

# Where do forest values and forest behaviour come from?

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## Introduction

How place of residence influence values, environmental beliefs, and behaviours have been examined in several studies (e.g., Huddart-Kennedy et al., 2009). With regard to forest issues, urban residents have been found to display a stronger biocentric value orientation than people living in smaller towns (McFarlane & Boxall, 2003). However, there is a lack of studies examining the effect of childhood place of residence on forest values, despite the fact that socialization is considered an important determinant of values (Schwartz, 1994).

The present study explored the importance of socialization, including childhood place of residence, and experiences as an adult, including current place of residence, for forest values. We also examined the importance of these predictors for engaging in forest behaviours.

## Method

A questionnaire study was conducted in a sample of adults drawn from the general public in Sweden (n = 796). Ecological, recreation, and production forest values as well as the frequency of walking and doing leisure time work in the forest (e.g., cutting wood) were assessed. The size of the town where the respondents had grown up and how often they had spent time in the forest as a child were used as indicators of socialization. In addition, the respondents' experiences as an adult, that is the size of the town the respondent live in today, distance to closest forest, and experience with work outdoors (e.g., within forestry) were assessed. The importance of social structural factors (i.e., gender, age, education) and general values were also examined.

## Results

Results demonstrated that those who had

grown up in larger towns and had spent more time in the forest as a child displayed stronger ecological and recreation forest values, while those who had grown up in smaller towns displayed slightly stronger production values. Notably, though, for production values, experiences as an adult also played a role; those who lived in smaller towns and had experience with work outdoors displayed stronger production values. The effects remained even after considering social structural factors and general values. In relation to the examined forest behaviours, socialization, experiences as an adult, and social structural variables were important, and in relation to walking, general values also mattered. Predictors explained between 3 and 20 % of the variance in forest values and 22 % of the variance in frequency of engaging in forest behaviours.

## Discussion

In sum, the roots of ecological and recreation forest values were partly found in socialization experiences, while production values were also related to experiences later in life. Furthermore, both socialization experiences and indicators of the respondents' present situation were important for forest behaviours. This study confirm that socialization experiences are related to forest values, although the explained variance was moderate and more studies (e.g., longitudinal) are needed.

## References

- Huddart-Kennedy, E., Beckley, T. M., McFarlane, B. L., & Nadeau, S. (2009). Rural-urban differences in environmental concern in Canada. *Rural Sociology, 74*, 309-329.
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