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Participation in outdoor recreational activities and cultural identity in Australia: An exploratory qualitative study

Authors' contribution:
A) conception and design of the study
B) acquisition of data
C) analysis and interpretation of data
D) manuscript preparation
E) obtaining funding

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on personal statements written by 23 Year 11 students about what outdoor recreational activities they participated in and their sense of cultural identity in the culturally plural context of Australia.. A sociological approach of inductive analysis of their comments was employed to investigate the extent to which those of culturally diverse identities were actually participating in outdoor recreational activities. The respondents came from six Adelaide co-educational secondary schools which agreed to participate in the study. The responses given to the guideline questions provided evidence of participation in twelve different outdoor recreational activities, some involving individual pursuits and others group activities. Twelve students identified themselves as 'mainstream Australian', while eight claimed identities linked to other European and Asian cultural groups and three reported no sense of cultural identification. The evidence from this exploratory study was that those of culturally diverse identities were actually participating in outdoor recreational activities. However, they were more likely to be involved in individual rather than group activities. Furthermore they preferred land-based activities to those requiring water skills. The paper discusses the significance of the findings, implications for making future initiatives and policies in outdoor recreational activities more inclusive, as well as directions for further research.

KEYWORDS Outdoor education, cultural diversity, qualitative study, humanistic sociology

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate through qualitative research methods whether students with culturally diverse identities were actually participating in, being excluded from, or choosing to avoid outdoor recreation activities. No previous Australian study which systematically examined the cultural identity of young people as a factor related to their participation in outdoor recreation activities could be located. No previous study had asked young people to write about their experience of participating in outdoor activities and analysed the factors which promoted or discouraged their participation in these activities, This investigation was important in the context of exploring whether young people with diverse cultural identities were actually participating in outdoor recreation activities in Australia.

Cultural diversity and participation in outdoor recreation activities are both recognised as important features of Australian society. Reports on organisations like Scouts (Tyas, 2012) and the Surf Life Saving Association

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(2015) have pinpointed the lack of participation of those culturally diverse backgrounds in their activities. Policy makers, teachers, instructors and researchers involved in outdoor recreation activities have become increasingly concerned that young people from culturally different backgrounds were not participating in the activities they organized.

Outdoor Recreation, along with sport, enjoys prominence in the Australian psyche (Crawford, 2009), with the Australian Bureau of Statistic ABS suggesting: 'in many ways sport and outdoor activities unites and personifies the nation', and much is made of the nation's high level of physical activity (Currie, 2009, p. 14). A recent analysis of data available on participation in sport and physical activities indicated that 61-80% of children and young people were involved in organised sport and physical activities, but less than 21-40% participated in physical activity at their own initiative, outside an organisational framework such as the school or sporting club (Active Healthy Kids Australia, 2016). This suggests that other forms of physical activity such as active transport, outdoor play and outdoor recreation are important in promoting a healthy, active Australia (Schranz et al., 2014; Vella et al, 2014). The view that increasing outdoor play, risky outdoor play and outdoor recreation would improve physical and mental health has been supported by recent systematic reviews by a group of health researchers led by Mark Tremblay Brussoni et al., 2015; Gray et al., 2015; Tremblay et al., 2015). Beyond health benefits, it is suggested by Dickson, Gray and Mann (2008) that participation in outdoor recreation has potential positive social and economic impacts.

Outdoor Education, as a school subject or program, has diverse aims and goals (Pickett & Polley, 2003), one of which is to promote participation in outdoor recreation beyond schooling (Bunting, 1989). Outdoor Education is not a compulsory component of South Australian schooling, but has been recognised as a study area in South Australia since the 1960's and available as a senior school subject since 1984. Many schools in South Australia teach outdoor recreation as part of their Health and Physical Education program (Polley & Pickett, 2003). A positive relationship between the provision of outdoor education in schools and participation by children in outdoor recreation activities has been suggested (e.g. Bunting, 1989), but there is a paucity of studies to directly support the idea. There is some discussion in the literature about the impact of outdoor education on personal development and general physical activity levels (Rickinson et al., 2004). However, Sallis et al. (1999) investigated a range of correlates of physical activity of children and adolescents and reported 'no association with teacher support or modelling' (p. 967).

Although the exact relationship between outdoor education in schools and participation in outdoor recreation outside school hours is not clear, the possibility of a relationship remains. In the USA, Sallis et al. (1999) conducted an extensive review of literature on the correlates of physical activity for children and adolescents. They discussed the US 1996 Surgeon General's report and their review supported nine of the 12 variables recommended by the report to support physical activity. Five of these variables have a strong relationship to school physical and/or outdoor education – 'perceived physical competence', 'support from significant others', 'program/facility access', 'opportunities to be active' and 'time outdoors'. Pennington and Krouscas (1999), in a case study in the USA, identified a relationship between structured youth activities and participation in outdoor education. One Australian study exploring the outcomes of an extended stay program found, among a range of findings, an improvement in physical activity levels (Gray, 1997).

According to Polley and Pickett (2003) the majority of South Australian schools surveyed in 1999 were offering outdoor recreation activities as part of schooling. However, many South Australian institutions, colleges and schools have experienced difficulties with implementation of outdoor education related to economic, staffing and logistic factors, which were found to be more pronounced in state schools (Pickett & Polley, 2003, Polley & Pickett, 2003). No recent studies have investigated whether this situation has changed. Reduced outdoor education offerings in schools that have a more culturally diverse population may well impact on students' participation in outdoor recreation activities. Sex differences may well compound this impact, with Humberstone (2000) in a UK study finding females experiencing additional issues, because

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organisers in schools were not necessarily taking gender issues into account when planning outdoor recreation activities.

Australia is also known for its cultural diversity. The extent and nature of cultural diversity in a society can be demonstrated in official Census Statistics for birthplace, ancestry and language use. Of those born overseas, 20.8 per cent were born in the United Kingdom; 9.1 per cent in New Zealand; 6.0 per cent in the People's Republic of China; 5.6 per cent in India; 3.5 per cent in both Vietnam and Italy and 2 per cent in Germany (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Birthplace figures, however, take no account of the children born to immigrant parents in Australia. Ancestry and language are better indicators of the extent of cultural diversity being maintained in Australia. The 2011 Census reported the 36.0 per cent of the Australian population claimed an English heritage; 35 per cent Australian; 10.4 per cent Irish; 8.9 per cent Scottish; 4.6 per cent Italian; 4.5 per cent German and 4.3 per cent Chinese (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In relation to language, the 2011 Census showed that 81 per cent of the Australian population aged above five spoke only English at home, while in contrast, there were two percent who spoke no English at all. Among the 19 per cent who spoke a language other than English at home, Mandarin speakers represented 1.7 per cent of the population; Italian 1.5; Arabic 1.4; Cantonese and Greek both 1.3; Vietnamese 1; with Spanish, Hindi and Tagalog speakers each under 1 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

However, such figures do not necessarily reflect the range of languages and cultures actually being maintained in the everyday life of families and communities. Another way of looking at cultural diversity in society, through the eyes of individuals, is to focus on their sense of cultural identity, as a reflection of their personal experiences of cultural diversity. It is this personal, individual reflection of diversity that is the focus in this study.

Only a small number of studies have investigated participation in outdoor recreation activities in relation to culturally diverse participants. A case study by Davidson (2001) from a Catholic secondary school in New Zealand investigated outdoor education as an adventure experience for fifth year secondary students who had selected outdoor education as a part of their studies. Among the ten students who participated in the research were two immigrants, one respondent being a Malaysian of Punjabi background, and another Samoan born. In both cases, their personal cultural background and the physical environment in which they grew up had a great influence on their enthusiasm for outdoor recreation activities (Davidson, 2001).

By contrast, patterns of cultural restriction emerged from an investigation by Purdie and Neill (1999) of an Australian outdoor activity program in which a number of visiting Japanese students participated. In the course of the program the Japanese students encountered a number of activities which they found culturally distressing and embarrassing. For example, ‘swimming in a river, and dressing and undressing near fellow students in a coeducational setting’, were issues for these students because their cultural background took for granted a far greater level of personal privacy. This factor has also been found to be a barrier to the participation of girls of Muslim background in outdoor recreation activities like snorkelling and kayaking (Benn, 1996).

Surf lifesaving, although an emergency service and sport, has a component of organised active outdoor recreation. In an historical study of Surf Lifesaving in Australia in relation to the cultural background of immigrants, Brawley (1997) claimed that even at the time of the establishment of the first surf lifesaving club in 1907, a large proportion of the members were Australians of British-Irish descent (Brawley, 1997). However, there is also evidence of other minority cultural participation. In the interwar period, a significant number of Croatians became members of two different surf lifesaving clubs in Sydney. Subsequently after the Second World War, many Dutch community members actively participated in surf lifesaving. Greek and Italian immigrants became involved around Adelaide’s northern suburbs during the 1950’s and 1960’s. At the elite level of surf lifesaving competitions, there were champions like Nick Yakich, whose parents were of

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Croatian background and another champion by the name of David Dworjanyn, of Lithuanian parentage (Brawley, 1997).

Generally, however, the proportion of participants from culturally diverse backgrounds in surf lifesaving has remained low. In a country where 24 per cent of the population was born overseas (Australian, Bureau, of, & Statistics, 2006) and 26 per cent of people born in Australia had at least one overseas-born parent (Australian et al., 2006) Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) membership has yet to be representative of this demographic profile (Fitzgerald & Giles, 2007). A recent review suggests that this may not be a high priority, in that it omitted to discuss strategies to address this issue (Surf Life Saving Australia, 2015). Historically, some efforts have been made by State clubs, such as the New South Wales State Centre, who tried to introduce surf lifesaving to Sydney's Vietnamese community in the Cabramatta area (Brawley, 1997). Brawley suggests the attempt failed because of lack of financial support, travelling issues and religious and cultural beliefs which prevented engagement for the local Vietnamese community and concluded far greater effort was required from both the mainstream surf lifesaving community and the minority communities themselves (Brawley, 1997).

Scouting has been another organization associated with group outdoor recreation activities where cultural diversity has been identified as an issue. For example, the 2012 final recommendation report to Scouts Australia on the National Venture Scout Youth Forum (Tyas, 2012) discussed engaging and recruiting culturally diverse minorities into Scouts programs. Tyas (2012) identified Australian Scouts as an organisation which originated in British cultural traditions dominated by 'white, Caucasian, middle-class members' (p. 8) who do not reflect the reality of Australia's current multicultural society. In response, the report recommended several recruitment measures and recognised the importance of eradicating racial bias in the current Scouts units and groups. It recommended Scouts organisers engage with local ethnic minority communities to investigate particular issues that prevented cultural or ethnic minorities from joining Scouts (Tyas, 2012).

Similar recommendations emerged from the investigation of Blanchet - Cohen and Reilly (2013) into teachers' perceptions of culturally sensitive approaches to environmental education in Canada. Their findings pointed to the advantage in multicultural contexts of connecting with parents and communities and encouraging them to help in designing appropriate outdoor activities.

A qualitative study among young people of both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds in the Netherlands (Kloek, Buijs, Boersema & Schouten, 2017), showed that ethnicity was one of the key factors shaping the young peoples' attitudes to outdoor recreational activities, regardless of their background. The other two key factors identified were personal identities and age. The study also found that for some female respondents, their gender identity became an issue in participating in outdoor activities, seen particularly in their concern with safety.

At a deeper level, Taylor (2018) explored the underlying attitudinal issue of variations in the sense of connection to nature expressed by 157 college students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in the United States. The results showed that most students of minority background had similar aspirations and desires in relation to nature as those from the majority Anglo-American background. There was no evidence that those of minority background had any fear of nature. Participation in outdoor recreational activities was at a similar level for all students, regardless of their background, despite the fact that all expressed some concern for safety in these activities.

Based on the issues raised in the literature discussed above, this paper investigates the relationship between participation in outdoor recreation activities and cultural identity in the personal experience of the students who participated in this study.

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Method

The research reported in this paper, investigated the sense of cultural identity of year 11 students and their engagement in outdoor activities as part of a larger study on participation in sport and physical activity (Maniam, 2014). In the larger study, all of the respondents, who had agreed to participate, with parental consent, were in year 11 classes in six Adelaide secondary schools where principals had given permission for the study to take place. The guideline questions that the students were asked to answer in writing contained a question about each student's voluntary participation in outdoor recreational activities outside the school. The 22 students (13 M, 9F) who answered this question constituted the set of respondents for the investigation reported in this paper. In the strictest sense, they represent not the sample of a wider population, but a very small self-selected population, Ethics approval for this research study was obtained from the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Department of Educational and Children's Services, as well as the relevant authorities for independent schools.

Procedures

The data for this paper took the form of written responses to open-ended researcher designed questions that asked students to write a personal statement about their ethnicity, their sense of cultural identity, and their engagement in outdoor recreation activities. The collection of data took place in a classroom designated by each particular school.

Data analysis

An inductive approach was adopted for the analysis of the students' statements following the humanistic sociological approach of interpreting the data from the perspective of the participants as social and cultural beings (Smolicz, 1999; Znaniecki, 1968). NVIVO software was employed to assist with identification and categorization of themes supplemented by close reading of the students' statements. Student responses on their sense of cultural identity could be categorized as Mainstream Australian or Culturally Diverse grouping, with the latter including those with Aboriginal and a range of European and Asian identities. Student comments on their participation in outdoor recreation activities enabled the activities to be categorized, on one dimension, as being either individual or centred on group involvement. A second dimension also emerged as significant; some activities were essentially land based, while others involved water-based participation and skills. In the discussion that follows, the comments of the participating students are quoted verbatim to ensure that their experiences, thoughts and feelings about their identity and their participation in outdoor recreational activity were represented on their terms rather than through the researcher's interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the 12 different outdoor recreation activities mentioned by the 22 students that participated in this study. Each student is indicated individually on the table by the identification number given in the research analysis. Among these respondents five, including one female, were members of Scouts. Four female students participated in surf lifesaving. The outdoor recreation activities of bushwalking, fishing and hiking, each recorded three participants respectively. For bushwalking there were two female respondents. In the case of fishing as an outdoor activity, the three participants were male, all of whom indicated that they were also involved in hiking.

Camping, scuba diving and snorkelling each had two participants, while the remaining three outdoor recreation activities, the Duke of Edinburgh award, downhill mountain biking, and hunting each had only one. One respondent (P03) included scuba diving and shell collecting, as well as fishing and hiking, among his

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outdoor recreation activities. Another (S03) mentioned three outdoor recreation activities bushwalking, fishing and hiking.

Table 2 shows that all 22 of the respondents answered the question in relation to their cultural identity. The issue of how young people describe their personal sense of cultural identity has rarely been considered in relation to participation in sport and particularly outdoor recreation activities. For this reason, the comments given in this study are presented in detail in the discussion below, using the actual words written. The intention is to enable readers to understand the range and diversity of the students' reflections on their cultural identity and to demonstrate the depth of some of their thinking on this issue.

Table 1. Respondents' Participation in Outdoor Recreation Activities

Outdoor Recreation Activities	**Respondents**	**N = 22 (13M,9F)**
Bushwalking	B14*, P10*, S03	3
Camping	B02, Z04	2
Duke of Edinburgh Award	H23*	1
Downhill Mountain Biking	B03	1
Fishing	P03, P06, S03	3
Hunting	C10	1
Hiking	P03, P06, S03	3
Scuba Diving	P03, Z13*	2
Shell Collecting	P03, H15, H04, H05	4
Scouts	P09, P11*, H11, H24*, P14	5
Snorkelling	B03, H24*	2
Surf Lifesaving	C01*, H23*, S12*, Z07*	4
Total of Activities		31

Notes: 1. An asterisk following the number indicates a female respondent.
2. Individual Respondents are identified by a letter and two-digit numbers.
Source: Own study.

Half of the participants (12) identified themselves as Monocultural Australian. According to Smolicz (1994), this single mainstream Australian identity, is linked to the ancestral, cultural and historical Anglo-Celtic roots of those Australians who, over generations, have arrived from Great Britain and Ireland. The comments of students, who felt this kind of Australian identity and related it specifically to birthplace and residence, are given below.

> *B02: I think of myself as Australian because I was born here, my parents were born here, my grandparents were born here my great grandparents were born here.*
> *B03: I think of myself as Australian because I was born in Australia.*
> *P11*: I am a pure Aussie*

Another two students claimed a different Monocultural identity. As the statements below clearly show, each of the two respondents identified with a specific cultural group, one British and the other Filipino. In the Australian context, this linked them to a minority ethnic group, or what Clyne (2005) called an Australian community.

Although the British group has many cultural overlaps with mainstream Australia, the student concerned identified only as British. It is worth noting that both these respondents were recent immigrants to Australia.

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C10: I am British.

Table 2. Participants and their Sense of Cultural Identity

Sense of Ethnic Cultural Identity	**Respondents**	**N = 22 (13M,9F)**
Monocultural Mainstream Australian	B02, P10*, H24*, B03, Z13*, P03*, H15, P11*, P09, S12*, Z07	11
Monocultural Minority	C10	
European	Z04	
Asian		2
Bicultural/Polycultural		
European + Australian	H11, B14*, S03	
Australian + European	H23*	
Asian + Australian	P14	
Australian + Asian	P06	
		6
No Sense of Cultural Identification	H04, H05, C01*	3

Notes: An asterisk following the number indicates a female respondent.
Individual respondents are identified by a letter and two-digit number.
Source: own study.

Z04: I identity myself as a Filipino who still loves his home country and of course his new home, Adelaide. I realise that my lifestyle and personality are a bit different to the majority especially in a public school. First of all, I'm religious unlike a number of people who are secular or atheist. In comparison to my peers' lifestyle, I'm somewhat conservative who seldom drinks. In Australia I start to get more independent and liberated. Also, I feel different in terms of stand toward education. Being that [my school] is a sports school, some of them do not even give a damn towards academics which I am currently fortunately taking advantage of.

The Table 2 also shows that six students expressed a bicultural identity, which Smolicz (1994), described as the hyphenated dual identity. In these cases, a particular European or Asian identity was used to describe what sort of Australian they considered themselves to be. Examples of this are given in the quotations below.

H11: Australian Polish. I see myself as an Australian with Polish roots therefore I call myself Aussie but respect my heritage.
B14: I think of myself as half German half Australian so German Australian. This makes me slightly different I think due to my German background but I like it.*
S03: Greek Australian, my heritage is Greek and I was brought up with a rich cultural heritage of what it is like being Greek. Attended Greek school from year 1-6, went to church regularly Greek culture and functions as a youth and had many friends who was of Greek or European background. Australian also; proud to be an Aussie as I was also brought up and went through the education system in Australia. I enjoy the culture and follow AFL football. So, I am a proud Greek-Australian.
H23: I think of myself as an Australian who has an Italian background but not a strong Italian culture in the way I live.*

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P14: I am Chinese Australian because I was born here but I can speak full Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese.
P06: Australian / Chinese / Vietnamese [because of] parents [and] country born in.
P06's identification was closely linked with the concrete reality of his life. He was born in Australia to Chinese-Vietnamese parents and spoke both these languages at home.

As the extracts cited in the sections above demonstrate, a good many of the students responded to the guideline question on personal sense of identity in some detail. They were often quite explicit about who they felt themselves to be and could explain the factors which led them to this identification. In contrast, three students involved in outdoor recreation activities explained that they had no sense of being culturally different.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was a general one, not directly related to the original aim of the study. Only 22 of the 111 students in the larger study investigating student engagement in physical activity reported participating in extra-curricular outdoor recreation. Furthermore, only nine of the 23 were females, an even lower proportion than in the larger study of 111. The low participation rate for this group may well reflect the settings, with reduced offerings of outdoor education in city-based state schools in South Australia that might not promote such extra-curricular participation (Pickett & Polley, 2003; Polley & Pickett, 2003).

Table 3. Outdoor Recreation Activities by Participants' Sense of Identity

Outdoor Activity	**Mainstream Australian N = 11**	**Culturally Diverse N = 8**	**No Culture Identification N = 3**	**n**
Bushwalking	P10*	B14*, S03		3
Camping	B02	Z04		2
Duke of Edinburgh	H23*			1
Down Hill Mountain Bike	B03			1
Fishing	P03	P06, S03		3
Hunting		C10		1
Hiking	P03	P06, S03		3
Scuba Diving	P03, Z13*			2
Shell Collecting	P03, H15		H04, H05	4
Scouts	H24*, P11*, P09	H11, P14		5
Snorkelling	B03, H24*			2
Surf Life Saving	S12*, Z07*	H23*	C01*	4

Notes: 1. An asterisk following the number indicates a female respondent in the study.
2. The number of activities is greater than the 22 participants, because several respondents mentioned more than one activity.

As stated, this investigation focused on the relationship between sense of cultural identity and participation in outdoor recreation activities among this group of respondents. Table 3 provides the full breakdown of the cultural identities claimed by the respondents, summarized under the headings of Mainstream Australian, Culturally Diverse Identities and No Cultural Identification. These have been plotted against the 12 outdoor recreational activities that the students responded participating in. However, when participation in the various activities were analysed along the two dimensions of group as against individual and land-based as against water-based, the patterns of participation by cultural identity and gender were found to vary, even though the total number of students in each type of activity was the same.

It is worth looking at the three main group organizations in more detail. The Duke of Edinburgh Award which requires successful participation in physical and outdoor activities (Duke of Edinburgh Award, 2019) had only

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one participant (H23*), a girl who identified as a Bicultural. Scouts which is mainly linked to land-based activities, had more participants among the students taking part in this study than any other outdoor activity with five students, three males and two females involved. Among these five participants, three were Mainstream Australian, while respondent H11 identified as Australian-Polish and P14 as Chinese-Australian. The Scouting Movement is a well-established and popular activity for young people in Poland and in the Polish-Australian community (Smolicz & Secombe, 1981), but the participation of a Chinese-Australian who spoke Cantonese at home and for whom English was a second language is evidence of some culturally diverse participation in Scouts. The participation of only two young people of culturally diverse identity reflects the earlier view expressed by Tyas (2012) that more might be done by the Scouting movement to encourage culturally diverse participation.

The other group activity, Surf Life Saving, which involved mainly water-based skills through participation in a voluntary lifeguard service and various surf sports (Surf Life Saving, 2019), attracted four participants, all of whom were females. This suggested that the strategies adopted by the Surf Life Saving leaders to change the earlier image of Surf Life Saving as a male dominated activity, and make it more gender inclusive, has had some success. Two of the four were Mainstream Australian in identity; one claimed to have no sense of cultural identification, while the fourth (H23*) considered herself to be Australian of Italian background. Based on this group of respondents, cultural inclusivity in Surf Life Saving cannot be said to have yet become a distinguishing feature of its outdoor activities.

In summary, out of the nine students participating in group outdoor activities, only three were identified as Culturally Diverse - H23*, who was involved both in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and in Surf Life Saving; H11 and P14 who were involved in Scouts. The other three males involved in Scouts and the three females in Surf Life Saving were of Mainstream Australian identity. It is also worth noting that out of the nine females participating in this study, six were involved in group outdoor activities.

The individual land-based activities of bushwalking, camping, and downhill mountain biking, hunting and hiking had a total of nine participants, with S03 involved in both bushwalking and hiking. Only two of these were females. Four of the nine were of Mainstream Australian identity. Two claimed a Minority cultural identity, one linked to a European group, the other to an Asian group. Three identified as Bicultural, two with links to Europe and one to Asia. Overall, five of the nine students participating in land-based individual activities were of Culturally Diverse identities.

The individual water-linked activities of fishing, scuba diving, shell collecting and snorkelling had nine participants in all, with PO3 involved in the first three of these activities. Only two were female (Z13*, H24*). Five were of Mainstream Australian identity but two were of Bicultural identity, one with a European component and one with an Asian, while two claimed no cultural identification. In summary, only two (PO6, SO3) of the nine students involved in individual water-based activities were of Culturally Diverse identities.

Although the numbers overall were very small, the above analysis appears to highlight a number of gender and cultural identity preferences which would be worthy of further investigation. Mainstream Australian respondents, particularly girls, seemed to prefer organized group activities. In the case of individual land-based outdoor recreation activities, more of the students involved identified themselves as Culturally Diverse than Mainstream Australian, with a predominance of males. Males from both Mainstream Australian and Culturally Diverse Identities were the main ones involved in the individual water-based activities.

Conclusion

There is a paucity of literature investigating the relationship between culturally diverse backgrounds and participation in outdoor recreation. Although not generalizable to the broader population, the results from this small-scale study suggest that the level of participation in outdoor recreation activities for senior secondary

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state school students from culturally diverse backgrounds may well be lower than for students of mainstream Australian background. The more recent Netherlands study (Kloek, Buijs, Boersema & Schouten, 2017) identified ethnicity as a factor in participation in outdoor activities. Another surprising finding of this study was a general one, not directly related to its original aim. Only 22 of the 111 students in the larger study investigating student engagement in sport and physical activity reported participating in extra-curricular outdoor recreation. Furthermore, only nine of the 22 were females, an even lower proportion than that found in the larger study of 111 (Maniam, 2014). These findings may well reflect reduced offerings of outdoor education in city-based schools as suggested by Polley and Pickett (2003).

The study has demonstrated that those of Diverse Cultural identities are participating in outdoor recreational activities, as represented in this study by eight out of the 22 participants, approximately a third. Moreover, their responses have provided very useful pointers to the sorts of activities they preferred and those they tended to avoid. Among the participants in this study, those of Culturally Diverse identities were found most often in individual land-based outdoor recreation activities. They were less frequently involved in group outdoor recreation activities. This could suggest that those from culturally diverse backgrounds felt less comfortable in the culture of outdoor recreation organisations such as Scouts and Surf Lifesaving. It is also important to note the higher levels of participation in land-based than water-based outdoor recreation for this group, possibly suggesting more could be done to promote water confidence and safety for students of culturally diverse backgrounds.

Implications

Recently, the Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum (ACARA, 2016) included challenge and adventure activities, aquatics and navigation as part of the curriculum and acknowledged the role and place of outdoor education (‘outdoor learning’) (ACARA, 2017) to teach across a range of curriculum areas. The identification of issues for Culturally Diverse Identities has implications for teachers of physical and outdoor education who seek to promote participation in outdoor recreation, as well as organisers who wish to encourage greater inclusion of students from both genders and all cultural identities in outdoor recreation activities. The results of this small-scale study suggest greater attention could be given to encouraging the participation of those of Culturally Diverse Identities through being more aware of taken for granted Mainstream Australian cultural patterns which those of other cultural identities may find unfamiliar, and even alienating. It would also be useful to follow up Taylor’s 2018 study and explore in more detail the attitudes to nature revealed by young people of different backgrounds, comparing in particular the attitudes of those who participate in outdoor activities against those who do not.

Ethics approval and informed consent

Ethics approval for the study was granted by The University of Adelaide Research Ethics Committee.

Competing interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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