Two of the family interviews took place outside, one of them due to the family renovating their home, and the other because we were already outside, and no one suggested going inside. All of the walking interviews were conducted outside. The conducting of research was done during late summer and early autumn, namely in August and September 2022. Doing the fieldwork in the early autumn made it easier to spend more time outside due to the Norwegian climate. One of the family interviews that was conducted outside, was merely possible since the weather was still very nice, with a beautiful autumn day and approximately 14 degrees Celsius outside. It was fortunate that the weather was so good this day since we were outside a library in which it was not allowed to bring dogs. When the autumn weather strikes, usually from October, Trøndelag is subject to a much harsher weather. Then one can witness storms, rain falling sideways as well as warning notices advising people to secure loose objects or stay inside if they can. Thus, it is more favorable to conduct walking interviews outside before this season strikes, not only because it is more comfortable and easier to go on walks when the weather is nice, but also since it is easier to hear what the participants say and to concentrate if the weather is not that stormy. Nonetheless, it is impossible to predict what kind of weather Trøndelag offers, due to the rapidly changing weather conditions, or the inflexibility of changing the date for meeting solely because of bad weather. The last walking interview I conducted, took place when the fall weather had slightly begun, which required us to sit somewhere where the wind was not as bad in order to ensure an audio recording of good quality. We sat in a dog park with no people in close proximity, and it seemed to work quite well. The participant was talkative, and I did not think that sitting still ruined the interview setting. Even though we sat still, the wind was still audible in the tape recording occasionally, which made the transcription process challenging, but not impossible.

### 4.2.2 Participants

The sample is relatively homogenous with families seemingly being in quite similar socioeconomic situations in addition to all of them being native Norwegians. The sizes of the families varied but had many other similarities. The family composition had to include at least one parent, one child and one dog, and there was no upper limit to how many children or dogs the family could consist of to be eligible for participating in this research. 6 families with children between the ages of 5.5-17 years ended up participating, and many of them had several pets, by which I mean either several dogs, or both dogs and other pets. There were 17 participants in total, consisting of 10 children and 7 parents. Combined, the families had 9 dogs. There were multiple participants in each family due

to the parent(s) being participants in the family interview in addition to that some families had several children. Since the project is aimed towards sensemakings about a phenomenon, it was easiest to explore this through verbal expressions. Thus, it is necessary to be able to express oneself verbally to participate in the project, which younger children may not always be (Ennew et al., 2009). It might also be that I did not have the knowledge to help younger children express themselves in other ways due to this being my first time conducting research. The children also had to be able to talk about previous events and be capable of participating without an adult supervising them, which again might be difficult with very young children (Ennew et al., 2009).

I knew that I needed enough data to be able to probe into the research questions (Gill, 2020), and since generalizability is not of importance in qualitative research, a small sample is usually sufficient (Gill, 2020). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the purpose of the research affects the number of participants needed. The purpose of this research is to go in depth with a few participants to explore their sensemakings of the phenomenon of having a dog, in general and during childhood. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) further emphasize that by analyzing a few interviews it is possible to be more thorough, which is what I aimed to do. They also highlight that a common number of interviews is usually around 5-15 (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), which is one reason for why this thesis includes 6 families and 12 interviews. I argue that the sampling strategy utilized is a combination of purposive sampling and volunteer sampling. Purposive sampling is about intentionally picking out participants with knowledge regarding "the phenomenon being studied" (Gill, 2020, p. 580), in this case the meaning of dog keeping in general and during childhood. Volunteer sampling is when "Potential participants volunteer to participate in the research study" (Gill, 2020, p. 580). I posted the Facebook posts, and people volunteered to participate, whereas I then had to select the families that met the criteria. Thus, I intentionally picked out participants with knowledge about dog keeping, albeit selected them from volunteers.

Of the children and youth participating there were four girls and six boys. However, the parents who contacted me were all women. The reason for this is hard to establish, but it might be connected to the way I recruited people. It might also be related to who is most interested in the topic. I contacted people through groups on Facebook, and most of the people posting in those groups are women, and thereby most of the members might have been women. Correspondingly, Shepherd (2016) has done a study mapping gender differences in Facebook use in USA, and found that women are more likely to post than men. Conjointly, women in the study also spent more time on Facebook each day than men as well as thinking about posting later the same day if they did not have the time to do so instantly (Shepherd, 2016). During the interviews I got the impression that of the parents, it was the women who were most interested in the topic. What moreover strengthened this belief was that all of the parents interviewed were women except in one family, where both the mother and father participated. Some of the fathers were travelling or did not want to participate, whilst in other families the mothers were living alone with their children. It could have been a coincidence, but it could also indicate that some of the findings of Shepherd's (2016) study may also be applicable in this context.

In some of the families, not all the children wished or had time to participate, or they only wanted to partake in one of the interviews. Below is a table presenting the dogs, as well as the children and parents participating and in what methods they are participating. The table also includes pseudonyms of the participants and dogs, and the children's ages.

<b>Families</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Participants in walking interview</b>	<b>Participants in family interview</b>
Family 1	Hilde (mother), Sigurd (8 years old) and Batman (the dog)	Sigurd	Sigurd and Hilde
Family 2	Kjersti (mother), Erik (17 years old), Bolla and Terje (dogs), and Gudrun (the main dog)	Erik	Erik and Kjersti
Family 3	Saga and Jens (mother and father), Leah (6 years old), Nora (9 years old) and Bull (the dog)	Leah, Nora and Saga	Leah, Nora, Saga and Jens
Family 4	Gunvor (mother) and Pelle (5.5 years old), Are (11 years old), Johannes (14 years old), Jørn (17 years old) and Charlie (the dog)	Are	Pelle, Are, Johannes, Jørn and Gunvor
Family 5	Karen (mother), Sofie (8 years old) and Molly (the dog)	Sofie	Sofie and Karen
Family 6	Siri (mother), Marie (17 years old), Bruce (the main dog) and David (the dog)	Marie	Marie and Siri

**Table 4.1** Overview of participants and families including dogs, the methods and in what methods the family members participated.

#### 4.2.3 Recruitment process

The process of recruiting participants begun by tracking down different groups for people with dogs on Facebook. Recruiting participants through social media has increased with the digitalization, and digital platforms make it easier to reach a grand audience (Benedict et al., 2019) due to a vast amount of people utilizing them. Recruiting through social media can also make harder-to-reach-groups more accessible (Sikkens et al., 2017). The target groups for this thesis project may not necessarily be groups that are harder to reach, but harder to find due to not necessarily knowing where to start looking for them. Possible options could have been to make flyers or visit schools, but I figured that social media would be a more time efficient way to recruit participants. Thus, I concluded that finding groups specifically made for people with dogs would increase the chances of finding families with dogs, since most people with dogs in Norway are families with children, as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

What I did was to begin searching for relevant Facebook groups, with search words such as "dogs" "Trøndelag", or "people with dogs in Trøndelag". This is when I discovered three groups that seemed particularly interesting, for people with dogs, one in Trondheim and two in Trøndelag. In those groups, I published a post about this thesis project, asking for people interested in it to contact me privately. It turned out to be a good strategy due to this resulting in that the gatekeepers were the ones who contacted me, and not the other way around. With gatekeepers I am here referring to the parents of the children participating. There is reason to believe that the gatekeepers contacting me made it easier to access the field, since only those interested in participating contacted

me, and those not interested did not have to do anything but ignore my post. This way of recruiting is according to Priscilla Alderson (2005) called an opt-in-approach, which she advocates for being an ethically sound strategy because it respects the participants' decisions and privacy.

Originally, the project was going to include the age span of children between 8 and 15 years of age. However, once the post about the project was published, several families with children in every age group reached out. This led me to a dilemma where I had to decide whether to expand the age span, and if I wanted to expand it in both the older and younger direction of the span. Many of the families had several children, wherein some of them were older than 8, but also younger, and some were older than 15. Thus, I had to decide on what age span I thought could participate in the methods and research project. Every child is different, and thus one may argue that it is impossible to predict what they understand, how they express themselves, and what they feel comfortable with participating in and sharing. It was easier to adjust the age span when the case was teenagers older than 15, due to the probability of them being able to join me on walking interviews regardless of the dog's size. Most likely they would also be more independent in this age, as that is a prominent part of growing up in a Norwegian culture, as mentioned in the background chapter. Nonetheless, being older than 15 years also meant that they could sign the consent form without parental approval, and thus required making a change in the NSD-form (application for ethical clearance), which I did not know how long would take. Lowering the age span, on the other hand, did not require a re-submitting of the NSD-application, only a message to the case worker. I ended up adjusting the age span on each side of the scale. This way, the project could grasp more thoughts about having a dog during one's upbringing and in general, from diverse age groups.

Another part of the recruitment process included people misunderstanding the post as some families with newborns and/or babies contacted me. This might mean that I did not express myself clear enough, or simply that people interpreted the post in various ways. I also received a lot of relevant messages from parents with both children, teenagers, and plenty of dogs. Still, I was pleasantly surprised by the messages ticking in quite fast, and relieved to find participants rapidly. However, some of the people messaging me immediately started writing their opinions on the meaning of having a dog through childhood, which I did not quite know what to do with. Perhaps I was not clear enough with explaining that the research was going to be qualitative and not quantitative. In line with social constructionism, there is reason to believe that people interpreted the meaning of the post differently. This means that it makes sense that not everyone interpreted it in the way I meant for it to be interpreted. If I was to do it again, I would have edited and worked on the post for a longer amount of time, to make it more precise and hopefully harder to misinterpret<sup>1</sup>.

During the fieldwork, several families had such a limited amount of time that they had to withdraw from the project. Consequently, I tracked down a fourth Facebook group, also for people with dogs, except this group contained members from all of Norway. The reasoning was because there still was a possibility of reaching new people in that group, or that seeing the post a second time led more families to be willing to participate. I posted a second post in the first three Facebook groups as well, whereas in the fourth group, I specified the age group on the participants and was more detailed about what I

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<sup>1</sup> The Facebook posts can be found in the appendix 2 and 3.

was looking for. I also made it clear that I was flexible to meeting the families when it suited them. I specified that it was possible to do both interviews the same day and that I had a year to complete the thesis and therefore had time to plan the meeting quite some time in advance and did not have to meet them immediately. This led to a much greater response than the first time, and I was quite surprised by this, but also very content with the outcome of the second post. I received more messages than from the first time posting, and meetings with the participants I needed was scheduled relatively fast.

## 4.3 Methods

The methods used in this thesis are walking interviews and family interviews. Two interview methods were utilized as this can create a richer material to work with due to going more in depth in each family. The methods were chosen to get an insight into both the children's perspectives on their own, and the children's perspectives together with the parents' perspectives. Two interviews were conducted for each of the six participating families; one with the child(ren), and one with the family (or those in the family wanting to participate). In some of the families, the family interview was conducted before the walking interview, and this happened if the children expressed a wish to do that first, or if they seemed hesitant to do the walking interview straight away.

### 4.3.1 Walking interview

A walking interview is a method that combines both walking and interviewing, which is done simultaneously. The method has many different names, such as walking and talking, and may have some varieties depending on the name. Anderson (2004) advocates for how walking and talking can trigger memories due the spatial movement and enhance the knowledge production and the socially constructed knowledge.

Walking comprises diverging, stopping, and returning (Camponovo et al., 2021), and can be a way to grasp and scrutinize the dynamics of the participants. However, it might also include exchanging (Camponovo et al., 2021) or producing knowledge together. By walking whilst interviewing the participant, the researcher can get insight into places the participants usually go, for instance with their dog(s). Nonetheless, it is not the place that is of particular relevance in this project, but rather using the place as a way of informalizing the interviews, and creating a more comfortable setting for being interviewed in. According to Camponovo et al. (2021), combining walking and interviewing has proven to be useful in approaching the participants' emotions and their experiences. In this project, the method seeks to explore families' sensemakings of having a dog, in general and during upbringing, and this is partly done by walking around familiar places with some of the interviewees and their dog(s). This is done to bring to light sensemakings and meanings regarding life worlds (Anderson, 2004). What happens is that the researcher is interviewing the participant(s) whilst walking around in the participant's neighbourhood or local area (Carpiano, 2009). In my project, the walking interview comprised questions regarding the participants relationship with their dog(s), and by being curious, the researcher may get a deeper insight into the participants' sensemaking of their life world (Carpiano, 2009). Furthermore, Camponovo et al. (2021) emphasize perks of using a walking interview as a method in research with children, such as the possibility of mitigating the power asymmetry between researcher and participant. There is also reason to believe that the dogs helped informalizing the interviews as the children probably trust in them, thereby creating a safer and more comfortable atmosphere. The walking interviews were moreover of semi-structured character, which

means that it is more informal than a structured interview, since the interviewer has a broad set of questions and a topic to stick to, but can decide in which order the questions are to be asked (Ennew et al., 2009). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews create the possibility to ask follow-up questions, which can be great if the interviewee says something that the interviewer wants to know more about. Lastly, this method puts the participants more in charge of the direction of the interview, and how and what they want to share (Ennew et al., 2009). This is also why, if one is to use interviews as a method with children, one should use semi-structured interviews (Ennew et al., 2009), so the children do not feel as intimidated or forced to "say the right thing" due to them steering the depth and partly direction of the conversation (Ennew et al., 2009).

Another benefit of walking interviews is that it is applicable regardless of the number of children in the family. For example, there were one walking interview where two children participated. Thus, I had to balance asking both of the children questions and including them so they both were given the opportunity to speak. I tried to ask a child "what about you, what do you think having a dog means?" if that child had not said much but maybe wanted to. At the same time, having a walking interview with two children perhaps also made it easier for those who wanted to talk a lot, to do that, as well as those who possibly did not want to say much, did not have to. If I asked one of the children what they thought about a question, and they kept saying "I don't know" or actively choosing not to respond that much, I did not keep pushing, but rather aimed at respecting their choice not to be so active in the interview.

There is reason to believe that children may be given a bigger responsibility as they grow older (Such & Walker, 2004), like for example walking their dog by themselves. This might make it easier to for example do a walking interview only with the child and not necessarily the parents. I wanted to do the walking interview with the children alone because I thought this might create less of a formal atmosphere if the parents were not around. In addition to this, I did not want the parents to ask leading questions to their children that could potentially clutter the research. I was concerned that if the parents participated, they would lead their children's track of thoughts into certain topics without giving the children enough time to think for themselves how they viewed the questions, or what came to their minds when being asked questions. Still, precautions such as the dog's size, and its obedience may impact whether this was considered safe, which made it necessary for a parent to accompany us on one of the walking interviews.

The purpose of using walking interviews was thus to explore the research topic in a way that mitigates power asymmetries, may trigger memories relevant to the research area, and make the interview flow better due to being more informal.

#### 4.3.2 Family interview

The second method used was family interviews. When interviewing several people in a family, one may be able to grasp more of the extensive dynamic of the family due to their varying views and perspectives on the life of the family (Reczek, 2014). The purpose of using family interviews in this thesis is thus to explore the families' views on a certain topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), namely, on the phenomenon of having a dog. It seeks to explore the parents' views on their children(s) relationships with their dog(s), as well as the meaning and value of having a dog, in general and when growing up. Additionally, there is a focus on the dog's role in the family structure as this can also be interesting to understand the relationship between the dog and the family members. The family interview guide contains questions such as "How would you describe your dog?",

and "How would you (the parents) describe your children(s) relationship with the dog(s)?" as a way of exploring the abovementioned factors. In a family interview the family is interviewed as one unit (Eggenberger & Nelms, 2007). Interviews can be explained to be "... a social encounter where knowledge is constructed" (Holstein & Gubrium 2003, in Eggenberger & Nelms, 2007, p. 283). Through the family interview, one can therefore say that knowledge is constructed about dogs and the families' relations to their dog(s). The purpose of doing family interviews is thus for both the interviewer and the interviewees to be engaged "... in the process of uncovering the meanings of an experience that exist for a person or persons" (Holstein & Gubrium 2003, in Eggenberger & Nelms, 2007, p. 283). The purpose of this method in this particular research is to investigate the families' meanings and sensemakings about their relationships with their dog(s) and the phenomenon of dog keeping.

#### 4.3.3 Adjusting the methods

Originally, I was going to use three methods, starting with a neighbourhood walk, followed by semi-structured interviews with children, and lastly the family interview. However, I had to adjust this as it was rather challenging for many families meeting three times and participating in three methods due to "tidsklemma". "Tidsklemma" is a concept used to describe the limited time available in people's lives, and it entails the difficulty of making time for all the things one wishes to set aside time for. The problems often span balancing time for work and for privacy, and is in particular about having enough time for the children and family (Ellingsæter, 2005) and also dogs in this case. Meeting some of the families took a lot of planning, since some of the families barely had time to meet once. This made me aware of that I had to adapt to their hectic lives and adjust my plan accordingly. Some families withdrew from the project because of lack of time to meet me, whilst others could meet me once. This meant that I had to change my mindset regarding how to use the different methods, and that is when I decided to combine neighbourhood walk and semi-structured interview into a walking interview. Thus, that narrowed down the methods to having two interviews. Furthermore, most of the families wanted to do both the interviews the same day instead of dividing it into two meetings. Thus, I was able to finish two interviews in one day and thereby conducting all the research necessary with one family in one day, in every family but one. It is important to clarify that after I had conducted the first interview, I asked the children and teenagers specifically, if they wanted to do the second interview then, or would want to do that another time. I thereby tried to let the children and youth decide whether to do the second interview the same day as the first.

In addition to that, some of the participants were older than I first had planned. It also occurred to me that going on a neighbourhood walk with a child or teenager and their dog whilst asking the interview questions, was also a way to get to know each other, rather than just go for the walk. "Some barriers between children and adults may be bridged when interviewing children in natural settings" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 171). Hopefully, the children viewed the walk in an area in which they are familiar as a natural setting, thus bridging some barriers. That way, we had something to talk about, in addition to the interview feeling more natural. "In quite a few instances interviews with children may preferably take place within the context of some other task..." (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 171). Having a common third aspect to focus on might therefore have made it less awkward and more relaxing answering questions.

#### 4.3.4 Recording the interviews

Audio recordings were used in both versions of the interviews to tape what was said. This was done to be able to be fully invested in the participants and what they were saying instead of having to take notes whilst interviewing them and in this way possibly miss important details. Recording audio also made it easier to ask follow-up questions, be present and show that I was interested in what was being said (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Therefore, I was more aware of other details, such as the interviewees body language, the dog's actions and how that influenced the interviews and the atmosphere in the interviews. The emotional reactions and facial expressions, as well as the silences and pauses occurring were also easier to recognize when using audio recordings since the participants then had my undivided attention. Had I taken notes, there is reason to believe that I would have missed many aspects that I hopefully did not due to the tape recordings, in addition to that when recording, the possibility of relistening to the interviews was there (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), and I could even notice comments in the background that I did not register whilst being there.

It went quite well using a tape recording, however, some challenges also occurred. For example, it was very windy some days, which made it more difficult to hear what the interviewees said due to the tape-recording catching wind sounds instead of the interviewee's voices occasionally. Other risks of noise came from vehicles passing us whilst talking, or the participants facing their backs at me if they walked in front of me. Thus, I became more aware of how to position myself whilst interviewing them and trying to walk beside them or even in front of them so that I could turn to face them with the tape recorder to catch what they were saying. It would be impossible to remember the details from what they said without recording it. In some cases, third parties were caught in the recordings, and my solution to this was not to transcribe what they said. All things considered, I still believe that using tape recordings worked quite well as long as one is aware of possible hindrances and try to prevent this by taking precautions such as where to position oneself, how to hold the tape recorder, to for example repeat what the participants said if one suspects that it might have been difficult to hear due to traffic, wind or the like. By using an audio recorder, it was much easier to focus on the interviewees' statements as well as the whole dynamic of the interview. This included how the interviewees formulated their sentences, pauses, tones, body language, which Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) also highlight are pros of using an audio recorder.

#### 4.4 Considerations in research with children

When doing research, perhaps especially with children, there are a number of things to keep in mind. For instance, there is the power relationship between researcher and research participant. How the issue of power is viewed, depends on the social and cultural context of the power situation (Christensen, 2004). In some situations, children may therefore feel the presence of power, whereas in the same situation in another context, this might not be the case. This depends on people's understanding of how cultural classifications, status, power and the social rank is intertwined (Christensen, 2004). Christensen (2004) advocated for a view on power as ingrained in the research process, which may imply that one does not have to think in the matter of the *possible* power imbalance between an adult and child, but rather *how* these are viewed in a given context and how the adult and child bargain and consult with each other in for example the research process. By not taking the power asymmetry for granted, but rather question it, it can possibly be minimized. Gallagher (2008) promotes a slightly different view on power, and instead argues that "...power could be reconceptualized as a form of



action carried out through multivalent strategies and tactics, rather than a commodity or a capacity" (p. 147). He states that power does not have to be an evil and that what is important is the type of power, and an aim could be to resist domination of power, rather than power itself (Gallagher, 2008). Researchers often view power as something bad, whereas Foucault (1994) sees power as productive and filled with possibilities as long as it is not utilized in an oppressive way (in Gallagher, 2008). Power imbalance is most likely present when doing research with children, at least to a certain degree, but one can still take measures to try and make use of that power in a productive and healthy way. I tried to do that by among other things, letting the children decide in which terrain they wanted the walking interview to be carried out. They thereby decided the walking route and the surface on which we would walk. Some children for example started walking on a hill underneath trees next to the pathway instead of actually walking on the pathway. I did not object to this, but rather followed their lead, and often had to bend to not get a branch in my face. Even though this made it slightly more challenging to keep the tape recorder close to the participant, and to be fully focused on the interview, I wanted to let the participants decide the walking path. Viewed from the perspective of Gallagher (2008), I perhaps could have asked the children involved to walk on the pathway, so I could stay more focused. This could have been a productive way of using power. Nonetheless, I did not find the surface of walking important enough to start bargaining and consulting with the children about when the interview itself was going so well and the child seemed perfectly focused.

In this project, the age difference between the oldest and the youngest participant was approximately 11 years. Thus, it is possible that a need to adjust the methods or questions was present. For example, there were certain questions some children found difficult, and that I therefore had to explain using different words. This became visible when I had the first meeting with the families and explained the project. Every child was given the same letter of information, so there were no adjustments in the way it was formulated depending on the age of the children. This meant that the letter of information had to be written in a comprehensible way so that the youngest children would understand it, but also so that it would not look too "childish" for the oldest children. I am not sure whether this succeeded, but I nonetheless always explained the content of letter and project to them when we first met. Furthermore, I double-checked that they understood parts of the project by asking questions like "Did you understand what anonymizing means?", or "Did you catch what I am going to do with the tape recordings?", and if they hesitated or said no, I explained it again. Some children asked me about what I would do with everything and said that it would be cool if I had a diary with a padlock on it so that no one could read it. I explained to them that it was sort of like that, except I had the files on my computer which I could only access with two passwords, so it was like a padlock but inside my computer. The children thought this was cool, but then problematized it by asking what if someone hacked into it. Then I tried to explain that that would be very difficult to do.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

Being familiar with the ethical guidelines and utilizing them is crucial to carry out ethically sound research. The guidelines can for example be of great help if one experiences ethical dilemmas, as well as to make sure that research is done in an ethical way. Important guidelines in the field of social sciences is for example NESH's (The Norwegian National Research Committee, 2022). Their guidelines comprises, among other things, participation and consent, and how vulnerable groups have a special need

for protection (The Norwegian National Research Committee, 2022). During the process of fieldwork, different ethical challenges occurred that I had to reflect on and decide on how to operate and deal with. These were dilemmas such as how to react when families withdrew from the research project and how I, as a researcher am expected to respond. Issues to be aware of regarding reflexivity, voluntariness, and confidentiality are also elaborated on as well as *how* I exercised reflexivity and confidentiality. To be able to do this research project, I also needed to get ethical clearance from The Norwegian center for research data (NSD). Thus, I sent an application with an overview of the research plan, including the target group, methods to be used as well as how I was going to recruit participants, what the letters of information contained etcetera. It was after I had received this ethical approval that I could move forward with the project and start recruiting participants.

#### 4.5.1 Ensuring confidentiality

An important feature of ethical research is regarding ensuring confidentiality. Confidentiality comprises protecting the identity of research participants (Ennew et al., 2009). When describing confidentiality, Ennew et al. (2009) refer to pseudonymization. Pseudonymization means changing the names of the research participants so the information will not be traced back to the individuals. Pseudonymization was used in this project to maintain the anonymity of the research participants, not only by giving pseudonyms to the participants, but also to the dogs as this could reveal essential information about a family. After all, researchers have a certain responsibility to foresee possible risks relating to revelations of the participants confidentiality (Ennew et al., 2009). Thus, I concluded that giving the dogs pseudonyms too was the safest path to take to maintain the participants' anonymity. Confidentiality is not only about anonymization pertaining to pseudonyms. It also comprises writing in a way that does not divulge information about the participants' identity (Wiles et al., 2008). This can for instance be stating what dog breed a family has if that is so rare that sharing such information can disclose the identity of the family. Therefore, I decided not to mention any of the families' dog breeds and also why I changed their names.

After I had conducted the interviews, I never wrote down the participants real names digitally, only on paper, and when I started transcribing, I wrote down their pseudonyms straight away so their real names would never appear on screen. The method for finding pseudonyms was both by writing down names that came to mind, but also by googling girl names, boy names, but also dog names to find some inspiration for possible pseudonyms. Furthermore, I explained to the participants that they would be anonymous, and this was expressed both verbally and through the letters of information and during the first meeting before the interviews began. Christensen (2004) emphasizes the importance of informing participants about who will have access to information about them. Thus, I told the children that I was the only one who would listen to the tape recordings, which turned out to be a good move due to some children thinking that several people would listen to it. I also explained to them that I would delete the tape recordings when I was done with the project or after I had transcribed them. I assured them that I would change their names so that no one would know who they were, which is highlighted as an important measure to take in Christensen (2004), in addition to only writing the age and not date they were born.

#### 4.5.2 Voluntary participation and withdrawals

A part of research being voluntary, includes getting an informed consent, and also a regular ongoing consent from the participants to make sure they are participating voluntarily. Informed consent pertains to consenting when having understood "...the nature, purpose and likely consequences of a research project" (Gallagher et al., 2010, p. 471). This means that the participants need to have grasped the main aspects of the research in order to be able to give a fully understanding informed consent. Ennew et al. (2009) states that informed consents cannot be rushed, in addition to taking time explaining in a way every individual that is to participate, understands. Furthermore, they emphasize that every person participating should be informed and asked as individuals (Ennew et al., 2009). A way of checking if the participants have understood is to ask them to repeat what the research is about (Ennew et al., 2009). However, in this research project, not all family members were asked separately, but I had sent the information letters and the interview guides in advance to give them more clarity and predictability regarding what the project was about. I believe that was a good choice since almost every family had read through it. I also asked if they had any questions or other comments regarding the project to give them an opportunity to do so.

As Ennew et al. (2009) underlines, it is not enough with the consent of an adult for a child to participate. Sometimes it is sufficient for the child to consent by itself (The Norwegian National Research Committee, 2022), such as when the child is above 16 years old. This was relevant in this project due to several of the participants being older than 16 years old. When the child is younger than 16 years old, one still has to ask the child even if the adult consents, to respect the children's wishes in choosing to participate or not. I highly emphasized this when informing about the project, explaining several times that it was completely voluntary and what that implied. I also explained that if only one of the methods looked interesting, it was possible to partake in that and not the other. Some of the children took great advantage of this, as one of the youngest participants then clearly stated that he could join the family interview but did not wish to join the walking interview. To this I nodded and said was perfectly fine, as one should respect decisions not be interviewed (Ennew et al., 2009). Everyone that consented signed a consent form and checked the boxes in which methods they would like to participate in. Thus, children who only wanted to participate in one of the methods, simply checked that particular box and not the other.

Being transparent about the option of refusing to participate is crucial (Ennew et al., 2009) which became apparent as this happened a few times during the fieldwork process. Some of the families I had scheduled times to meet with, sent me a message saying that they did not find time to participate after all. This happened after I had found the first five families through the primary post on Facebook, thereby leaving me in need of finding more families. It also happened after the second post, but then I luckily had enough families even with withdrawals since I agreed to meet with more families than I had originally planned. I did this in case changing circumstances with families occurred, such as realizing they did not have enough time to participate. This led to a more time-consuming process when finding participants as I had to make more posts to find enough families to participate. Even so, it can be difficult to know how to relate to families withdrawing from the research project. As a researcher one wants the families to stay in the project. At the same time, one is expected to relate to it as a researcher. Still, it is also important to respect a refusal to prevent the children from being harmed or feeling coerced in any way (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). There is thus not much one can do about withdrawals as it is voluntary to participate, as it should be, but it can still lead to some

frustration within the researcher as to why families are withdrawing. When families withdrew, I responded that I understood that and if they changed their mind, they were welcome to contact me.

### 4.5.3 Reflexivity

Holmes (2010) suggests describing reflexivity as including an emotional aspect, defining it as "... an emotional, embodied and cognitive process in which social actors have feelings about and try to understand and alter their lives in relation to their social and natural environment and to others" (p. 140). Thus, there is an ongoing process within researchers as they try to understand and adjust their lives according to their feelings towards a process, as well as in connection to the context and other people. Berger (2015) argues that:

researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal. (p. 220)

This means that researchers need to think about how who they are and the context in which they live, may affect how the researchers interpret and present what others say. Thus, the researchers have to know themselves quite well it seems like, to be able to be reflexive. Berger (2015) further emphasizes how reflexivity comprises adjusting the lens of the researcher back towards the researcher to become aware of and own up to the part the researcher plays in the research and how that may impact the "...setting being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation" (p. 220). How a given research project is presented will therefore vary depending on the researcher presenting it, as people interpret phenomena differently due to among others, different backgrounds (Berger, 2015).

Spyrou (2011) highlights how researchers need to be more aware of the process of how children's voices are presented since this varies depending on the beliefs in a context and power asymmetries. What this means is in part that I as a researcher need to think critically about the way I present what the children have told me, and the process of how I decide what to present and in what way I present it. For me, it was very important not to correct anything the children said, but rather listen to how they explained things to me, and to use those direct quotes to make sure I presented it as close as possible to the way the children did. However, it is my interpretations of what the participants have said and the theoretical framework I utilize that gives meaning to their quotes. Additionally, it is not a given that children speak their minds as this can also depend on the context and therein the social and cultural constructions (Komulainen, 2007). In other words, how they speak might depend on the voice children have within the constraints they find themselves in.

One of the ways in which I tried to be reflexive, was by asking questions phrased like "is it then correct to say that you have become more active after you got a dog?", rather than saying "so you are more active now because of the dog" as this can be difficult to correct for the children, or anyone for that matter. Furthermore, when analyzing what the children told me, it was not enough merely analyzing what they said, but rather to include "... considerations of the dynamics of human communication and interactions" (Komulainen, 2007, p. 22). Thus, I often included the communication pattern between us and how we interacted with one another as this may impact what the children tell and share with me, such as if there were long pauses.

## 4.6 Interpretation and production of data

Before conducting interviews, I had to decide on how I wanted to transcribe them. There are many ways to transcribe interviews and what to include. How one chooses to transcribe may be affected by how one interprets the knowledge produced (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The way one chooses to transcribe may lead to one person leaving some aspects out, that others would have included and vice versa.

As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) emphasize, "... in a transcription, the conversational interaction between two physically present persons becomes abstracted and fixed in a written form" (p. 203). The content and knowledge produced may then be experienced in a different way by people reading the transcriptions rather than for the ones who were there in person. Thus, it is crucial to have thought through how one would like to transcribe to best present the most accurate version of the interview. By accurate I mean what is most essential to capture in a given interview. After all, transcribing means transforming, or in other words to alternate from one shape to a different one (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). What I found to be important, was to make the interview as accurate as possible regarding pauses, laughter, and hesitancy. I did this because I wanted to make it as similar to the actual interview as possible as this might reveal some of the meaning behind and relating to the statements. I decided on transcribing statements in a verbatim way, this being every word being said (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). It is thus written in a more informal way to capture the essence of language, dialects and slang even. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) mention the importance of if including pauses in the transcriptions, to reflect on how detailed the lengths and kind of pauses should be. As a result, I transcribed in a way that makes this visible; pauses are marked as (.), laughter as: ((x and y is laughing)), as well as if a word was prolonged, this was shown through a colon symbol, :. For example, if a participant said eh, for a prolonged time, it could look like this: e:h. However, I did not focus on highlighting interruptions, but rather chose to show this as someone talking straight after the other without any pause in between through the = sign. I did this because I felt like this showed their engagements nearly as well, and because interruptions were not an important part of the analysis, but rather the content of what they said.

Since the purpose of this research is exploring the participants' views on dogs, everyday life, relationality, and their sensemaking of the meaning of having a dog, one could argue that there is not necessarily a need for too much focus on how fast people talk for instance (the detailed linguistic characteristics of the interview), but rather on what is being said. Furthermore, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) emphasized that there is no "right" way of transcribing, and that one therefore should choose the transcription style based on what is fruitful for the given research project. In my project, the verbatim transcription style highlighted what I found to be most relevant to the research project.

In the walking interview it was usually easier to hear every word the participant said due to most of them consisting of only one participant and me. In the family interviews, on the other hand, there were at least two participants present, and this sometimes led to them interrupting each other or speaking at the same time. When this happened, the transcriptions took more time because I had to listen to those parts several times. I found this to be quite challenging since I first had to tune in on one of the voices, and then shift the focus to the other voice. I also experienced challenges when the dog was so strong that when pulling the leash, the children followed because they got dragged after the dog.

Moreover, the walking interviews were characterized by a more informal atmosphere than the family interviews due to the walking outdoors in participants' familiar surroundings with their dog(s) accompanying us. In the family interview, on the other hand, the atmosphere was a bit more formal because we sat down facing each other throughout the whole interview. Nonetheless, the dog contributed to informalizing the interview just by being present. A reason for this is because the dog functioned as an attention magnet either by laying there next to us, or by starting to do activities such as playing by itself with a toy, or doing tricks, which eased the atmosphere to a certain degree. Thus, both the interviews can be said to have been more informal due to the presence of the dog, albeit in different ways.

#### 4.6.1 Analyses of the walking interviews and family interviews

To analyze the walking interviews and the family interviews, I did a thematic analysis through coding in NVivo, which is a data analysis software. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis is a tool used to analyze data, for example in qualitative research. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are many varieties of thematic analysis (TA) and how to utilize the method (Terry et al., 2017). The approach taken in this thematic analysis, is first and foremost an inductive approach. Within this lies that the themes are discovered gradually while working with the material and coding, rather than existing in advance (Terry et al., 2017). This is what is called fully realized themes, where the themes for example can be quotes from the stories the participants have shared (Clarke, 2021a). Furthermore, thematic analysis is a good method to use in constructionist paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2006), therein being suitable for this thesis as it views realities as socially and culturally constructed. The thematic analysis is semantic, which means that the codes "... stay close to content of the data and to the participants' meanings" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61). The thematic analysis I did, is inspired by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step model, which is presented below.

The strategy chosen to do a thematic analysis is by taking as a starting point the six steps of 1) becoming familiarized with the data, this being the transcriptions as well as noting what could be possible patterns and themes. In this step I therefore re-listened to the tape recordings and read through the transcriptions a couple of times. I did not, however, merely read through it, I also started reflecting on what was relevant regarding the research questions. Step 2) comprises collecting and combining the entire data corpus into parts that fit together and putting them into different code categories. For me, this step included empirically close coding which means that whilst reading through the transcriptions I made codes as close to the statements as possible. I also tried reading through the codes without the data available to see if I could make sense of the codes alone and relate those to the different data sets (Clarke, 2021c) and adjusted some of the codes if I could not. When doing empirically close coding it is not unusual to end up with several hundred codes, in which I ended up with almost 600 codes. I did this thorough coding to gain a deeper insight into what possible themes could be. By coding so empirically close to the participants' statements, one can notice aspects that one would not notice if I had merely summarized the main parts of the data set. This made the process of analysis more structured and straightforward once I started generating themes. Clarke (2021c) emphasizes how one should not merely code statements one is sure about, but also statements one is not quite sure are relevant as it might turn out to be relevant later. This is for example due to the research questions not being finalized until the very end and therefore the possibility of them changing. Drawing on the concept

of traveler is relevant here, as generating themes is in accordance with knowledge being created in the process. For instance, Clarke (2021b) highlights the importance of using thematic analysis in a reflexive way, meaning that one has to make active decisions as a researcher and also justify and explain those decisions. The method thereby helps with structuring and generating themes within the data one has produced.

Step 3) entails starting to pin down possible different themes and connecting the different parts of the data set into the different feasible themes. When I approached this step, I exported the codebook to one document, and printed it to make it easier to grasp. This way, I could physically cut out the codes and move them into clusters as I saw fit. Thus, I waited with naming themes until after having clustered the different codes together as reading through all the codes could provide me with a new perspective on possible themes. After clustering the codes, I created 12 possible categories on post-it-notes based on the participants' statements' whilst reading through one cluster of codes at a time. Whilst doing this part I still relocated some of the codes to different clusters. What was also important was to think about the process moving forward, and about what the overall story was going to be in the analysis. This included making considerations of the relationship between the different themes a crucial part of this step (Clarke, 2021c). Most importantly was looking for the shared meanings of the participants, and keeping in mind that this process of generating themes is a subjective and interpretative one (Clarke, 2021c). Step 4) includes going through the current themes, seeing if they work well together with the excerpts or are in need of adjustments or moving of parts of the data set to a different theme for example. In this part I removed some of the themes as they did not appear to be relevant in relation to the research questions. In addition to this I wanted to delve into the themes I picked out, and therefore did not want too many themes. Thus, several themes that seemed less relevant were removed. This is an important part of the process, as Clarke states that one has to be prepared to let things go during several of the steps (Clarke, 2021c). At the same time, I figured out some sub-themes within the bigger overall themes to make the findings more visible and easier to follow.

Step 5) is when the themes should be finalized and describing what each theme entails, making the distinctions and names of the themes clear. The main themes I ended up with are "Dogs as family members and friends" and "Not just a dog" in the first analysis chapter. The main themes of the second analysis chapter are "The right to have a dog" and "Quality of life". Within those main themes, I also created some sub-themes. I encountered step 5 by writing descriptions of each theme to clarify what to include in each theme. Step 6) pertains to the report being produced. This is where the closely picked extracts are presented with an analysis on those excerpts, as well as connecting this back to the theoretical framework and research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). What I found to be of relevance was to not only include what most people agreed on, but also the exceptions if someone did not share that same view, to show nuances in the participants' meaning making of having a dog. Some of these exceptions are presented in the analysis chapter.

The purpose of using thematic analysis is to gain a richer and more exhaustive data narrative, making it clearer what themes and codes that are prominent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This makes it more apparent what the findings are as the thematic analysis will help structure the data and find common themes or quotes. Unveiling how one, as a researcher, makes sense of and understands the material and process of the research is a substantial part of qualitative research (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thus, transparency

regarding the execution of methods and process is crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis approach was useful in this thesis to help me find overall themes and frequently mentioned meanings of having a dog. It thereby helped me structure the basis of the analysis. When presenting the analyses in the analysis chapters, I am using extracts from the walking- and-family interviews interchangeably. I am thus not studying the interviews with the children and youth separately from the family interviews.

## 4.7 Summary

This chapter has provided information regarding the qualitative approach taken, as well as the researcher roles of the "friendly", "unusual" and "atypical" adult that I tried to enter. Moreover, a description of how participants were recruited through Facebook posts have been given, as well as some essential information about the sample. This was followed by describing walking interviews and how this can make the interview less formal, as well as explaining family interviews as a method where the participating family members were interviewed as a unit. After this, ethical considerations regarding reflexivity, confidentiality and voluntary participation were reflected on and how important those considerations are when doing ethically sound research. Lastly, the way the data production and analyses are undertaken were introduced, mentioning the use of thematic analysis and ways of transcribing, focusing on body language, but also pauses, prolonging of words and laughter. The next two chapters are the analysis part, where each chapter focuses on one or two research questions with themes related to that or those particular research question(s).



## 5 Analysis Part I: Dogs' roles in the family

This is the first of two analysis chapters. The current chapter explores the second research question: *What role does the dog have in the family structure and everyday life of the family?* The research question is explored by delving into the two themes developed in the process of analysis: "Dogs as family members and friends", and "Not just a dog". The theme "Dogs as family members and friends" is mainly about how the family members describe the dog's role in the family. "Not just a dog" elaborates on the dogs' roles in the families' everyday life. Within this lies how dogs are seen as important actors in the family through being emotional and relational beings capable of understanding human emotion. This includes how the family members think their dogs' understanding of feelings are. To reiterate; the theoretical perspectives utilized in these analysis chapters are sociomaterial, social constructionist, and intergenerational, wherein relationality is present in all of those perspectives. I utilize social constructionism to grasp the families sensemakings of having a dog, both in general and during childhood. I also find social constructionism fruitful when viewing dog keeping as a social construct in the wider context. Sociomateriality is essential when exploring non-human agency and how dogs "do" something with the family dynamic and the family members. Lastly, intergenerationality is helpful when delving into parents', children's, and family perspectives. Before starting the analysis, I find it essential to remind the reader of the family compositions to avoid any confusion regarding who is part of which family.

### 5.1 Family backgrounds

Family 1 consists of Sigurd, who is 8 years old, Hilde, his mother, and Batman, their dog. They live in a house and are a big family of five children and two parents. Family 2 is made up of Erik, a 17-year-old, his mom, Kjersti, as well as their three dogs Bolla, Terje and Gudrun. What is important here is that Gudrun, as can be seen in Table 1, is described as the main dog because she is considered Erik's dog. Erik has the most responsibilities regarding her, as well as the closest bond with her out of all their dogs, hence the use of the term "main dog". Erik and Kjersti also lives in a house and are a family of two humans. Family 3 is where we find Leah and Nora, who are 6 and 9 years old, respectively, their parents Jens and Saga, and Bull, their dog. They live in a house as well, and in total are a family of five humans, with three children. Family 4 involves Pelle, Are, Johannes and Jørn, with the ages of 5.5, 11, 14 and 17, respectively, their mom Gunvor, and their dog, Charlie. This family also lives in a house, and the four children live with two parents. Family 5 embody Sofie who is 8 years old, her mom Karen and their dog Molly. Since I only met them outside I do not know whether they live in a house or not, but this is also a family of two humans since Sofie's parents do not live together. Family 6 includes Marie, at the age of 17, her mom Siri as well as their dogs Bruce and David. Similar to family 2, there is also a main dog here, and that is Bruce. Again, this is because Bruce is Marie's dog, and she bears the full responsibility for him as she lives at a boarding school with Bruce, even though she goes home to her mom and David with Bruce every weekend. I also only met this family outside and therefore do not know what kind of residence they live in. When Marie goes home every weekend she stays with her mom and live-in partner, as her sibling has moved out. This is thus a family of four humans.

## 5.2 Dogs as family members and friends

Many family members talk about their dog not merely as an animal or pet, but as a family member. The different roles they are ascribed to are systematically presented within this theme. From the analysis it is evident that most of the families view their dog as part of the family. But what *is* family? There is no one right way to define family as this will vary from person to person and context to context, or due to cultural ambivalence regarding how we view animals (Irvine & Cilia, 2017). Still, in a study done with 22 dog-owners in Australia, 21 of them considered their dog a family member (Power, 2008). What they weighted when thinking of family was being in emotional proximity to the humans of the family, as well as being incorporated into the activities the family did (Power, 2008). This goes well with the research of Horn et al. (2013) which states that doing joint activities with the dog strengthens the relationship between the dog and the human. Most of the participants in my study describe their dog as a family member, but there are variations in *how* they do so. This depends on how they make sense of the dog's role in the family. What is very interesting is the importance of living together that is prominent not only in the study of Power (2008), but also something, among others, Are (11), one of the participants in my study emphasizes: *"I think that, Charlie is like, he is a part of, like the family. He lives in the house, he sleeps, he eats, and he is partaking in the family."* Are draws attention to living together, as well as activities commonly done together when describing Charlie's role as a family member. Cohabiting is crucial due to it contributing to close relations between humans and their dogs (Power, 2008), which is also the case for Are. Like many other participants, Are shows an understanding of the family as not necessarily only consisting of humans. Through viewing family as something fluid and not necessarily consisting of only humans, non-humans' agency can become visible (Power, 2008). In Are's description of Charlie's role in the family we see this prominence of non-human agency (Power, 2008) – the dog is viewed as a partaking and active actor in the family. While Australia and Norway can be described as "western contexts", Are and the participants' in Power's study reside in quite different contexts, but still emphasize similar factors, which is very interesting. Are highlights the same features as the participants in Power's study did when mentioning Charlie joining activities and living inside the house with the rest of the family. This indicates that views on dogs in different contexts can still be similar. At the same time, others find it difficult to put into words why they see their dog as a family member but are still set on that they do so, such as Are's mom, Gunvor: *"I feel like it is difficult to explain why it is like that, but like for us it is not JUST a dog, it is Charlie. [...] I believe that he is one of us, a part of the herd."* Gunvor expresses an inherent feeling that Charlie is part of the family but finds this notion difficult to put into words. It is notable that she uses the phrase "part of the herd", as similar descriptions, such as dogs being "part of the pack" were prominent also in Power's study. This is a very interesting aspect, for it is like the expression "part of the pack" is not only "humanized", but an expression from the animal kingdom is utilized to describe the family as a phenomenon. Humans are thus indirectly referring to themselves as animals when using the term "pack". Power (2008) presents a table of different ways the participants in her study view their dog. Those ways are as family, as children, as siblings, as similar to children, as unique/minded being and as pack animals (Power, 2008, p. 540). All of the participants in her research demonstrated multiple views of their dog, as is also Gunvors' case, as she views Charlie both as one of the family, as unique and as "part of the pack". Gunvor's explanation where she explains that "it is Charlie", creates another layer, for it is clear that there is some meaning behind such a statement. What this also indicates, is the

plurality of “doghoods” as well, similar to how childhoods are not a universal phenomenon (Burr, 2015). I want to argue that the same applies for dogs, because “doghoods” are defined, practiced, and understood differently in varied historical and cultural contexts. “Doghoods” do not only include individual dissimilarities, but also patterns in meaning making that exceeds the individual. When Gunvor says that it is not just a dog, but it is Charlie, this can say something about his uniqueness, how there is only one Charlie in the world. It can also indicate an individualization of animals. Kjørholt (2013) argues that “market oriented politics and ‘global images’ of childhood are connected to... increasing individualization”(p. 245), and I argue that some of this individualization might also transfer to animals. There is something very interesting about the simultaneous accentuation of being a unit (a herd) and unique. There is only one dog that is like Charlie, and that is Charlie. It may be all the things that Gunvor associates with Charlie, every way he contributes, his being, just the fact that his presence is precious, albeit also makes a difference in the family unit. He does something with the family dynamic. It is like Johannes (14), one of Gunvor’s sons, explained it: *“I mean, it is just cozy to... have a dog that... walks around and does that.”* According to Johannes, Charlie is “doing” a dog, he is doing something to the family dynamic just by being, existing. Greenebaum (2004) writes about how dog owners are “doing family”, by taking their dog to the dog bakery every Thursday, viewing the dogs as their children and “fur babies”. Similarly, I want to argue that Charlie is “doing” something, too. Charlie impacts the family merely by being a present non-human actor. Charlie is doing “dogginess” (Power, 2008), meaning that with his characteristics and preferences he is contributing in valuable ways within the family, being a non-human actor. Power (2008) argues that when the dog is both filling the roles as a child-like actor and as a pack member, this confirms the closeness of the relationship experienced between the dog and its family members. What is interesting is how she argues that that way of doing family and the “negotiation of these roles points to a more hybrid model of the traditional Western family, and signifies participants’ willingness to extend family-belonging beyond people” (Power, 2008, p. 543). This is prominent throughout this analysis as well, in how most of the participants do indeed view their dog(s) as part of the family, and thus that the view on what family is or can be, is changing. This can be linked to how the view on dogs are also changing, as they are increasingly acquired for company reasons rather than for practical purposes (see chapter 3.4). Not only this, but publicly viewing pets as family members began quite recently (Irvine & Cilia, 2017).

Seeing one’s dog as a friend was also promoted by Sigurd, one of the participants in my study. It is possible that his reply is different because of the way I asked the question as he could have interpreted it like he had to reply that Batman was a friend. Sigurd said this:

L: And you and Batman, are you, how would you describe you and Batman are you friends or how is the relationship between you and Batman?

Sigurd (8): we (.) I almost never fight with her. We are friends. We have it cozy together. And then sometimes I have to yell at her a little bit since she is barking.

L: Yes.

Sigurd (8): it is that and then I love her.

L: Yes, that is nice=

Sigurd (8): =THAT we all do. Me and the family.

When I asked Sigurd if he and Batman were friends, he either confirmed that they are friends, or he was influenced by my question that could have been seen as leading. He was talking about Batman as a friend, albeit not really making it clear if Batman is also considered family from his point of view. Consequently, I did not manage to create the open-to-interpretation- angle I strived to accomplish in that specific moment. Sigurd mentions Batman as a friend but describes their relationship a little further when talking about having to yell at her, being together and rarely fighting. Sigurd does not mention seeing Batman as a family member. Still, it might be that Sigurd does consider Batman family but that I did not manage to ask questions that made him express that. Nonetheless, seeing one's dog as a friend is also a common way of describing the relationship with one's pet (Blouin, 2012; Power, 2008). The character of the relationship, however, is both suiting to describe a friendship but also a familial relationship. What might stand out is the fact that Sigurd says that all of the family loves Batman. This may or may not imply something deeper than merely a friendship. Regardless, another participant responded differently even if I also asked him if he had a friendship with his dog. This is how Erik replied:

L: but do you feel like you have a friendship with the dog in some way?

Erik (17): yes:, or, more, more like a family member really.

Kjersti, mom: Yes, I believe so. Not friend, more, yes, I do say it is my children.

Erik (17): yes, it is a little weird, I mean, just how I grew up, it is weird to just call them friends, because, they mean a lot more to me.

L: mhm.

Erik (17): than friends, if you know what I mean, because they are a part of, eh, my inner circle you could call it. Someone I see every day. I don't sort of talk directly with them, but I feel like that is tied together, so then I get a kind of family feeling, that they are in that inner circle then.

L: mhm.

Kjersti, mom: you are after all Gudrun's dad.

Erik (17): Yes, I am in fact Gudrun's dad.

L: mhm, yes how=

Kjersti, mom: =so it is his daughter ((laughs)).

At first Erik replies that they are indeed friends, but just as quickly he corrects himself and firmly states that the dogs are more than friends. His mom, Kjersti supports this view. It is very evident that Kjersti and Erik view Gudrun as part of the family to the degree that they refer to her as a child, and Erik's daughter. Erik even uses the term "inner circle" to describe how intertwined and incorporated the dogs are into the family. He emphasizes seeing them every day, and that their ways of communicating are connected and thus, they are a part of the family, they give him a "family feeling". Erik highlights how the dogs mean more to him than friends, therein implying that family means more than friends, even though some consider friends their family. Similar to Erik and Kjersti, Nora states that she does find it important to have a dog because it is family. When I asked Nora about what it is that makes it important to have a dog, this is what she said:

Nora (9): because that, now it has become a family member.

L: yes.

Nora (9): and that is in fact just like leaving a child or something, because it is after all a living being, so that... it too can experience bad feelings and lots of such.

L: mhm.

Nora (9): so that it is important to take care of him.

Nora compares the dog to a child and finds similarities between them, such as the ability to "experience bad feelings". She also mentions the importance of taking care of Bull and how he has feelings too, both good and bad. She talks about him as something valuable, as a living being it is important to look after. Later on in the interview, I asked Nora again if she was able to say something more about why Bull is not only considered a friend, but as a part of the family, due to us being interrupted when talking about this previously:

L: But, you mentioned a little bit about it earlier when we were headed down here. But you, talked about that he is a part of the family.

Nora (9): yes.

L: are you able to you say something more about why you do not see him as a friend, but as a part of the family?

Nora (9): because he... I was with him since only some WEEKS when he was born, and then, I have grown up with him in October he does turn two years old, so then we have had him for two years already and then, then you feel like it is a part in the family and you have started to love it, and such. Like that it lives with you.

What is interesting is that the criteria for seeing one's dog as family are the same criteria as seeing one's own family as family, or in other words that "Animals were weighed in the same terms as humans, and seen to be kin for the same reasons as humans were" (Tipper, 2011, p. 151). One of these criteria are cohabitation, which is mentioned previously from Power's study, and the other is regarding the duration of the relationship (Tipper, 2011). Similar to Are, Nora accentuates that when the dog lives with the family, it is a part of the family. Growing up together is also described as what makes Bull part of the family, and even though Bull and Nora have only lived together for two years, Nora views that as growing up together. Nora views criteria for being considered family in similar ways to Are, for example by saying that living together is important to be part of the family and that Bull does this. Nora also mentions love, that loving and caring for someone can also imply that they are part of the family. When I asked Marie to describe the relation between her and Bruce, she said this:

Marie (17): yes. Hm:, it is a little like a sibling relationship mixed with... I do say that he is my little baby, so when I call for him I say "come to mommy" right yes, so it is sort of a mix between a sibling relationship mixed with a mother-son-relationship if I can say that.

According to Irvine and Cilia (2017) "Children's close relationships with pets, their communication with their pets, and their tendency to define pets as siblings reveal both their conception of a flexible human-animal boundary and how it intersects with their ideas about family" (p. 6). The notion of a flexible human-animal boundary is valuable here because it so clearly illustrates children's and the parents' ideas and thoughts regarding what family is in this thesis, and how this signals that dogs most definitely can be part of the family concept. They do not draw a clear line between what is human and what is animal as they talk about their dogs in human ways. As mentioned previously, the families also talk about humans in animal ways, occasionally. It is interesting because it does not seem like they have a need to put the different categories into boxes, but rather let them be fluid, or "flexible", therein possibly being open to changing

constructions. One can see how the boundary of the relationship between Marie and Bruce is multiple as Marie talks about it in varied terms, in example as a sibling relationship but at the same time also as a mother-son-relationship. This reveals something about Marie's ideas and sensemakings regarding what family is. Marie refers to Bruce through varied generational orders and systems of kinship, thereby including him in the family concept.

Most families describe the relationship between the children/youth and their dog(s) in a familial way, either like a sibling or as a child (daughter/son-relationship). This applies to the way both the parents and the children/youth themselves describe it. This is rather interesting and goes well with the research of Power (2008) where every participant but one considered their dog a family member. The research of Greenebaum (2004) is also relevant as she found that people considered their dogs either as friends, children or fur babies and not simply as dogs or pets. All of these ways of viewing one's dog are present in this project as well. What is also worth noticing is the similarity in how both the parents and the children/youth describe the children's relationship with their dog(s), as both generations emphasize this child/parent- relationship with the dog(s). Thus, the children and youth are sometimes positioned in parental roles in meetings with the dogs. Again, this is interesting because children usually are not allowed to take on these parental roles in western contexts, except when it applies to dogs it seems like. The dogs thereby impact the everyday lives of the families when being incorporated into the family structure in child- or sibling-like roles.

As mentioned previously, the participants in Power's study had several ways of describing the animals. The fact that there were so many different ways of describing one's pet could be related to the concept of flexible human-animal boundary in Irvine and Cilia (2017). The variety of ways of describing one's pet might point to how flexible this boundary can be, as the dogs were described in several ways by every participant. As stated previously, Gunvor talked about Charlie as unique, a family member as well as part of the pack, which speaks to the flexibility regarding Gunvor's view on human-animal boundaries. Consequently, Charlie is both viewed in an individualistic way, in a collective way, but also in a human- and animal way by both being a family member and a part of the pack. This can be connected to a wider context as well, as viewing one's dog in the abovementioned ways are also prominent in other research and thereby other contexts, such as in Power (2008). What this thereby indicates is that a flexible-human animal boundary as well as a fluid family concept is present in several contexts. Hence, constructions about animals and dogs seems to be changing to a more inclusive view on what they are and can be part of.

### 5.3 Not just a dog

The dog's role does not stop as merely being a family member or friend. It also has a role as an important actor in the everyday life of the family. In this sub-chapter, dogs are also presented as emotional and relational beings, and many family members believe that their dog can feel, understand, and relate to their feelings and vice versa. All of the families believed that their dog's understand their feelings, whereas many of them also claimed to understand the dog's feelings. Power (2008) advocates for seeing "the home as a key space through which more-than-human family relations are negotiated" (p. 538). This means that dogs' can be seen as partaking in these negotiations through interactions in families' everyday lives. This is visible through how the relations take shape "...through every day, routine activity in and through the home" (Power, 2008, p.

537). Examples are among others pertaining to body language and actions that the dogs' show or respond to in a way that makes the families feel like their dog understands them and their feelings, as well as the dogs being good listeners.

As mentioned previously, there has been a change in the way we view animals. A related concept to this change is called the animal turn, which comprises how relationships have changed between "scholars and subjects, and new understandings of the role of animals in the past and present" (Ritvo, 2007, p. 119). What is very interesting about this, are the characteristics of this turn, as the new way of understanding animals are no longer "...a passive role in human-animal relations, it places the animal at the center and perceives it as a subject and an agent contributing to the encounters observed and studied" (Nyman & Schuurman, 2016, p. 2). The extracts below show how the participants explain how the dog is in fact an agent and doing something with the relationships between the dog and the different family members, but also between the family members themselves. The dog thereby makes many decisions on its own and is part of co-constructing the relationships. Irvine (2004) argues that the term "companion animal" is "an effort to appreciate animals for what they *are*, not for what they *could be* if they were not so much like "animals"" (p. 28). Similar to how the view on children have changed, it is about appreciating what the companion animals are like here and now and not merely focusing on what they can become. A companion animal is recognized as being worthy of respect even if being different from people (Irvine, 2004).

One of the ways in which the relations take shape were described when I asked Leah and Nora's parents to describe their children's relationship with Bull. Saga therein connected the character of the relationships to age and the ability to see beyond oneself:

L: And how would you, the parents, describe the relationship between Leah and Nora, and also the last one for that matter and, and Bull?

Saga, mom: mm, eh, I think they have a really nice relationship, but it is a little like we said down in the park as well, that we do see that it is a little like age dependent and a little, what kind of relationship you have to a dog, that then you have to grow out of that period where you only see yourself, to be able to take good care of a dog. E:h, and that we thought that we had taken that into account when we got, I mean that the oldest was, no that the youngest sort of was FOUR when we got a dog, so we have intentionally waited a little, eh but we probably had, it had probably maybe been even better if it was now that the dog came into the picture because, because the youngest probably will see the dog more as a competitor or an extra thing, while the little older ones, but not many notches, because you were only six seven when we got him.

Nora (9): mm

Saga, mom: while they have been able to tie a better bond because she already then starts to see a bit beyond herself and... provide more care. I do see that that eh.. they, they do have different relationships to him. You ((Nora)) maybe have the best one because you see him and see his needs and sort of play a little on his premises and, while her ((Leah)) it gets more like if it suits her, and the oldest is again on his way into like a youth phase, he is a little busier. Eh, so that, there we also see that he, when he is home he is very good with him, but I don't think that when he is away on a hockey game some weekend that he thinks about the fact that we have a dog.

There is a lot to unpack from the excerpt above. Saga directly connects the children/youth's different ages to the characters of their relationships with Bull. She implies that some ages go better with dogs than others, that to be able to be a good provider for the dog you have to be a certain age. I am not suggesting that any child regardless of age can take care of a dog by itself. Rather, I am simply bringing to light this notion of thinking in a more psycho-developmental lane, meaning stages that

allegedly “every” child follows (see for example Piaget (2000)). This gives a great insight into Saga’s sensemakings of requirements to be a good caretaker for the dog. This is very interesting, because as presented in the introduction it is not seen as culturally accepted for most children in the west to take care of others except if it is a pet (Melson, 2003, in Muldoon et al., 2015). The difference here though is that it is not seen as accepted for Leah to take care of Bull, even if it ‘technically’ might be since she is a child, and he is a dog. Since it is culturally acceptable in many western contexts for children to be the caregiver if the care receiver is a pet, one could argue that Leah possibly could be allowed to take care of Bull to some degree. However, Saga connects being able to take care of a dog to the ability of seeing beyond the self. It is reasonable to claim that Saga utilizes ideas about age and development when making sense about childhood as she states that “you have to grow out of that period where you only see yourself” and connects this to the children’s ages and how she thought she and Jens had avoided the issue of the children seeing only themselves due to the children being a certain age. It is commonly believed within sociology and developmental psychology that children become more aware of those around them as they grow older (Adler & Adler, 1998; Frønes, 1995; Larsen, 2003, in Sørenssen et al., 2021). However, this implies that it is at a certain age that one starts seeing beyond oneself. But what does it mean to see beyond oneself? I interpret it to mean being considerate of those around you, as well as being able to see things from different perspectives, to put yourself in someone else’s shoes. According to James (1993, in Sørenssen et al., 2021), children in kindergarten are also conscious and aware of those around them. Thus, it can be argued that the ability to see beyond oneself will vary from child to child, regardless of age. It is not a given that at a particular age any child will be able to “see beyond itself”, and therefore it is important to question this taken-for-granted-ness (Burr, 2015). However, Power (2008) also emphasizes how “encounters between people and dogs are likely to change throughout the life of the relationship” (p.538). Thus, the character of the relationship between children and their dog do not necessarily merely change based on the child’s age. It might as well be according to how the relation develops.

In the first part, Saga speaks about the relationships between the children and Bull from how the children are actors but are referring to Bull as a somewhat passive recipient of care. In the last part of the extract Saga talks about Bull’s needs and playing on his premises, thereby indicating that Bull has needs too and likes to play a certain way. This reveals that Saga sees Bull as a non-human actor, as his own being. She brings up the children’s abilities to provide care for Bull and how this impacts the relationship. However, Saga does not only comment on Leah’s lacking abilities, but also utilizes an age logic when describing that the oldest child has moved into a phase of life where he is not always that oriented towards the dog. The middle child, Nora, is referred to as the ideal caregiver for the dog of the three children. Saga does not necessarily interpret the children’s ability to take care of Bull as increasing with age, but also in conjunction with life phase, interests, and activities. Hence, her descriptions are not limited only to age.

### 5.3.1 Dogs’ abilities to understand feelings

When I asked Marie and Siri what they think of David and Bruce’s abilities to understand their feelings, they started exemplifying some of the ways Bruce and David demonstrate such abilities:

Siri, mom: Well, I think they read me very well. Or for me, personally I think they do.



Marie (17): I think David is especially good at reading like if you are a little weary or...yes something, then he's really like... he is going to lay against you and warm you and then you get to cuddle a little with him and such.

Siri, mom: Yes, so if you have had such sad experiences then they like sit next to you if you cry and such. They sit beside you and like really up close to you and he doesn't move until you leave then. I think, I think he reads, I am a dog owner then but I think in fact that he is very like understanding. I talk to him and I feel like I get replies. My live-in partner doesn't quite agree with that really, but I think I know him in fact really well. It is after all me he has the closest relationship with and then so maybe there is a little difference.

L: yes.

Marie (17): and then he is really like if he... if we are cheery and happy then he is sort of, he joins in on sort of all of that...

Siri, mom: in all of it

Marie (17): yes, he is joining in on sort of everything. So the youngest one I feel like gets it him too, but eh he is not that old yet, so, but he does sit next to me if I am sad or something, he does give sort of the same except that he is a little less and maybe hasn't gotten it fully yet.

L: mm.

Siri, mom: and likewise, I think the other way too I am able to read his body language if he doesn't want to go out for a walk for example or today I just want to relax and stuff so... we do see that he doesn't want to. We don't force him to anything then because he is a little spoiled the oldest one.

L: yes, but how do you see that he doesn't want to go for a walk some day?

Siri, mom: well then he doesn't come when we open the front door for example or go get the harness, start to get dressed, then he kind of sits far into the living room and just looks at us.

Marie (17): and that we go towards him with the harness and he hides then he definitely doesn't want to go for a walk.

First, Siri and Marie confirm that they believe that their dogs have the abilities to understand their feelings. Both Marie and Siri think David reads them well, whilst Marie highlights his abilities to read particularly well when she is weary and how he then wants to lay really close to her to comfort and warm her. Siri points out David's comforting skills when she is sad, and how he stays there with her until she is ready to move. Siri believes that they communicate well and uses the term "understanding" about David. What is also interesting is how Marie talks about how the youngest dog, Bruce, has not quite learned all the abilities that David has yet, but that he is starting to grasp it. They make very vivid comments regarding how they see that Bruce and David understand them, but also how they understand Bruce and David. They explain how the dogs are very present and participate and adapt to the atmosphere in the house which shows how they relate to their human's feelings. This resembles Virginia Morrow's study done in England where several children stated that the dogs knew when they were upset and were good listeners (Morrow, 1998). By the examples Marie and Siri provide it is also evident that something is happening within the dogs when Marie and Siri are weary or sad, as the dogs come up to them and comfort them in those mentioned ways depending on the feeling shown. What is particularly interesting as well is how Siri's cohabiting partner does not agree with her, and how Siri argues that it might be because she has a closer relationship with David than he does. In a study with households containing one dog and two humans done by Horn et al. (2013) in Austria, the authors found that "...building a close relationship with the dog based on many joint activities could be the

basis for a stronger orientation towards the caregiver" (p.442). This can imply that if Siri is the one doing most activities with David, such as walking him, it might actually be that they have a closer relationship, and that David therefore pays more attention to Siri than to her partner. Feeding the dog most often could also impact the character of the relationship to a closer one (Horn et al., 2013). It is emphasized that "...relationships between humans and individual animals can be understood as co-produced by both human and non-human actors in specific contexts" (Nyman & Schuurman, 2016, p. 2). This means that it is a common view that animals impact the relationship with their humans, and that they both play a part in the changing dynamics of their relationship. This shines through when Marie and Siri talk about how David is spoiled, and that they do not force him to for example go for walks if he does not want to. It is also visible through how Marie explains that Bruce "maybe hasn't gotten it fully yet", thereby implying that he will come to understand it eventually. Through David's choice in whether to go for a walk, he is defining his role in the family as well as shaping "... the rules and practices of family living" (Power, 2008, p. 549). David thus decides whether he wants to go for a walk and Marie and Siri clearly respect this by not forcing him, thus altering their plans and activities in order to be considerate of David's needs, preferences and pleasures (Power, 2008). Had he not been there, then their way of family living would most likely be quite different as they would have had different practices.

Tipper (2011) states the need for accepting that dogs "... are capable of the kind of 'minded interaction' and intersubjectivity which constitute social life" (p. 148). As explained in the theory sub chapter 3.4.1, this means that dogs can understand and interact with humans. When I asked Nora's family what they thought about Bull's ability to understand their feelings, Nora explained how he demonstrates understanding them:

L: mm, and what do you think about Bull's abilities to understand your feelings?

Nora (9): Ehm, he does understand them, it rubs off on him, both from far away and close by, if we are happy he gets happy. If, if I say like "Bull, come on!" in a fun voice he always gets happy and wants to come to me. But eh, eh... we also do understand his feelings. If his eyes get wet, like really wet in the eyes, then he is sad. If he is scared, his tail goes between his legs, if he is happy then eh, his tail goes like a propel. You can see it a little bit on his ears and face too.

It is clear that Nora believes that Bull does understand the families' feelings and she provides quite a few vivid examples on how he shows that he understands their feelings, too. Nora describes Bull's understanding of feelings in such a vibrant way, bringing in the importance of body language as he does not speak through words. She is very observant of signs that Bull shows that indicates how he is feeling, and how she is indeed making sense of Bull as an emotional and relational being. Nora describes Bull as participating in the family "vibe", thereby co-producing meaning making in the everyday life of the family. When I asked Sofie if she could describe the relationship between her and Molly, she, similarly to Nora, also highlights some of the ways in which Molly understands her feelings:

Sofie (8): Ehm, it is actually quite good, she gets, if I like, if I am stressed she walks into her cage and lays down so that she doesn't ruin and stuff, and then when I am maybe a little sad then she often comes over to me but, we both do really like the same things so like we love laying on the couch and sleep together and... be together and go for walks together. We really do almost everything together except school and being with friends.

Sofie brings to light the sense of togetherness and closeness, that spending a lot of time together is very important to her and makes it quite visible that their relation is very essential in Sofie's everyday life. Sofie depicts how Molly is with her almost every step of

the day, doing activities together and the ways in which Molly shows that she understands Sofie's feelings by giving Sofie space when she is stressed, and staying close when she is sad. In a study done by Greenebaum (2004) she found that the dogs had features and personalities that resembled their humans. What is very interesting is how Sofie emphasizes just this, namely sameness, being similar and liking the same things. This can also be connected to relational geographies of age as mentioned in sub chapter 3.2. The differences and similarities visible in the social interactions between Sofie and Molly described above, impacts the meaning Sofie adds to her identity and her interests as she partly connects them to Molly. Marie also pointed out being similar to Bruce and compared her dog to a twin due to how similar they were, for example regarding being social and spreading joy. Several of the participants thus mentioned being similar to their dog and vice versa. According to Greenebaum (2004) having resemblances with one's dog "...encouraged the dog lovers to view their dogs as more than just a pet, but a vital member of the family" (p. 132). Both Sofie and Marie considered their dogs as part of the family, and it could be that the emphasis on sameness is one of the reasons for that.

According to Cassels et al. (2017) children are more likely to turn to their pets when sad, and both children, youth and adults with dogs are more likely to seek their dog when in need of support due to being upset. We have seen this through the examples of David and Bruce comforting Marie and her mom, Siri, for instance. However, it could be that dogs are also seeking their humans when the humans are sad, and not necessarily always merely the human seeking their dog. This is evident when I asked Charlie's family what they thought of his abilities to understand their feelings:

L: But, what do you think about Charlie's abilities to understand your feelings? Do you think that he gets if something is wrong for example?

Are (11): yes.

Johannes (14): Yes, I believe that actually.

Are (11): Especially when, like, if you're angry or sad, then he comes to the room and sits down there.

What one can draw from this extract is first that both Are and Johannes believe that Charlie has the ability to understand their feelings. Nyman and Schuurman (2016) emphasize "... both humans and animals are able to learn to become affected by the other and change their behaviour accordingly" (p. 2). Are also explains how when his mood is shifting into sad or angry, Charlie goes to check on him. Are does not say anything about where he encounters these feelings, only that at some point he is in his room. Then Are connects feeling sad or angry to Charlie entering the room. What is clear is that Are has been in his room to some extent during his experiences of those emotions. Charlie has entered Are's room while those mentioned feelings occurred, and that has done something with the way Are was feeling. When Charlie changes his behaviour because Are's feelings change, Are (11) is influenced by this: "*when he comes into my room then I feel happy when he comes.*" Are describes feeling happy when Charlie enters his room, and this indicates that Are is affected by Charlie's appearance. One can see how the relationship between Are and Charlie can be viewed as co-produced by both of them as actors in this specific context (Nyman & Schuurman, 2016). They are both "doing" something in this situation that further does something to their relationship. Charlie is being an emotional and relational being and actor when he walks into Are's room by his own choice. From a sociomaterial perspective, in those meetings between Are and Charlie, Charlie is partaking in constructing meaning and practices, just by being

present. Together, they are co-constructors of a relation in everyday life. Are makes sense of Charlie as improving how he feels, and maybe Are does something with the way Charlie feels as well since he keeps coming into Are's room when something is off. Either way, "When these pets anticipate shared routines or seem to appreciate others' intentions or feelings, they can be seen as social actors engaging in a shared social life" (Tipper, 2011, p. 148). As Charlie is clearly appreciating Are's feelings, he is a social actor. Hilde also describes her and Sigurd's dog as a social actor. When I asked Sigurd and Hilde if they think Batman understands if they are sad or happy, this is what they said:

Hilde, mom: yes, I would think so. They do notice state of minds and... adjust a bit thereafter. If there is a lot of noise and fun, then Batman gets full of noise and fun too.

L: mhm.

Sigurd (8): mhm.

Hilde, mom: if there is someone who does something wrong, wrong and I have to yell, then Batman pulls away.

Sigurd (8): Yes.

Hilde, mom: She does not like that dejected atmosphere.

Sigurd (8): No.

Hilde is replying in a way that makes it seem like she really does understand Batman as she firmly states for example that "she does not like that dejected atmosphere". Hilde is talking about Batman like she knows her very well, about what she likes and dislikes. Batman is described as adapting well to the atmosphere, again showing how Batman is an actor too. Both talking for and to one's dog is actually quite common and is proof of that pets are viewed as "...subjective beings with interests and reciprocal roles in the interaction" (Irvine & Cilia, 2017, p. 4). This means that they are seen as having their own opinions as well as playing an active part in their relationships. Moreover, by talking for and to one's dog, people are making interpretations regarding their (in this case) dog's minds (Irvine & Cilia, 2017). This is very prominent through the way Hilde talks about Batman and how she does not like certain atmospheres.

In an exploratory paper that draws on two research projects with 191 children and 183 children, respectively, in the UK, Morrow (1998) found that many of the participants thought that their pets were very crucial to them, emotionally. Moreover, she found that the children experienced that the pets comforted them and listened to them, and that they were viewed as part of the family. What is very interesting is how the findings are extremely similar in this project. Throughout this chapter I have shown how the dogs have comforted their family members and how the family members view their dogs (mostly) as part of the family. When I asked Nora's family if Bull helps with the family relations, another similarity, regarding dogs listening to their human family members appeared:

Nora (9): he is quite, if he first lays down, and you start talking with him like I usually do, when I come home from school and am home alone. Then I usually sit and talk with him in that couch over there ((points to a couch)), and then he gets a pillow and I get a pillow, and then eh... he lays there ON my foot, when I like am there he comes over and lays ON TOP of me. And then I start talking with him, and then he lays there until I am done talking.

This is such a vivid example of how Nora talks *with* Bull, and therein makes sense of Bull's mind (Irvine & Cilia, 2017). Nora experiences that Bull listens to her and describes

that they have a ritual where they each get a pillow and he lays there until she is finished talking. This is not presented as a single event, but as a regular occurrence, and thus there is reason to believe that Bull does all those small things intentionally. He is laying down on top of Nora's feet after she has sat down, and he stays there with her while she speaks. It truly indicates that he is listening to her. Nora clearly makes sense of Bull as a listening being, able to understand and relate to her feelings. What is outstanding is how Nora, her family and other families in Trøndelag weights and point out basically the same features regarding dogs as the children in Morrow's study regarding pets. Even though Morrow's study took place in the UK, it indicates that how they think about pet keeping, or at least thought about pet keeping around 1998 in a context in the UK is quite similar to how some families think about it in Trøndelag today. This can point to enduring constructions about pets.

## 5.4 Summary

To answer the research question: *What role does the dog have in the family structure and everyday life of the family?* In the family structure the dog is seen as either a family member in some way or as a friend, by all of the participants. In the everyday life some believe that the relationship between the children/youth and their dog differs depending on partly the children and youths' ages. A common view among the participants is that they do believe that their dogs understand their feelings. Many of them also believe that they understand their dog's feelings and that the dog is very good at sensing the "vibe" and adapts to it, for example by joining in if it is a very happy or excited "vibe" and withdrawing when there is a negative atmosphere where someone for example is being yelled at. The families are making constructions regarding how their dog's mind functions as well as about the dog's interests and personality, stating what they like and dislikes when talking to or for them.

To sum up, what is promoted by the participants is the mutual understanding between the dogs and their family, this being the dogs' adaptability to different situations. If the family is happy, the dog joins in and wants to participate, but if someone is fighting for example, the dog steps back and gives space to the family. If someone is sad, the dog comforts them, and the same applies if they are weary. The other way around the families also describe how they notice when their dog is upset or happy by looking at its eyes for example, or their tail, ears, or actions even. Through the interviews it is clear that the families see the dog as its own being as well as feeling, understanding, relating, and adapting to the other family members state of mind, including being good listeners.

## 6 Analysis Part II: An essential childhood experience

This is the second and final analysis chapter. The chapter explores how having dogs during childhoods are made sense of by families in Trøndelag, Norway, which is connected to the research question: *How is the phenomenon of having dogs during childhoods constructed within families in a Norwegian context?* For this first research question, there is a theme called "The right to have a dog" which comprises the family members thoughts and ideas regarding the essentiality of having a dog during childhood. Moreover, this chapter delves into Norwegian families' sensemakings of having a dog. This is connected to the following research question: *How do Norwegian children and parents describe the meaning and value of having a dog?* To attempt to answer this research question, there is a theme named "Quality of life" which includes more generally how having a dog can enrich the lives of both children and other family members.

### 6.1 The right to have a dog

It is commonly stated that having a dog is a big responsibility (Westgarth et al., 2019). The primary Western understandings of animals and children revolve around children learning responsibilities by caring for a pet (Tipper, 2011). When I interviewed families that have a dog, many of those "well-known" and common understandings regarding developing empathy and learning to be responsible were in fact brought up, as will be presented shortly. Responsibilities connected to travel limitations and logistics were mentioned, but nonetheless most participants said that having a dog was worth it. However, as I have mentioned earlier in the thesis, and as Tipper (2011) also highlights, it is not satisfying to only view "... children's relationships with animals only through this psycho-developmental or evolutionary lens" as I am "...concerned with understanding the socially situated nature of children" (p. 146). I am interested in the parents' and children's sensemakings of having a dog and thus understand more about children's and their families' everyday lives. The majority of the participants described having a dog as meaningful to them and highlighted that they felt happy because of the dog's presence in the family. As will be explored below, having a dog during childhood is by most of the family members described as central and very positive. Other aspects emphasize the dog as a binding agent, and several families even state that it should be every child's right to have a dog, as is visible when Kjersti talks about her and Erik's dogs:

Kjersti, mom: if I am going to humanize, I think that they understand it if you're not okay.

L: mhm.

Kjersti, mom: mhm, and that is why I believe that it should have been every child's right to grow up with a dog.

L: Yes that could have been interesting yes, if everyone had grown up with a dog, or if everyone had a right to do so as you say.

Kjersti, mom: I think that then we would have more empathy in the world.

Sanders write about how people talk about their pets as humans, and how they state having this mutual relationship (Sanders, 1999). This is precisely what we can see when Kjersti talks about her and Erik's dogs, as she several times states that she is not going

to talk about them as humans, but then she somehow still ends up doing just this. After Kjersti has said that she is not going to humanize the dogs, she says, "if I am going to humanize" and then talks about their dogs' qualities regarding understanding them. The mutuality of the relationship can be seen through how Kjersti describes how the dogs understand her and if she is not feeling okay. She even goes as far as connecting the dogs' abilities to understand "if you're not okay" to why children should have a right to have a dog- because dogs' sense when something is off. Kjersti explains how she believes having a dog would therefore lead to more empathy in the world. Similar to Kjersti, Erik also believes that it should be every child's right to have a dog, as one can see when I asked Erik what life is like with a dog:

L: mhm. And how do you think life is with a dog?

Erik (17): I think it is a good life really. And it is like mom says too, that everyone should get to experience it and I believe that too.

Erik connects having a dog to something everyone should get to experience. This indicates some of the social and relational aspects of dog keeping. It also says something about Erik's meaning making regarding having a dog as well, as he connects it with "a good life". One may argue that Erik thus makes sense of a good life as including a dog. Erik is agreeing with his mom regarding every child having the right to have a dog. This is very interesting as this says something about how essential they think dogs are in their lives. Their view on dogs is almost seen as a necessity, and as is shown later they refer to dog keeping as a lifestyle. When Erik and Kjersti interact, they have a quite common view about dogs and dog keeping. Stating the right to have a dog indicates that dog keeping means something to them, as Kjersti has had dogs for as long as Erik has been alive (17 years) and even a little longer too. Kjersti connects dogs to an increase in empathy in the world, thereby implying that having a dog leads to more empathetic skills. This is not to say that the children should necessarily be responsible for the dog alone, but rather that they should have the right to experience having a dog, and how this would be possible in an ideal world where everyone is fit to have a dog. In Kjersti's view, dogs do lead to an increase in empathetic skills. In the ways Kjersti and Erik make sense of having a dog, it is seen as an essential childhood experience. Nonetheless, Kjersti is not the only one talking about empathy, but also Jens, as will be shown later in this analysis chapter.

### 6.1.1 Responsibility

There were also other participants arguing that every house should acquire a dog, such as Marie who said this:

Marie (17): every house, especially with children should have a dog, unless they are allergic, but then there are allergy-friendly dogs too, so, I feel like everyone grows from that so everyone should have had a dog, and then it is, if you have a... baby I get it if maybe it is a bit hectic, but it is still fully possible. So ehm, both to grow up with a dog and to have a dog when they are a little older I think, everyone should have had because you know you have to go for walks, for example if you, when I came home from school when they were at work, I knew sort of that, I could not suddenly spend three hours to walk home from school that usually take me five minutes to right yes because I actually had to get home to a dog that had to be walked, and ehm, I had that responsibility, I was responsible for him until he, until mom and dad got home.

L: mm

Marie (17): so ehm, it was a little... nice to sort of have that responsibility, and I would never have dared to be home alone when I was little.

"Paying attention to children's experience of animals allows us a particular insight into the micro-geographies of everyday experience" according to Tipper (2011, p. 155). Marie strongly encourages every house, especially with children, to acquire a dog. At first she makes some exemptions for why people cannot necessarily have a dog, but then she changes her mind and says that even then they can make it work somehow. This points to some strong ideals Marie has about the value of having a dog. She connects having a dog to learning responsibilities and describes this as a good thing. She highlights that it was nice to have that kind of responsibility. Marie had obligations to go home and look after the dog until her parents came home, and she describes having a dog as important both while growing up but also as one ages. It is notable that several parents in the study, but also children and teenagers, like Marie, emphasize the value of learning responsibility. Further, Marie highlights how the dog helped her overcome her fear of being home without her parents. To Marie, it was a positive experience to be responsible for the dog until her parents got home. It was culturally acceptable for Marie to take care of Bruce even if she was a child because Bruce is a dog and not a human (Muldoon et al., 2015). Nonetheless, it is reasonable to argue that age could also be a variable in this context, as it can be contested whether or not children should care for dogs by themselves. This can be connected to risks and safety, wherein Mattilsynet (03.03.2023) argues that children and dogs should never be left unsupervised. This is because small children are often unpredictable and have no prerequisite of understanding the dog's signals (Mattilsynet). One could here problematize what a "small child" means and whether that applied to Marie, but one could also argue that it will depend on the child whether it is capable of being home alone with the dog. Still, it is commonly assumed that children should not and do not care for other humans (Morrow, 2008). The view on children as dependent and not being able to take on responsibility is prominent in many contexts, and thus children are seldom "...credited with the positive capacity to take on responsibilities for others" (Morrow, 2008). Marie clearly states that she found it positive to be responsible for Bruce when her parents were not home and that having a dog is to Marie filled with meaning and is important in her everyday life. However, it is important to not only romanticize being responsible for a dog. Despite having a dog there are also many children and youth that do not automatically take, get, or learn that much responsibility. Thus, having a dog is not a guarantee for children and teenagers making sense of responsibility in a different way.

When I asked Jens and the family what it means for them to have a dog, Jens talked about how the common responsibility for the dog is functioning as a binding agent, binding the family members together:

Jens, dad: Yes I think it means that we sort of have a common thing, that everyone needs to take responsibility for. And like everyone understands we have to share a little of the responsibility... And... then there is a... type of binding agent and, when you have kids different ages, that everyone can partake.

Jens weights how the dog brings the family together through sharing the responsibilities for Bull, as is also found in most families in the study of Power (2008). Jens explains how kids every age can contribute to taking care of the dog. How he talks about Bull as a binding agent is also very interesting, something that keeps the family together. The concept of Bull as a binding agent can help us understand contemporary constructions about dogs' roles in families. Bull is thus doing something with the family's relationship as they have to work together and cooperate to take care of Bull. At the same time, it is possible that sometimes some family members get less time with other family members. This came to light when I asked the family what Bull's role in the home is like:



Saga, mom: he does let us know if the rhythm is not like he is used to, he does. Yes.

Jens, dad: yes, he does. But I would also say that he, he does TAKE attention, and time, where eh you maybe, eh, WITHOUT a dog, would have disposed the time in a different way. Ehm, so it does become a being that also requires something, in an otherwise hectic weekday. So it is like instead of the both of us going to a workout or follow up or do something, it is like Saga says that one has to go for a walk, and one gets to go ((to work out)). So I would dare to assert that he influences in that direction too.

L: mhm.

Jens, dad: but he is after all very nice to bring with you on hikes, and he is in fact like a part of the family, so.

As Sanders (1999) points out, dogs commonly have certain expectations, as they know approximately when their humans wake up as well as when it is feeding time. "When these expectations are not met at the appropriate time, they actively inform me that things are not as they should be and do all they can to get me to do what they want" (Sanders, 1999, p. xv). Similarly to Sanders, Saga also states that Bull does this by letting them know "if the rhythm is not like he is used to", again proving that he is a social actor playing a role in the everyday rhythm and the relational patterns in the family. What one can further draw from the extract is how Bull's relationship with the different family members can impact the different relationships between the other family members. Sometimes Jens and Saga have to split up due to one having to go for a walk with Bull, whilst the other gets to go to work out. That is also prominent within some of the families in Power (2008) where "a number of individuals discussed the divisive impact of this experience" (p. 535), "this experience" being bringing a dog into the family. In that way, Jens is describing how Bull separates Jens and Saga sometimes due to his needs. Still, they could both decide to go for that walk and that way do the activity together. Nonetheless, Jens eventually traces back to the positive sides of Bull and explains how he makes a good hiking buddy and "is in fact like a part of the family". Thus, one can see how the interactions between Bull and the other family members influence the relations not only between Bull and the family but also between the other family members (Power, 2008). It seems like Jens' track of thoughts first circles around what is not always so positive when having a dog, but then circles back to the benefits of it. Jens interprets Bull as a binding agent that brings together family members across ages and generations. Another participant that brings in the aspect of responsibility is Sofie. When I asked her about how it feels to have a dog, this is what she replied:

Sofie (8): eh, it feels... eh, responsible really.

L: mm

Sofie (8): mm, and that you don't have time for other things.

L: not so much time for other things no?

Sofie (8): no.

L: but... what is it that makes you not having as much time for other things then?

Sofie (8): well, I do have to look after the dog and take it outside and go for walks and such.

Sofie seems to view responsibility as something negative or time consuming, and she talks about not having time for other things. Almost every family mentions the aspect of responsibility, but most often in a positive matter, whereas Sofie seems a little sceptical. Even though she also says earlier that having a dog is mostly nice, she clearly weights the responsibility quite a bit, as the word she chooses to describe having a dog is

“responsible”. According to Irvine and Cilia (2017) research has shown how pets “actively reshape everyday family practices” (p. 4). One of the ways in which Molly does so, is by needing to go for walks. Benton (1993) states how the pets dependency on their owners makes the family members obligated to “... provide for their well-being” (in Irvine & Cilia, 2017, p. 4). Providing for their wellbeing entails caring through “...feeding, walking, protecting, nurturing, and other responsibilities” which creates these close and family-like relations (Irvine & Cilia, 2017, p. 4). Sofie is doing just this, as she exemplifies by explaining how she has to “look after the dog and take it outside and go for walks and such”. Consequently, it seems like Molly plays a big part in re-shaping Sofie’s old everyday practices where she would usually spend time with friends. The pets play a big part in shaping “... the “doing” of household routines by waking their human family members up in the morning or by demonstrating their desire for food, walks or play” (Carter & Charles, 2013; Sanders, 1999, in Irvine & Cilia, 2017, p. 4). This is interesting because it shows so clearly how the dogs participate in the family and are active actors influencing the families’ functioning and everyday life as Sofie states so clearly. She cannot do other things before she has made sure that Molly’s needs are fulfilled. Erik highlighted whether people are able to carry the responsibility of having a dog, and brought this up right after Kjersti emphasized the right to have a dog and how she believed this would lead to an increase in empathy:

Erik (17): but there are many who are not fit to have a dog too.

Kjersti: Yes.

L: yes.

Kjersti: but it should have been every child’s right.

Erik (17): yes.

Erik thus problematizes whether everyone should have a dog but ends up agreeing with Kjersti when she counters with that it should be “every child’s right”. When I conducted the walking interview with Erik, he brought this discussion to light once again when I asked him what he thinks is good and not good regarding dog keeping. What he mentioned as not good was the degree of responsibility as well as what it means not being fit to have a dog:

Erik (17): the minus with it, is really all the responsibility you get. Because that is what makes someone not fit to have a dog. That they can’t take care of it, that they don’t go for enough walks, not enough environment training, not enough maintenance.

In the extract we get a deeper insight into what Erik means when saying that not everyone is fit to have a dog and he views this as when they cannot take care of the dog. He then elaborates more on what taking care of a dog entails and talks about lack of training and maintenance. At the same time, Erik demonstrates the ways in which he is fit to have a dog, by illustrating what he does to be considerate of Gudrun, as is visible when I asked him about what it means for him to have a dog:

Erik (17): what it means yes... well, it is a lot of responsibility, because you have to take measures if you are going away.

L: mhm.

Erik (17): eh, you have to take into account what you are doing in the evenings and such, that you have to remember to feed them, walk them and stimulate them, enough cuddling among others.

Erik acknowledges the degree of responsibility and demonstrates in what ways he fulfills that responsibility. The meaning Erik places on having a dog is to a large extent connected to responsibility. This is visible as he, similarly to Sofie, highlights responsibility when being asked what it means to have a dog. When Erik talks about what it means for him to have a dog, he emphasizes meeting Gudrun's needs. Through Erik's descriptions of the meaning of having a dog, one can see how Gudrun "actively shape the ways that family and home are lived in the everyday" (Power, 2008, p. 537) as Erik has to adjust what he is doing to Gudrun's needs. Thus, the family and home are lived in different ways due to Gudrun's presence as Erik cannot necessarily be as spontaneous in the evenings. Within the home we can find "... rules, routines and ... 'doggie' ways of living" (Power, 2008, p. 538). At the same time, Gudrun also has to adapt to Erik's everyday life as she has to wait with being fed, cuddle or go for walks until Erik is ready/available. This shows how both Gudrun and Erik's lives are shaped by the home, but also how the home is shaped by its residents (Power, 2008). The home is "... a key space through which they are negotiated" (Power, 2008, p. 538), "they" being the relations. At the same time as Erik talks about responsibility, Erik and Kjersti also refer to dog keeping as a lifestyle:

L: you have already answered it a bit but what does it mean for you, to have a dog?

Erik (17): well, it is a little like a lifestyle.

Kjersti: mm, to us it is that.

Erik (17): mm.

Power (2008) states that "Though encounters between people and dogs are likely to change throughout the life of the relationship, the early period is characterised by change as humans and dogs learn to cohabit" (p.538). To Erik and Kjersti it is not an early period of learning to cohabit with their dogs as they have co-existed with dogs all of Erik's life and even a little longer, as mentioned previously. Erik and Kjersti simply state how dog keeping is a lifestyle to them. This might be because they are so used to co-habiting with their dogs that they do not recognize how the family have changed from being merely a human family to the changing character of the more-than-human family life. In other words; it might be because they have properly adapted "...their lifestyle and home routines to the presence and activity of the dog(s)" (Power, 2008, p. 549). Nonetheless, they make sense of dog keeping as a lifestyle.

## 6.2 Quality of life

"Quality of life" is about how having a dog can enrich the lives of both the children and youth but also the other family members. This theme is tightly connected to how the dog impacts how the family members feel, as this can say something about what it does to their life quality. Having a dog means, according to the families, that both the children and other family members have better days. By this, I mean that several participants explain that if they had a bad day, it helped knowing that they had a dog waiting for them at home. If they were angry, seeing the dog would also mitigate the feeling of being angry as it was impossible to stay mad when looking at their dog. Thus, joy is permeated throughout all the interviews as connected with the meaning and value of having a dog. What is mentioned is better mood, being happier, not being alone, having a hiking buddy, and company. One of the participants that mentioned company, was Siri. This is what Siri said when I asked her and Marie what it means for them to have a dog:

Siri, mom: No eh, but for me it is the social, I think with that the dog is always home, that you have something to do, you get out on walks, and it is only positive with a dog.

Marie (17): mm

Siri, mom: if you think about that... it can get a little dirty at home and such and some footprints and such but you sort of just have to forget that with time when you have, yeah, friends over, that not everything is tidy all the time.

As Siri, several others also mention having something to do. Cain (1985) states that "Pets serve other purposes in the family such as a means for pleasure, fun, and exercise, as a source of physical security and protection, as a means of teaching children responsibility and a respect for life, and as a catalyst for establishing human contact and interaction" (p. 5). Many of these purposes are in fact mentioned by Siri. Going for walks is moreover visible in most interviews, as well as how social it is with a dog, never having to be alone, and how the dog provides a lot more company than some thought beforehand. Siri even goes as far as saying that it is only positive with a dog. She mentions that it can get a little dirty and footprints, but that you have to forget that. Thus, it seems like despite the dirt and footprints, Siri believes that there are no negative aspects of having a dog. Siri also talked about that it is nice not be alone and it is clear that not being alone is important to her, as she said: "*To me it is just a hiking buddy, a social so, like you're not alone.*" She states that David is *only* a hiking buddy to her, but she still highlights the socialness of having a dog. The way Siri states "so, like you're not alone" makes it sound like having a dog is trivialized and a way of glossing over the loneliness-part, when in fact she talks about David's understanding of feelings and comforting skills earlier (see sub chapter 5.3). Thus, Siri emphasizes how great company David is. This may indicate that having a dog means more to Siri than merely a hiking buddy as he is doing more than being present, such as when he comforts her. However, having someone to go for hikes and walks with to avoid having to go alone is described as central by several participants. The company dogs provide in households are also reiterated so one does not have to be alone there either. It is evident that the company means something to many of the families as so many emphasize it, Erik (17) included: "*it is a lot more fun to go for a hike in the woods with dogs than alone, at least I think so. It gets a little lonely to go by myself I think.*" Erik describes Gudrun as keeping him company on hikes and walks. According to Friedmann and Thomas (1985) having a pet makes the owner less lonely and less likely to be depressed due to it providing company and companionship. This resembles how Erik makes sense of Gudrun through how he describes that hikes are more fun with Gudrun, and that going by himself is lonely. Erik can also be considered Gudrun's owner as it is his dog. By having Gudrun join him, he expresses feeling less lonely, and have more fun. Moreover, Gudrun is in fact actively taking part in shaping these routines of daily walks, as it is a need she has. In Power's study, similarly the participants "emphasize dogs' unique needs, and recounted their efforts to meet these requirements" (Power, 2008, p. 541). Gudrun needs to go for walks, and thus this has become a part of the routines in the family and everyday life of Erik. At the same time, Gudrun is also partaking in meeting Erik's needs for hiking and companionship. This way they both participate in co-constructing meaning and practices as it appears they have a mutual need for going outdoors on a regular basis. Jens also talks about hiking, and ends up humanizing Bull when describing what it means for him to have a dog:

Jens, dad: out on hikes, that it cozy. And for me that is... is spending a little bit of time hunting and hiking, it is in fact very nice. It is after all a good hiking buddy, and a good extra person to accompany you out and about, also on ski trips.

Jens connects Bull to a huge provider of company while Jens gets to enjoy and execute some of his favorite activities. According to Sanders (1999), "Studies show that somewhere between half and three-quarters of pet owners define their companion animals as "persons" or as having "person status"" (p.9). This goes well with how Jens refers to Bull, as he repeatedly talks about Bull in a human-like way. Jens does not correct himself when referring to Bull as "a good extra person". He also utilizes the term "hiking buddy" which again has human connotations to it.

The notion of boredom can be viewed as a common "complaint" among children and youth in Norway. It is not unusual for many Norwegians (of all generations) to constantly be stimulated by something, it being television or the smartphone, which is something the elderly participants in Isaksen et al. (2021) are concerned about. The study explores play from a historical perspective. Through interviews, three generations' memories and sensemakings of their play during childhood are explored, in addition to how they consider children's possibilities of playing today. The participants were in the age groups of 20-30, 50-60 and 70-80. Isaksen et al. (2021) found that the oldest participants in their study believe that they were better at improvising and being creative when they were children due to the lack of finished products and arranged activities being handed to them. They emphasize how they believe the increasing institutionalization where children are given store-bought toys instead of making toys to play with, as well as arranged activities and the digitalization are making contemporary generations less creative and imaginative (Isaksen et al., 2021). The oldest participants also stated that boredom was not a challenge when they were children, and also highlight that the children of today have too much and are activated too much (Isaksen et al., 2021). Nonetheless, a dog in the family may also prevent the family members from ever becoming bored. Most of the families do indeed highlight as a positive means always having something to do, as is visible when we talked about how Bull impacts how Leah, Nora, Jens, and Saga feel:

Jens, dad: I think you ((Nora)) think it is very fun to come home and see how happy he gets to see you.

Nora (9): Yes, it is quite boring when I come home and you ((Jens and Bull)) are out hunting.

Jens, dad: Yes.

Saga, mom: Yes, when he is not around. It was last weekend in fact, then I just sat... like when we eat breakfast he usually sits and looks at us and when we clear the table he stands READY by the trashcan, and... receives, and then eh, there was no one, nothing, boring, huh?

Nora (9): mm.

Saga, mom: we barely even left the house.

As one can see from the excerpt above is how the concept of being bored is mentioned several times. Nora explains how she finds it boring to come home when Bull is not there. Saga agrees and exemplifies this with how they "barely left the house" when he was not there. This not only speaks to the concept of boredom, but also regarding how the family members seem to be depending on Bull in order to leave the house. Power (2008) found that "Dogs also made their 'mark' on routines that pre-existed their presence in the house." (p.547). This is precisely what is visible through Saga's description of Bull sitting next to the trashcan. Before they got Bull, the routine would probably be to just throw the leftovers in the trashcan. Now, it has become a routine in the family that Bull stands ready by the trashcan to receive leftovers, as Saga says that is something he usually does. This is a way Bull is making a mark on the routines in the

everyday life of the family. Saga and Nora also mentioned Bull in connection with having something to do in the walking interview when I asked them what they think the good things about having a dog are:

Nora (9): ehm I think it is good to have a dog because then you have something to do, like eh, when Bull is out hunting we almost have nothing to do since then it is so quiet in the house.

L: mhm.

Saga, mom: he was last weekend, then we simply had too much time.

Nora (9): yes, so it is almost good to have it a bit hectic when you have a dog, then you always have something to do.

It seems like both Saga and Nora enjoy having something to do, and not really appreciating having a lot of free time and quietness. They seem to value the hectic lifestyle constantly filled with content, as is visible when Saga stated that when Bull was away they "simply had too much time", which is quite the contrast to the time crunch mentioned throughout the thesis.

### 6.2.1 Taken for granted?

At the same time, some children believe that it is not that different to have a dog versus not having a dog. This was visible when they were asked about what a normal day looks like for them. Still, this can have something to do with the children being used to having a dog and therefore taking it for granted, or even that they might have forgotten what life was like before they acquired the dog. It could even be that they do not feel like there is much of a difference, but this can also depend on their relationship with the dog as well as other factors, such as how much of a responsibility they have for the dog. When asked about what a normal day looks like, this is what Pelle and Are replied:

L: how does a usual day look like for you and Charlie?

Pelle (5.5): e:h, quite alright.

L: mm.

Are (11): it is not really that much difference really.

And then when I asked if there were anything else they wanted to add, Jørn (17) said: *"no, I don't know, well he is just home like when you get home then. Then you have to walk him, or then () like."* Thus, Pelle, Are and Jørn talk about it as something casual, almost taken-for-granted, whereas in other parts of the interview it is evident that it means more for at least Are to have a dog than is visible in the extract. For example, Are (11) started talking about how Charlie influences the family members when we talked about whether anything would have been different without a dog: *"He has such a good experience on us, every time we walk towards him, or when he just is there at home, he kind of makes everyone cheerful."* Thus, even if Are said that it was not as different having a dog in the daily life, he later talks about Charlie in a way that indicates that the daily life is in fact different when having Charlie around. As Are describes in the extract, Charlie has a good influence on the family members just by being present. Are explains how Charlie enhances the others mood and just makes everyone cheerful. In general, when the participants were asked about what it means for the families to have a dog, most families mention having someone that is always happy to see them, and it seems like that means a lot for them. However, it is not only Are that seems ambivalent about

the meaning and value of having a dog. Leah does not seem to find it important, as she says this when asked about what it means for her and Nora to have a dog:

L: Can you describe a little for me what it means for you to have a dog, for example if you find it important (.), or what you are thinking?

Leah (6): we don't think it is important, but eh we think it is cozy to have a dog.

Nora (9): we think it is important to have a dog Leah.

Leah (6): no, not important! We just like to go for walks with them.

Nora (9): and then we like to play with him.

Leah describes that it is not important having a dog, but that it is cozy to have a dog, whereas Nora clearly states that she does find it important to have a dog. Leah tries to speak on behalf of them both by repeatedly saying "we think" or "we don't think" and states that it is not important, followed by Nora trying to do the same except stating the opposite. Nora does not bother to argue about it, so she just adds what else "we" like to do with him, which is playing with him. Thus, the extract is an example of an exception from the permeating view that having a dog is important and meaningful as Leah makes sense of dog keeping as not important. However, Leah does add some value and meaning to having a dog when saying that "it is cozy to have a dog", and that going for walks with Bull is something they enjoy according to Leah. Nonetheless, Leah does find it important to take care of Bull, as is evident after Nora states the importance of caring for Bull (see p.56-57 for Nora's quote):

(.)

Leah (6): important to take CARE of dogs yes! Or else THEY'LL DIEE!

L: yes.

Leah (6): if you don't feed them they will get all thin, like a pancake!

Leah demonstrates her understanding of having to feed one's dog in order for it to survive and not become "as thin as a pancake". Thus, Leah makes sense of having a dog as not important, at the same as stating the importance of taking care of dogs. Consequently, it seems like Leah is saying that if you have a dog, you have to take care of it. Leah thus clearly illustrates what she values as important and not important regarding dogs and dog keeping.

### 6.2.2 Unconditional love, company and joy

Another sub-topic highlighted by many participants is spanning unconditional love, company, and joy- feelings many participants connect to their dogs. As Sigurd (8) explains, having a dog means to him having someone to hang out with: "*and then, when you HAVE a dog and it is only the person and the dog, then you have someone to BE with.*" Sigurd points out the company aspect of having a dog, having someone to spend time with and not having to be by oneself, in similar ways to Erik. This is not so unusual, as one of the biggest reason for having a dog is due to the company it provides (Lund et al., 2009), as mentioned earlier. Not only this, but companionship is described as one of the most advantageous parts of the unique dog-human relationship (Sanders, 1999). Sigurd mentions not being alone again in the family interview with his mom, Hilde, when I asked what it means for them to have a dog:

Sigurd (8): a lot, it means a lot to me, because then I am not alone.

Hilde, mom: mm, having someone that is always happy when you arrive.

[...]

Hilde, mom: well, it is this... unconditional eh... feelings you get from a dog, they are... in relation to the pack aspect/mentality. I have, I want a cat but I don't want a cat because they are too independent.

[...]

Hilde, mom: I think we are leaning more towards a dog because, they, it is, like, a little mutual. A cat I have the feeling of only accepts that you feed them and then they can manage on their own other than that. The pro's weighs heavier than the con's.

Sigurd mentions not being alone and how that means a lot to him. This implies that having someone keeping him company is very important to Sigurd and some of the value and meaning of having a dog to him. Hilde also mentions the unconditional feelings, similarly to Siri, and she talks about the mutual aspect of having a dog and how dogs have a more similar mentality to humans than cats do for example. Companionship during childhood is pointed out as particularly important in Cain (1985), which is reflected in what Sigurd says about not being alone. Sanders (1999) states that "The animal is seen as nonjudgmental, accepting, and genuine, requiring nothing from the relationship other than the affectionate reciprocation of attention" (p.10). This might be what Hilde is talking about when speaking of the mutual and unconditional feelings of her relationship with Batman. She explains how Batman has more of a pack mentality, thus emphasizing this affectionate reciprocation of attention necessary to thrive. Batman is more interdependent than a cat, Hilde exemplifies. Hilde seems to be appreciating the mutuality with dogs more than independence from cats, as she makes an interpretation that cats "can manage on their own" besides from being fed and that they therefore lean more towards a dog.

Unconditional love was also emphasized when I asked in the interviews how the dog impacts how the family members feel. The question made most families really stop and reflect. Several families first reacted to this question with a wondering laugh whilst looking very pensive, as one can get a glimpse of in the extract below that starts with a long pause after I asked the question:

L: Can you describe how the dog influences, or the dogs influence, how you feel?

(.)

Kjersti, mom: I know how they influence me ((laughs a bit)). If I have had a really rough day at work, especially if I have had a rough day at work and had many tough cases, and then I come home and there is this unconditional love and joy, then the day simply gets better.

Erik (17): same with me if I have had a bad day or, or is sick of everything, then, then I always have someone who loves me, among other things. That I always welcome, always welcomes me.

L. mhm. That sounds very nice ((laughs a little))

Kjersti, mom: Yes, that love you receive.

L: yes.

Kjersti, mom: because that joy, right. Because they are so happy to see you.

The essence of this extract is what is commonly stated in most of the families. It is about the unconditional love they feel like their dog has for them, and how the dog makes their day better. It is about knowing that their dog loves them and always welcomes them with open arms almost regardless of their mood. As Cain (1985) states, having a pet "is



associated with personal happiness, comfort, and the development of positive interpersonal qualities" (in Loyer-Carlson, 1992, p. 948). These are central aspects in how Erik and Kjersti makes sense of the value of having a dog. Another example that shows similar associations to what Erik and Kjersti described is the following with Sofie and her mom, Karen:

L: mm (.) and then it is the final question; if you can describe how Molly influences how you feel?

Karen, mom: well, she eases the atmosphere a bit, I feel. You are a little happier when you are around Molly.

Sofie (8): Yes.

Karen, mom: And I am too I'd say. No matter if you are sort of stressed, or have a lot to do, or are a little mad or have had a bad day then it is not possible, like, to stay mad when she comes jumping towards you when you get home. Then it passes quite quickly.

Again, being happier is highlighted, regardless of how the day has been it improves once Karen and Sofie see their dog, Molly. Karen explains how her mood, Sofie's mood and the atmosphere at home is better when Molly is around, and Sofie agrees with her, again showing a part of their intergenerational interaction. An abundance of research also show just this, how having an animal companionship "... is good for people physically, mentally, emotionally and otherwise (Irvine, 2004), and this goes well with how Sofie and Karen make sense of the phenomenon of having a dog as well. Saga makes sense of having a dog in a slightly different way. When I asked Saga and her family how Bull influences how the family members feel, Saga started talking about challenges and care:

Saga, mom: actually... you do start caring about them an awful lot, that is what it is like with dogs really, but eh, even if they can be challenging sometimes I think, you always end up thinking that "no it was completely right to buy oneself a dog". Yes.

Saga presents how it can be challenging to have a dog sometimes, but that you do start caring about it so much and how she feels like it was the right decision to acquire a dog. Despite having challenges with the dog, the bottom line is that it is viewed as worth it. This goes well with what Irvine (2004) has found to be the case, namely that it is difficult to live without the relationship of one's companion animal (dog) once one is used to it, as is evident in Saga's situation as well. Her daughter, Nora (9), emphasizes Bull's role in the family and how he contributes to laughter: "*It is that we have a spreader of joy that walks around all the time. And that, ehm, he does make people laugh.*" Nora talks about Bull as a spreader of joy, making people laugh. She thus connects Bull to something joyful and fun. What is interesting is that Nora is not the only one describing their dog as a spreader of joy, Marie also does this, as do Karen, albeit a bit more indirectly: "*Well, it creates a lot of laughter. And a good vibe.*" Karen does not use the words spreader of joy, but she does say that the dog creates a lot of laughter, implying that the dog is the source of laughter, therein indirectly being a spreader of joy. All of the families are drawing a connection between their dog and something joyful, happy and/or filled with laughter. Irvine states that "Animals can be therapeutic in numerous ways, even when their role is not explicitly so" (2004, p. 22). It is clear that according to the six families I have talked to, having a dog is connected with a happier atmosphere and a positive effect on their mood. Even if the dog is not next to them, some of them describe how just knowing that there is a dog waiting for them at home enhances their day. However, having a dog also involves a fair amount of frustration, as one can see in Jens's description of how Bull influences how he feels:

Jens, dad: yes I think that influences a lot then, eh I think for me first and foremost that you do get very happy when you see him, eh and at the same time you can get quite mad when he doesn't behave, or yes, if he doesn't listen, yes, does things that he isn't supposed to do, but it is a great joy too... ehm... I do see that the kids have developed call it more empathy. That they, take and show care and care about... him in a whole different way, ehm... so in that way it does mean quite a lot. It influences the mood.

Jens is talking about how Bull makes him feel. What one can draw from the statement is among other things, that just by being present Bull influences how the others around him feel. One can see how Bull has become a part of the everyday life and routines of the family when Jens describes Bull doing things he is not "supposed to do". That implies rules, and a certain way of behaving as usual. That, as well as Jens talking about when Bull is not behaving or listening, brings to light "the unique character and agency of dogs, which shaped the ways that family was done in the everyday" (Power, 2008, p. 552). When Bull decides not to listen, he demonstrates his agency. Even though Bull brings Jens a lot of frustration, he also brings so much joy that Jens's mood is influenced in a positive direction. Jens also connects development of empathy in the kids due to having a dog, in similar ways to what Kjersti described earlier. Saga adds to what Jens said and shares how she thinks Bull influences how she feels:

Saga, mom: yes it is a little like weird to think about really because he... influences on a whole different... he gives a whole different feeling than what the kids do. He sort of gives a love where you think that he, "oh, he loves me, either way", while they can after all tell you straight up that they don't right it is a... bigger responsibility with them, I mean a more like collected feeling while with him it's more like that he... I know that he thinks that I am fantastic either way so he gives me like a... different type of happiness really, he does. And it is probably like that with animals in general then that you feel responsibility but maybe not as much concern for him, only that he is mostly connected with joy and not so much with... other things.

Saga is describing how Bull provides a different feeling than her children, strengthening how dogs can be seen from a sociomaterial or agentic perspective as they influence the other family members. This is in thread with Power's study, that found that "...the individual agency of dogs was recognised as shaping family and home" (Power, 2008, p. 535). Most family bonds were strengthened after bringing a dog into the family (Power, 2008). Saga is describing an unconditional love she feels from Bull, that regardless of what she does or says, he loves her. Saga is connecting Bull with a feeling of joy when she says that "he is mostly connected with joy". She also connects him with happiness, and love and describes the unconditional love she feels from Bull when stating that she knows that he thinks she is "fantastic either way" and that "he loves me either way". The dog accepts them as they are, and dogs are there every day no matter how the family members feel, as is also described in Irvine (2004). Gunvor describes this similarly to how Saga does, as is visible when we talked about how Charlie influences how the family members feel:

Gunvor, mom: he is after all the one who does not, sort of... (.). yes there is just something... sort of about you, you don't have to explain anything... to him. He is very content just by being there with you, right, so that it is, like he doesn't give stupid advice.

Companion animals "...have an innate and highly therapeutic ability to accept us as we are" (Irvine, 2004, p. 22). The extract above gives a great insight into how casual and not demanding Gunvor and Charlie's relation is, and how Gunvor makes sense of it. Again, sensemakings regarding the dog are made, this time by Gunvor. She makes sense of Charlie as content just by being present, and how he does not make stupid comments. She can be how she is and that is completely fine by Charlie, to just be. Once again, this

feeling of unconditional love is thus connected to a dog, when Gunvor says that “you don’t have to explain anything”.

### 6.3 Summary

This chapter has been about dog keeping as an essential childhood experience. Several families believe that every child should grow up with a dog. Responsibility was mentioned and how taking responsibility for a dog can be positive, as well as the dog functioning as a binding agent in the family. Another highlighted aspect is empathy. Several participants connected dog keeping to an increase in empathy within the family members.

Nonetheless, what is most prominent during all of the interviews is joy. The family members talk about how they connect an improvement of mood because of the dog, that the dog makes them feel happy and how it does something with the “vibe” in the family and therein with the family members quality of life. Several families also talk about their dog as a spreader of joy. Besides from happiness, love is a concept frequently reiterated during the interviews, and many of the families bring to light not only love, but *unconditional* love that they describe receiving from their dogs. Moreover, it means a lot for all the families to have a dog, not least because they have someone that is always happy to see them as well as providing company not only in the home but on hikes/walks as well. Even if not all the children find it important to have a dog, they do state that it is cozy to have one. Many of the families also emphasize how it can be challenging from time to time, and that they too can get tired of it. Despite this, they still end up saying that what they get in return from their dog makes it worth it.

## 7 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has aimed to investigate how children and families make sense of having a dog, through exploring three research questions; 1. *How do Norwegian children and parents describe the meaning and value of having a dog?* 2. *What role does the dog have in the family structure and everyday life of the family?* And 3. *How is the phenomenon of having dogs during childhoods constructed within families in a Norwegian context?* The findings of these investigations will be summarized shortly. However, all of the research questions are tightly connected. Therefore, all of the research questions are to some extent answered simultaneously as they are so interconnected. At the same time, answering question 1 is necessary to be able to answer the other two questions since this comprises the meaning of having a dog, which can be viewed as the basis of all of the questions. Therefore, the findings from the first research question will be summarized first, followed by the findings from the second research question and lastly the findings from the third research question. The methods utilized are walking interviews and family interviews. The interviews have allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of what it means for the different family members to have a dog, as well as some of the ways in which having a dog impacts them. The interviews and findings from both the walking- and the family interviews have been analyzed and presented interchangeably in the analysis chapters, as they also will be here. The theoretical lens utilized comprises social constructionism, sociomateriality, and intergenerationality in which relationality is a central aspect that runs through all three perspectives. The last parts of the current chapter address strengths and limitations of this project as well as suggestions for further research.

### 7.1 The findings summarized

In the following section the findings from the three research questions are summarized as well as how I have aimed at answering them. The walking- and -family interviews are of importance for answering all three research questions. I strive to show the reader how my research questions and findings are connected to theory and what I have contributed with and achieved by doing this project. Lastly, I delve into why the findings and project are valuable and what I have gained and learned from doing this project.

#### 7.1.1 Meaning and value of having a dog

Firstly, the thesis has explored: *How do Norwegian children and parents describe the meaning and value of having a dog?* Even though there are varieties in what meaning, and value children and their parents add to dog keeping, it is clear that it does have some meaning. Most of the families seem to view dog keeping as very meaningful, either in the shape of providing company, unconditional love, comforting or joy, or all of the above. Acquiring dogs for company reasons are increasing as well, as opposed to utilizing dogs for a purpose such as hunting, which was more common before (Lund et al., 2009). My study can therefore contribute to childhood studies as a field by, among others, the changing interpretations of what family is and can be, as most participants viewed their dog as a family member. Nonetheless, I have explored meaning attached to dog keeping, and therein provided insight into what such meaning entails in a small number of families in Trøndelag. An interesting and possibly helpful concept dropped during the conducting of data, was the dog as a *binding agent*. The dog as a binding agent can be useful in

childhood studies as it can reveal the importance of a dog in family relations, binding the family members together. Perhaps having a dog can create a more cohesive family. The binding dog agent therefore seems to have quite a relevance in children's and parents' lives, or in other words, in the everyday lives of families. That is why it is fruitful in the field of childhood studies, as it provides more insight into among others, children's everyday life in a small Norwegian context.

### 7.1.2 The dog's role in family structure and everyday life

This project has secondly investigated: *What role does the dog have in the family structure and everyday life of the family?* The analysis begins with scrutinizing the family concept and what family is and can be. One of the findings here is the evidence of viewing dogs as family members, as most families in the project do. What was emphasized by several participants when considering their dog family, was living together as well as doing activities together. An interesting aspect is that what made the dogs part of the family were the same criteria as what made humans considered family (Tipper, 2011). These criteria are related to cohabitation as well as the duration of the relationship (Power, 2008). When viewing dogs as family members, some even compared it to a sibling-relationship, a child-parent-relationship, or a combination of the two. Intergenerational perspectives are of relevance here as I explored the parents' views on their children's relationships with their dog first, followed by the children's views on their relationships with their dog(s). This way I investigated whether the family members made sense of the relationships in similar ways, therein also delving into a relational aspect. I also asked the children this when conducting the walking interview to see if they described it differently when their parents were not present. Simultaneously, social constructionism is present through the exploration of the families' sensemakings of having a dog. Social constructionism is also evident through the questioning of the family concept, as this may speak to changing constructions about animals in a wider context.

The non-human agency of dogs, and therein sociomateriality, moreover became present as the dogs were considered partaking and active actors in the families. Hence, the view on dogs have been promoted as "not just a dog", but rather as important actors in the family. The ones who did not refer to their dog as a family member viewed their dog as a friend. Others explained that their dogs meant more than friends and provided them with a family feeling and that the dogs were part of their inner circle. It is clear that based on the participants' statements, dogs can be ingrained into the family concept. The findings thus indicate that the concept of what family is, might be changing to be more inclusive of animals and perhaps dogs in particular. This changing view on dogs was also prominent in Power (2008), which was one of the key studies I drew inspiration from in this thesis. The family concept can thus be viewed as more fluid than before, with an increasing openness to more-than-human families.

The dogs in the different families are "doing" something to the family dynamic, as with their "dogginess" (Power, 2008), this being their characteristics and preferences, they are contributing in valuable ways within the family as non-human actors. The thesis has advocated for dogs as social non-human actors with agency, who impact on relationships in the family and co-produce practices and meanings in everyday life. This has been visible through the different participants' views on weighting the dogs as relational and emotional beings, capable of feeling as well as understanding and relating to humans' feelings. Sociomateriality was fruitful to make use of in this part of the thesis where I explored how meaning was co-constructed between different family members and their dog(s). It seems like the participants appreciate the "being" of the dog, that they have a

dog that is just doing “doghood”. Some of the ways in which the dogs partake in shaping everyday practices and routines have also been scrutinized, where some dogs are part of cleaning up after breakfast, whilst others decide whether to go for walks or not.

I explored what the families thought about their dog’s ability to understand the family members’ feelings. All of the families were certain that their dog was able to do so, and vice versa. Additionally, the family members explained the ways in which their dog for example comforted them when they were sad. The dogs were seen as unique and as “part of the pack”, creating this duality of talking about the dog in human terms and the humans in dog terms by being part of a pack. These ways of referring to one’s dog were also present in Power’s study. The concept of empathy was frequently brought to light, both in connection to dogs but also regarding sensemakings about children developing more empathy when having a dog. I have delved into the families’ interpretations of the phenomenon of dog keeping, thereby frequently utilizing social constructionism. A big part of this thesis delves into the families’ sensemakings about having a dog, and I have clarified that this is context-and-time-dependent. I have also tried to zoom out to grasp how my findings can be applicable to wider contexts and reveal some aspects about social constructs of dog keeping in Norway in general. This is visible partly by the increasing use of and normality regarding dog day care, which holds many similarities to kindergartens.

### 7.1.3 Sensemakings about dogs during childhoods

Thirdly, this study has delved into: *How is the phenomenon of having dogs during childhoods constructed within families in a Norwegian context?* This has revolved around life quality and how having a dog can enrich the lives of both children and other family members. The families have expressed feeling less lonely when having a dog, and what great company there is in their dog. The dog has been connected to responsibility and empathy, as well as joy and unconditional love. Nonetheless, not all participants seemed to find it as important to have a dog. Some participants expressed having a dog as “quite alright” and “not that much difference”, seemingly taking it for granted, whereas one of those later on described what great impact their dog has on the participant and its family members. Some of the statements are therefore somewhat contradictory. There was also one participant directly stating that she does not find it important to have a dog but does think that it is cozy. Thus, there are some varieties in how the participants make sense of dog keeping and also what meaning they add to it. Nonetheless, the most common opinion was that having a dog had great meaning and value.

Some families describe having a dog as an essential childhood experience. Several of the families go as far as stating that it should be every child’s right to have a dog, and that every household, especially with children, should have a dog. They moreover describe how having a dog is very central and positive during childhood through for example taking responsibility as well as developing more empathy.

## 7.2 Strengths and limitations

A strength of this project is the concept of the dog as a binding agent. The concept can prove to be useful when understanding contemporary constructions of dogs’ roles in families when exploring the dog’s role in the family. It can be useful when investigating which relations the dog bind together and whether it spans all of the family members and if it entails the dog itself too. It can be fruitful to explore if the dog is binding itself into the family or helping with the relations between the other family members, or even if it

binds some family members together and whether that leads to separating other family members.

I utilized two different interview methods when conducting research. I believe this helped with gaining a clearer perspective on the children's view separated from the parents. In addition to this I also received the children's perspectives in combination with the parents' views. This way I experienced children's, parents', and family perspectives, which I think was helpful to shed light on the phenomenon of dog keeping from different angles. Still, using more methods and meeting the families several times could have strengthened the thesis further, as I only used interviews as methods and only met the families once or twice. However, the families were short on time, and I therefore had to make the most of the little time they had available and adjust the methods accordingly.

A possible limitation is the narrow and homogenous sample of my study, as all of the participants seemed to be in similar socioeconomic situations. The sizes of the families did differ, but they were all native Norwegians, which means that this project have provided merely a glimpse of a very small distinct context. All of the families were also located through groups for people considering dogs and dog keeping as splendid and wonderful. The findings may therefore be colored by the sample's positive view on dog keeping. Nonetheless, it is still valuable research for giving insight into dog keeping and the meaning of that in a particular context. It might also prove to be useful in comparison to bigger similar studies, to see if resembling findings are also present in other contexts besides the ones already mentioned in this thesis.

I have contributed with knowledge regarding children's and their families' everyday life when exploring the meaning of having a dog. As mentioned previously, several scholars (Morrow, 1998; Tipper, 2011) have stated that often when children have been asked about who matters to them, they have mentioned pets, and how there is a need to investigate this further. After children mention pets, this has rarely have been explored further. That is why I decided to dedicate a whole project to the meaning of having a dog from among others, children's perspective, as it clearly has meaning and therefore is important to investigate.

### 7.3 Suggestions for further research

What could be of relevance for future research is utilizing other different perspectives when scrutinizing the abovementioned phenomenon to shed light on the meaning of having a dog in other ways than I have managed to do. Combining more methods and other methods could also be of interest, as I believe for example photographs could be a great asset when talking about one's dog. This could also apply for drawings if the children enjoy that. Photographs and/or drawings could then be used as a tool when talking about one's dog. Combining more methods might therefore be a good way to explore the topic even further as it can lead to a richer material and more coverage of the phenomenon by exploring it from more different angles.

Exploring sibling's relationships with dogs could also have provided interesting insight into their relationships with their dog(s), or into how they create meaning towards dog keeping. It could be interesting to scrutinize the character of the relationship between the different siblings as well, to see if they differ. One could even utilize the concept of the dog as a binding agent to explore if that also applies to sibling relationships, and thus if the relationships between siblings are strengthened by having a dog.

Future research could also aim for a bigger sample to gain more nuances and a more representable picture of a given context than I had resources for and managed to do. What could also be useful is to conduct a more longitudinal research on having a dog where one could follow several families for an extended amount of time, to observe part of the meaning of having a dog in general and/or whilst growing up in a given context.

Moreover, future research could focus on a more heterogenous sample. This could give greater insight into varieties of dog keeping and how the phenomenon of having a dog is made sense of by heterogenous groups of people. With heterogenous I also refer to people with dogs that are not in groups as described in the sub-chapter above, and who may have had negative experiences with dog keeping in general and during childhood. Dog keeping is commonly romanticized, similar to childhoods, and it may not always be as easy to talk about and share negative and difficult aspects of dog keeping. Exploring that could provide more nuances and differences in people's views about the phenomenon, bringing to light how different groups of people view dog keeping in varied ways. By doing that, the field of childhood studies could gain access to a richer material about this phenomenon that is so important in many children's and their families' everyday lives.



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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Confirmation from NSD

[Meldeskjema](#) / [Children and dogs: A relational, intergenerational and social constructi...](#) / Vurdering

# Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

<b>Referansenummer</b> 934676	<b>Vurderingstype</b> Standard	<b>Dato</b> 11.08.2022
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**Prosjekttittel**

Children and dogs: A relational, intergenerational and social constructionist perspective on the meaning of having a dog while growing up in a Norwegian context

**Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for pedagogikk og livslang læring

**Prosjektansvarlig**

Linn C. Lorgen

**Student**

Lovisa Sofia Berg

**Prosjektperiode**

08.08.2022 - 23.06.2023

**Kategorier personopplysninger**

Alminnelige

**Lovlig grunnlag**

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 23.06.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

**Kommentar**

Personverntjenester har vurdert endringen registrert i meldeskjemaet.

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg. Behandlingen kan fortsette.

**LOVLIG GRUNNLAG UTVALG 1**

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte/foresatte til behandlingen av personopplysninger om seg selv/barna. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte/foresatte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være de registrerte/foresattes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

**DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER**

Personverntjenester vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte og deres foresatte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert/foresatt tar kontakt om sine/barnets rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

**OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET**

Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

<https://meldeskjema.sikt.no/62a9917e-7cc7-43d3-b6d5-51aa85d744c6/vurdering>

1/2

3/31/23, 2:21 PM

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger

Kontaktperson: Markus Celiussen  
Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

**Appendix 2:** Facebook post nr. 1

The first post (translated) looked like this:

*Hello!*

*I am a master student in Childhood Studies at NTNU under the faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning. My Master thesis is a project about children and parents' perspectives on growing up with a dog. Therefore, I am now looking for families wishing to participate in the research project. Please contact me through a private message if you or anyone you know is interested in participating or wants more information. The reason for why I have chosen precisely this theme is because I want to understand how it is experienced for both children and parents to have a dog while growing up, and what meaning it has. Start-up is planned this autumn.*

### **Appendix 3:** Facebook post nr. 2

The second post (translated) looked like this:

*Hello!*

*I am a master student in Childhood Studies at NTNU under the faculty of Education and lifelong learning. A while back I published a post about a research project I am doing that comprises children and parents' perspectives on the meaning of having a dog during the upbringing in a Norwegian context. The project entails having a walking interview with the child(ren) between 8-17 years of age and their dog(s), as well as a family interview with those in the family who wants to join this. Both of the interviews can be done on the same day, and will in total last for approximately 1-1,5 hour. I have chosen such a project because I want to understand how it is experienced for both children and parents to have a dog while growing up, and what meaning it has. It is completely voluntary to join, but I still need at least one family, and hope that someone finds it interesting and wishes to participate. I am flexible regarding time to meet and am willing to go that extra mile to be able to meet when it suits they who eventually would like to participate. Please contact me through private message if you or anyone you know are interested in the project or wants more information about it. Thank you very much in advance 😊*

**Appendix 4:** Interview guide walking interview in Norwegian

**Intervjuguide**

**Kan du fortelle litt om hunden din?**

**Hvem kom opp med navnet på hunden?**

**Hvordan kom dere på navnet til hunden?**

**Hvem bor i huset?**

**Beskriv for meg hva det betyr å ha en hund.**

**Hva er det som er bra/ikke bra med å ha en hund?**

**Tror du det gjør en forskjell for folk som har en hund når de vokser opp?**

**Kan du fortelle meg om et godt minne du har med hunden din?**

**Hva var det som gjorde det minnet så bra?**

**Tror du at noe hadde vært annerledes uten hund?**

**Tror du at du hadde vært annerledes uten hund? På hvilken måte?**

**Hvordan er livet med hund?**

**Kan du beskrive relasjonen mellom deg og hunden?**

**Appendix 5:** Interview guide walking interview in English

**Interview guide**

**Can you tell me a bit about your dog?**

**Who made up the name for the dog?**

**How did you come to think about the name for the dog?**

**Who lives in the house?**

**Describe to me what it means to have a dog.**

**What is good/not good about having a dog?**

**Do you think it makes a difference for people who have a dog when growing up?**

**Can you tell me about a good memory you have with your dog?**

**What was it that made that memory so good?**

**Do you think something would be different without a dog?**

**Do you think you had been different without a dog? In what way?**

**How is life with a dog?**

**Can you describe the relation between you and your dog?**

**Appendix 6:** Interview guide family interview in Norwegian

**Intervjuguide familieintervju**

**Hvordan ser en vanlig dag ut for dere og hunden?**

**Hvordan er ansvarsfordelingen, hvem har hvilke oppgaver med hunden?**

**Hvordan vil dere beskrive hunden?**

**Hva tenker dere om hundens evner til å forstå deres følelser, skjønner den hvis noe er galt for eksempel?**

**Hva gjør den da?**

**Hjelper hunden til med noe i huset, enten i form av husoppgaver eller gjennom relasjonene?**

**Hva er hunden sin rolle i hjemmet? (f.eks. bestemmer den mye?)**

**Hvordan vil dere (foreldrene) beskrive forholdet mellom barnet(a) og hunden(e) ?**

**Hvordan vil dere (barnet/barna) beskrive forholdet deres til hunden(e) deres?**

**Hva var det som gjorde at dere bestemte dere for å skaffe en hund?**

**Hva betyr det for dere å ha en hund?**

**Kan dere beskrive hvordan hunden påvirker hvordan dere føler dere?**



**Appendix 7:** Interview guide family interview in English

**Interview guide family interview**

**What does a normal day look like for you and the dog?**

**How is the division of responsibility, who have what tasks with the dog?**

**How would you describe the dog?**

**What do you think about the dog's ability to understand your feelings, does it get if something is not right for example?**

**What does it do then?**

**Does the dog help with anything in the house, either in the shape of house chores or through the relations?**

**What is the dog's role in the home? (for example if it decides a lot)**

**How would you (the parents) describe the relationship between the child(ren) and their dog(s)?**

**How would you (the child(ren)) describe your relationship with your dog(s)?**

**What made you decide to get a dog?**

**What does it mean for you to have a dog?**

**Can you describe how the dog influence how you feel?**

## **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet**

### **«Barn og hunder: Hva betyr det å ha en hund mens man vokser opp?»?**

Hei! Har du lyst å være med i et forskningsprosjekt? Jeg ønsker å finne ut av hva det betyr for barn å ha en hund mens de vokser opp i Norge, og hvilken rolle hunden har i familien.

#### **Formål**

I dette prosjektet vil jeg finne ut av hva det betyr for barn å ha en hund mens de vokser opp i Norge, og også hva foreldrene tror at dette betyr for barna. Jeg ønsker også å se på hvilken rolle hunden har i familien og i hverdagslivet til familien deres. Jeg har lyst å snakke med minst 5 familier som har barn og hund. Jeg håper du vil være med!

Jeg vil for eksempel stille deg spørsmål som:

- Kan du fortelle litt om hunden din?

- Hvordan er livet med hund?

Hvis du har lyst å være med, vil jeg gjerne også snakke med foreldrene dine samtidig som at du er med, i noe som kalles et familieintervju.

Dette prosjektet er et forskningsprosjekt fra Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet (NTNU).

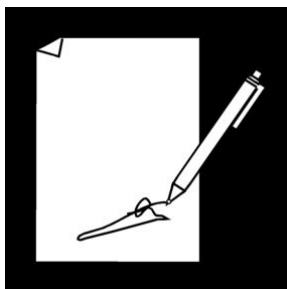
#### **Hvem leder forskningsprosjektet?**

Det er jeg, som er student og heter Lovisa.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Jeg spør deg om å være med, fordi du er et barn/ungdom mellom 6 og 17 år, bor i Norge og du har en hund.

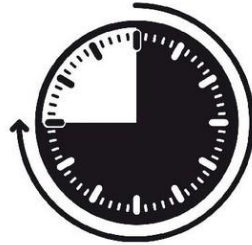
Hvis du har lyst å være med i forskningsprosjektet, må du skrive under på siste ark i dette brevet, og da vil jeg ta kontakt med deg.



#### **Hva betyr det for deg å delta?**

- Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, vil jeg gjerne at du deltar på en eller flere nabolagsturer. Da går vi på tur med hunden og blir litt kjent. Jeg vil gjerne ta lydopptak mens vi går på tur, for å huske hva du har sagt til meg når jeg skriver om prosjektet.

- Hvis du har lyst å delta i forskningsprosjektet, vil jeg ha et intervju med deg. Et intervju er en samtale der jeg stiller deg forskjellige spørsmål. Spørsmålene vil handle om hund, ditt forhold til hunden og hva det betyr for deg å ha en hund. Jeg vil gjerne ta lydopptak av intervjuet hvis det er greit for deg. Intervjuet vil ta ca. 30 minutter.



- Hvis du vil være med i prosjektet, vil jeg også gjerne at du er med på et familieintervju. Der kommer dere som familie kommer til å få spørsmål om tanker rundt det å ha en hund og hva det betyr for dere. Opplysningene blir registrert gjennom lydopptak hvis det er greit for dere.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det betyr at du kan velge selv om du har lyst å være med eller ikke. Ingen andre kan velge dette for deg. Det er bare du som kan samtykke. Samtykke betyr at du sier at du synes noe er greit.



Hvis du vil delta, kan du likevel når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Det betyr at det er lov å ombestemme seg, og det er helt i orden. All informasjon om deg vil da bli slettet.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan jeg oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

- Jeg vil bare bruke informasjonen om deg til å finne ut hva det betyr for deg å ha en hund mens du vokser opp.
- Jeg vil ikke dele din informasjon med andre. Det er bare jeg (Lovisa) som har tilgang til informasjonen.
- Jeg passer på at ingen kan få tak i informasjonen som jeg samler inn om deg.
- Jeg lagrer all informasjon på en sikker datamaskin.
- Jeg sletter lydopptak fra intervjuet når jeg har skrevet ned alt som vi har snakket om.
- Jeg passer på at ingen kan kjenne deg igjen i masteroppgaven. Jeg vil for eksempel finne opp et annet navn når jeg skriver om deg.
- Jeg følger loven om personvern.

### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når jeg avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Jeg er ferdig med forskningsprosjektet 23.06.23. Da vil jeg passe på at all informasjon om deg er slettet.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Hvis det kommer frem opplysninger om deg i det som jeg skriver, eller har i dokumentene mine, har du rett til å få se hvilken informasjon om deg som jeg samler inn. Du kan også be om at informasjonen slettes slik at den ikke finnes lenger. Dersom det er noen opplysninger som er feil kan du si ifra og be meg rette dem. Du kan også spørre om å få en kopi av informasjonen av meg. Du kan også klage til Datatilsynet dersom du synes at jeg har behandlet opplysningene om deg på en uforsiktig måte eller på en måte som ikke er riktig.

Hvis du har noen spørsmål, eller ønsker å vite mer om noe, er det bare å kontakte meg på mail: ..... eller telefon:.....

Med vennlig hilsen  
Lovisa Sofia Berg  
(Student)

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### **Samtykkeerklæring barn**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Barn og hunder; hva betyr det å ha en hund gjennom oppveksten i en norsk kontekst*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta på nabolagsturer
- å delta på individuelt intervju
- å delta i familieintervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

---

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

### **Samtykkeerklæring foreldre**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Barn og hunder; hva betyr det å ha en hund gjennom oppveksten i en norsk kontekst*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til at mitt barn kan:

- delta på nabolagsturer
- delta på individuelt intervju
- delta i familieintervju

Jeg samtykker til at mitt barns opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

---

(Signert av forelder, dato)

## **Do you want to participate in the research project «Children and dogs: what does it mean to have a dog while growing up?»?**

Hello! Do you want to participate in a research project? I want to find out what it means for children to have a dog while growing up in Norway, and what role the dog has in the family.

### **Purpose**

In this project I want to find out what it means for children to have a dog while they grow up in Norway, and also what the parents think this means for the children. I also want to look at what role the dog has in the family and in the everyday life of your family. I would like to talk to at least 5 families with children and a dog. I hope you want to join!

I will for example ask you questions like:

- *Can you tell me a bit about your dog?*
- *How is life with a dog?*

If you want to participate, I would also like to talk to your parents and you at the same time, in what is called a family interview.

This project is a research project from Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

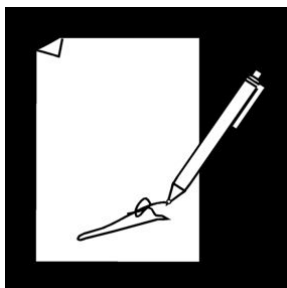
### **Who leads the research project?**

That is me, who is a student and named Lovisa.

### **Why do you get questions about participating?**

I ask you to participate, because you are a child/youth between 6 and 17 years old, live in Norway and you have a dog.

If you want to join the research project, you have to sign the last page of this letter, and then I will contact you.

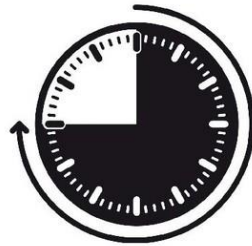


### **What does it mean for you to participate?**

- *If you choose to participate in the project, i would like you to participate in one or more neighbourhood walks. Then we will walk your dog and get to know each*

*other a little. I would like to tape record while we are walking, to remember what you have told me when I write about the project.*

- If you want to participate in the research project, I want to have an interview with you. An interview is a conversation where I ask you different questions. The questions will be about dogs, your relationship to the dog and what it means for you to have a dog. I would like to tape record the interview if that is okay by you. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.



- If you want to participate in the project, I would also like for you to join a *family interview*. There you as a family will get questions about thoughts about having a dog and what it means to you. The information will be registered through a tape recording if that is okay by you.

### **Participating is voluntary**

It is voluntary to participate in the project. That means that you can choose if you want to participate or not. No one else can choose this for you. It is only you who can consent. Consent means that you are saying that you think something is alright.



If you want to participate, you can still at any time withdraw your consent without giving any reason. That means that it is allowed to change your mind, and that is completely fine. All the information about you will then be deleted.

### **Your privacy – how I store and process your data**

- I will only use data about you to find out what it means for you to have a dog while growing up.
- I will not share your data with others. It is only I (Lovisa) who will have access to the data.
- I make sure no one can get hold of data about you that I am gathering about you.
- I store all data on a secure computer
- I delete tape recordings from the interview when I have written down everything we have talked about.
- I make sure no one can recognize you in the master thesis. I will for example make up a name when I write about you.
- I follow the law on privacy.

### **What happens with your data when I end the research project?**

I am done with the research project 23.06.23. I will then make sure that all data about you is deleted.

### **Your rights**

If there are data about you in what I write, or have in my documents, you have a right to see what data about you I am collecting. You can also ask for the data to be deleted so that it does not exist anymore. If there are any data about you that is incorrect you can let me know and ask me to correct them. You can also ask for a copy of the data from me. You can also complain to the Data services if you think I have processed the data about you in a careless way or in another way that is not right.

If you have any questions, or want to know more about anything, contact me on email: ..... or by phone number: .....

Best regards,  
*Lovisa Sofia Berg*  
(Student)

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### **Declaration of consent children**

I have received and understood information about the project *Children and dogs; what does it mean having a dog during childhood in a Norwegian context*, and gotten the opportunity to ask questions. I consent to:

- Participate in neighbourhood walks
- Participate in individual interview
- Participate in family interview

I consent to my data being processed until the project has ended.

---

(Signed by project participant, date)

### **Declaration of consent parents**

I have received and understood information about the project *Children and dogs; what does it mean having a dog during childhood in a Norwegian context*, and gotten the opportunity to ask questions. I consent to that my child can:

- Participate in neighbourhood walks
- Participate in individual interview
- Participate in family interview

I consent to my child's data being processed until the project has ended.

---

(Signed by parent, date)

## **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet**

### **«Barn og hunder: hva betyr det å ha en hund under oppveksten i en norsk kontekst»?**

Dette er en invitasjon til å delta i et forskningsprosjekt om hva det betyr for barn og hva foreldrene tror det betyr for barna å ha en hund mens de vokser opp. I dette skrevet finner du informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

*Formålet med prosjektet er å finne ut av hva det kan bety å ha en hund gjennom oppveksten, og å se på forholdet mellom barna og hunden(e) samt foreldres meninger rundt hva det betyr for barna å ha en hund. I tillegg vil oppgaven se på hva det betyr å ha en hund i en norsk kontekst, fordi dette kan bety forskjellige ting avhengig av i hvilket samfunn man har en hund i. Antall familier i prosjektet er cirka fem.*

*Forskningsspørsmålene jeg skal analysere handler om hvordan norske barn og foreldre beskriver meningen og verdien av å ha en hund gjennom oppveksten, samt hvilken rolle hunden har i familiestrukturen og hverdagslivet til familien.*

*Prosjektet er en masteroppgave i programmet Childhood Studies under institutt for pedagogikk og livslang læring og fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap.*

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (NTNU) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

*Dere får spørsmål om å delta fordi dere er en familie med barn/ungdom og dere har hund og bor i Norge. Det har blitt publisert innlegg både i grupper på Facebook for voksne med hund.*

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

- *Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar på et familieintervju. Der blir du stilt spørsmål om hva du som forelder tror at det betyr for dine/ditt barn å ha en hund mens det/de vokser opp, og dere som familie kommer til å få spørsmål om tanker rundt det å ha en hund og hva det betyr for dere. Opplysningene blir registrert gjennom lydopptak.*

*Ta kontakt om dere ønsker å se intervjuguide på forhånd.*

#### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### **Ditt personvern – hvordan jeg oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.



- For å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysninger, vil jeg erstatte navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data, og lagre datamaterialet på forskningsserver.

Du skal ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon, og ikke noen identifiserbare opplysninger vil bli publisert om deg.

### **Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes cirka 23. juni 2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger anonymiseres. Personopplysninger vil bli anonymisert gjennom å ikke skrive ekte navn og fødselsdato, og dette vil også fjernes under transkribering av lydopptak.

### **Hva gir meg rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Jeg behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger jeg behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- meg (student), Lovisa Sofia Berg, mailadresse:....., og telefon: .....
- NTNU ved Linn C. Lorgen (veileder), mailadresse: .....
- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen, mailadresse:....., og telefon: ....., NTNU.

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen  
Lovisa Sofia Berg  
(Student)

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## **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Barn og hunder; hva betyr det å ha en hund gjennom oppveksten i en norsk kontekst*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i familieintervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## **Do you want to participate in the research project “Children and dogs: what does it mean to have a dog during the upbringing in a Norwegian context?”**

This is an invitation to participate in a research project about what it means for children and what the parents think it means for their children to have a dog whilst growing up. In this form you will find information about the goals for the project and what participation will involve for you.

### **Purpose**

*The purpose of this project is to find out what it can mean having a dog throughout the upbringing, and to look at the relationship between the children and their dog(s) as well as the parents’ opinions regarding what it means for the children to have a dog. In addition to this the thesis will look at what it means to have a dog in a Norwegian context, because this can have different meanings depending on the society in which one has a dog. The number of families in the project are approximately five.*

*The research questions I am going to analyze are about how Norwegian children and parents describe the meaning and value of having a dog during childhood, as well as what role the dog has in the family structure and everyday life of the family.*

*The project is a master thesis in the program Childhood Studies under the institute of pedagogy and lifelong learning and the faculty of society- and educational sciences.*

### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is responsible for the project.

### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

*You are being asked to participate because you are a family with children/youth, and you have a dog and live in Norway. There have been published posts in groups on Facebook for people with dogs.*

### **What does participating involve for you?**

- *If you choose to participate in the project, this involves you participating in a family interview. There you will be asked questions about what you as a parent think it means for your child(ren) to have a dog while growing up, and you as a family are going to get questions relating to thoughts about having a dog and what it means to you. The information will be registered through tape recordings.*

*Please contact me if you wish to see the interview guides beforehand.*

### **Participating is voluntary**

it is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can at any time still withdraw your consent without giving any reason. All of your personal data will then be deleted. It will not have any negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

### **Your privacy – how I store and use your data**

I will only use the data about you to the purposes I have disclosed in this form. I process the data confidentially and in accordance with the privacy regulations.

- *To make sure no unauthorized persons get access to personal data, I will replace your name and contact information with a code that is stored in its own name list separated from other data, and store the data material on a research server.*

*You will not be recognizable in publication, and no identifiable information will be published about you.*

### **What happens with your personal data when the research project ends?**

The project will according to the plan end circa 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2023. After the project end the data material with your personal data will be anonymized. Personal data will be anonymized through not writing real names and date of birth, and this will also be removed during transcriptions of tape recordings.

### **What gives me the right to process personal data about you?**

I process data about you based on your consent.

On mission from NTNU the Privacy Services have appraised that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy regulations.

### **Your rights**

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have a right to:

- Access to what data is processed about you, and to get a copy of that information
- Get wrong or misleading information about you corrected
- Get personal data about you deleted
- Send a complaint to The Norwegian Data Protection Authority about the processing of your personal data

If you have questions regarding the study, or want to know more about or make use of your rights, contact:

- me (student), Lovisa Sofia Berg, email:....., or phone number:.....
- NTNU by Linn C. Lorgen (veileder), mail address: .....
- Our data protection officer: Thomas Helgesen, mail address:....., and phone number: ....., *NTNU*.

If you have questions connected to Privacy Services' assessment of the project, you may contact:

- Privacy Services on email (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or through phone number: 53 21 15 00.

Best regards,  
*Lovisa Sofia Berg*  
(Student)

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## **Declaration of consent**

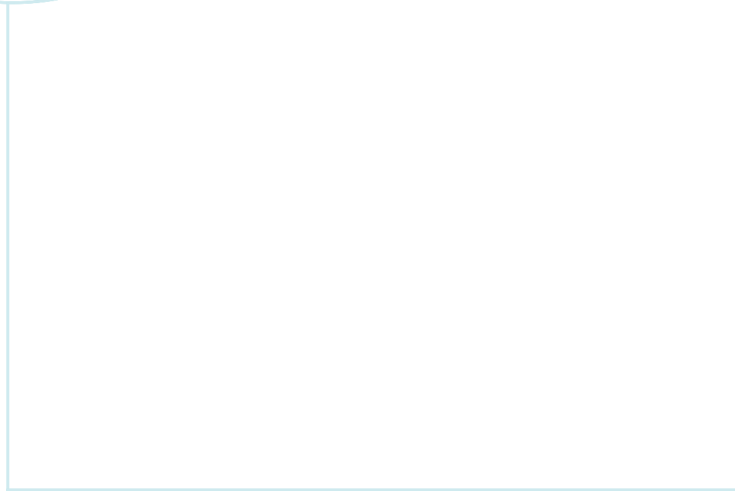
I have received and understood information about the project *children and dogs: what does it mean to have a dog during childhood in a Norwegian context*, and have gotten the opportunity to ask questions. I consent to:

- Participate in family interview

I consent to that my data are processed until the project is ended.

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(Signed by project participant, date)



 **NTNU**

Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology