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## Beyond Ethnic Stereotypes – Identities and Outdoor Recreation Among Immigrants and Nonimmigrants in the Netherlands

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### ABSTRACT

Studies on immigrants' recreational use of greenspace have tended to focus on ethnic groups as homogeneous entities. In a qualitative study based on group interviews, this article focuses on the cultural diversity among and within ethnic groups. We used an identity perspective to study outdoor recreation of young Dutch adults with Chinese, Turkish, or nonimmigrant backgrounds. Results show that primarily personal identities, age, and ethnicity inform recreational behavior. The multiplicity of peoples' identities results in more heterogeneity between and within ethnic groups, as well as more homogeneity between immigrants and nonimmigrants, than commonly described. When immigrants are considered as a homogeneous group that underparticipates in outdoor recreation, individual immigrants who frequently participate in outdoor recreation are overlooked. Furthermore, we show that acculturation does not progress at the same rate among all ethnic groups, and that ethnic identity may be sustained among second and subsequent generations through certain recreational activities.

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## Introduction

In their efforts to understand and stimulate immigrants' recreational use of greenspace, policy makers and nature organizations have largely failed to include the cultural diversity among and within ethnic groups (Jay et al., 2012). Consequently, these efforts often suffered from simplistic and stereotyped images about immigrants and nonimmigrants.<sup>1</sup> For example, with the article "A *Smulbos* ("yum-yum forest") especially for immigrants" published in a popular Dutch newspaper (Telegraaf, 2004), the Dutch environmental foundation *Stichting wAarde* launched an initiative to make nature conservation in the Netherlands more ethnically inclusive. The foundation's idea was to create a forest in which people, particularly immigrants, were invited to pick fruits and nuts and walk off the pathways. The foundation argued that in contrast to Dutch practices and legislation, "in their [immigrants'] own country, food can be found and collected everywhere in nature" (Telegraaf, 2004). That sparked a huge public

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the terms "immigrants" and "ethnic minorities" (or other terms such as race, visual communities, Blacks, BME) is country specific. We will mainly use the term immigrants and ethnicity because these terms are used in the Netherlands, where we conducted our empirical study.

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debate and fierce opposition from both immigrants and nonimmigrants, who thought such a forest especially designed for immigrants was stigmatizing and exclusionary. The example of the *Smulbos* illustrates the difficulties that environmental organizations may face when trying to operate in a multicultural society.

Meanwhile, in various Western countries, the number of immigrants has grown substantially over the last decades. In the Netherlands, for example, 21% of the population was considered immigrant in 2014 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2015). At the same time, governments and nature conservation organizations noted an underrepresentation of immigrants in the recreational use of greenspace, although few baseline data exist on real participation levels of immigrants, at least in European countries. Governments and nature conservation organizations increasingly think of this possible underrepresentation as a problem, especially considering the potential positive effects of outdoor recreation on health, social integration, and public support for nature and biodiversity conservation (Deutscher Naturschutzring, 2009; Jay et al., 2012; Peters, 2011).

The relation between ethnicity and the recreational use and perceptions of greenspace has been examined in academia as well (e.g., Chavez, 2000; Dwyer, 1993; Floyd, 1998; Gobster, 2002; Ho et al., 2005; Jay & Schraml, 2013; Krymkowski, Manning, & Valliere, 2014; Sasidharan, 2002; Tierney, Dahl, & Chavez, 2001; Winter, Jeong, & Godbey, 2004). Most of these studies on immigrants' use and perceptions of the natural environment focus on the United States. Since the United States differs from Europe regarding the types of greenspace and social and political views toward immigration but shows similarities in the cultural background of some immigrant groups, it is interesting to study immigrants' recreational use of greenspace from a European perspective. However, research on this topic in Europe is limited (Kloek, Buijs, Boersema, & Schouten, 2013). The few existing studies show that in various European countries, immigrants appear to be underrepresented in the recreational use of greenspace and especially of nonurban greenspace (e.g., Countryside Agency, 2005; Schipperijn et al., 2010). Moreover, these studies indicate that immigrants may have other motivations for outdoor recreation than nonimmigrants, and that they participate in different activities than members of the "mainstream" population (e.g., Countryside Agency, 2005; Jay & Schraml, 2009).

Societal initiatives and scientific studies on immigrants' outdoor recreation in Europe are often based on the assumption of a binary opposition between immigrants and nonimmigrants in outdoor recreational behavior. Immigrant culture is frequently depicted as a homogeneous entity, and immigrants are thought to enjoy greenspace in a culturally specific way that is supposed to be incompatible with the way "natives" enjoy greenspace (Hoving, 2011). A recent review study showed there is little European research that takes into account differences between immigrants or ethnic groups and heterogeneity within specific immigrant populations (Kloek, Buijs et al., 2013). Furthermore, many studies describe recreation in quite general terms and do not specify the contexts in which it takes place. This probably does not reflect people's lived experiences and can potentially lead to stereotyping and perpetuating an "us versus them" way of thinking (Kloek, Buijs et al., 2013).

We argue that we need a more in-depth understanding of the recreational use and perceptions of greenspace among immigrants. We intend to contribute to this goal by examining the multiple identities shaping recreational behavior. Previous research has shown that identity theory can help in explaining complex and varied behaviors (Stets & Burke, 2000; Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Focusing on the relation between recreation and multiple identities may be a step forward in understanding the complexities of recreational behaviors and the diversity of immigrant and nonimmigrant experiences.

The main objectives of this study are to distinguish the most prominent identities that shape the outdoor recreational behavior of young adults of immigrant and nonimmigrant background in the Netherlands, and to delineate the outdoor recreational patterns related to these identities. As immigrant status and ethnicity have been described as influential in immigrants' recreational behavior, we explicitly also examined how immigrants and non-immigrants themselves perceive the role of their ethnicity in relation to their outdoor recreation.

Our qualitative interpretative study is based on group interviews with young adults in the city of Arnhem, the Netherlands. We conducted nine group interviews with 42 young adults (18–35 years old) of three different ethnic backgrounds: Chinese, Turkish, and nonimmigrant. We only included second-generation immigrant participants and first-generation immigrants who spent most of their youth in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, a distinction is made between Western and non-Western immigrants, with 56% of the immigrants having a non-Western background (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2015). We chose to focus on Turkish immigrants since almost 20% of the non-Western immigrants are of Turkish descent and form the largest group of non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands. While the number of Turkish immigrants is not expected to grow much in future, the number of immigrants from Asian countries is increasing, and it is projected that they will become the largest group of non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands in 2050 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2010). Currently, 3% of the non-Western immigrants are of Chinese descent and form the fifth largest group of non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands. As China differs considerably from Turkey regarding culture and major religions, including both groups enabled us to not only study differences in outdoor recreational behavior based on immigrant status but also to make distinctions between ethnic groups.

## Outdoor recreation among Turkish and Chinese immigrants

Turkish immigrants are among the largest groups of immigrants in various European countries, and several European studies have researched Turkish immigrants' recreational patterns. The most striking results from these studies are that Turkish immigrants seldom participate in nonurban outdoor recreation and have a preference for recreation in urban greenspace (e.g., Jay & Schraml, 2009; Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2010). The importance of social aspects associated with recreating in greenspace has also been stipulated in various studies. Group activities with (extended) family members are supposed to play an important role in Turkish immigrants' outdoor recreation (Jay & Schraml, 2009; Peters, Elands, & Buijs, 2010). Picking fruits and other activities related to food, such as picnicking and barbecuing, appear to be popular among Turkish immigrants (e.g., Jay & Schraml, 2010; Jókövi, 2000).

While the number of Chinese immigrants in Europe is growing, there is little research on their outdoor recreational patterns in a European context. In the United States, outdoor recreation by Chinese immigrants, or Asian Americans in general, has received some attention, although less than that received by other minority groups (e.g., Dwyer, 1993; Ho et al., 2005; Sasidharan, Willits, & Godbey, 2005; Tierney et al., 2001; Walker, Deng, & Dieser, 2001; Winter et al., 2004). In general, these studies described recreational patterns of Asian Americans as less deviating from "white" patterns than recreational patterns of other minority groups such as African Americans or Hispanics (Dwyer, 1993; Tierney et al., 2001). For example, Dwyer (1993) found that Asian Americans visited state parks almost as often as whites and more often than, for example, Hispanics. Furthermore, similar to Turkish immigrants in Europe, Asian Americans have been described as tending to participate in outdoor recreation

in larger groups than whites do and favoring social activities (Chavez, 2000; Ho et al., 2005). However, Chinese immigrants have also been described as visiting greenspace in smaller groups or alone more often than other minority groups (Sasidharan et al., 2005). Food-related activities such as picnicking seem to be popular among Chinese immigrants (Dwyer, 1993; Sasidharan et al., 2005), although maybe less so than among some other minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanics (Sasidharan et al., 2005).

Still, relatively little has been published regarding both Turkish and Chinese immigrants' recreational behavior and preferences, particularly in Europe, and heterogeneity within ethnic groups has largely been overlooked (Kloek, Buijs, et al., 2013; Winter et al., 2004). We intend to distinguish the multiple identities that shape the outdoor recreational behavior of Turkish and Chinese immigrants.

## Outdoor recreation from an identity perspective

Identity is a theoretical concept that has been used in research in various scientific fields, including ethnicity studies. It is suggested that identity has become one of the main concepts in social science thinking (e.g., Bauman, 2007; Castells, 2011; Nagel, 1994; Verkuyten, 2005). The concept of identity is complex, prompting much discussion. Still, there are some basic ideas with respect to what identity is and how it is formed, maintained, and activated on which many scholars agree (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Stets & Burke, 2000). First, identity is conceptualized as a process of meaningful categorization, with people adhering to specific identity categories (Ashmore et al., 2004; Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity categories can be based, for example, on socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age), group/organizational membership, or social roles (student, father) (Stets & Burke, 2000; Thoits & Virshup, 1997). These identities are meaningful to people as they influence behavior and subjective experiences (Brown, 2000; Liu & László, 2007). As people move through their daily lives, the identities they adhere to may change according to their situations and the people they encounter. Identity thereby becomes a dialectical process of what you think your identity is and what others think your identity is (Nagel, 1994).

Various researchers have shown links between recreational behavior and identity. As early as in 1981, Kelly argued that leisure is a social space in which identity activation and formation takes place through social interaction. Other studies have focused on how one particular identity influences outdoor recreation, such as environmental identity (e.g., Clayton & Opatow, 2004), place identity (e.g., Lawrence, 2012) and leisure identity (e.g., Williams, 2002). An identity perspective focusing on multiple identities has been less common (Shinew et al., 2006). In the following sections, we elaborate on our theoretical perspective by focusing on the subjective meaning, multiplicity, and contextuality of identities.

### *Identity: More than just a category*

“Being a woman” or “being an immigrant” is more than just a label. Identity categories clearly have meaning to people and their identities have behavioral implications, including for recreational behavior. Ashmore et al. (2004) argued that identities have content and contain associated behaviors, shared meanings, preferences, ideological positions, and narratives. Identities can affect ideas of which specific recreational activities are fun or appropriate, or how they should be done. For example, a Dutch identity, when activated, may evoke images of and preferences for water sports or ice skating. A particular identity category is thus connected with certain behaviors, and this boundedness provides a shared or common-sense understanding

of the social world (Verkuyten, 2005). This does not mean that all Dutch natives participate in water sports. However, when the identity category “being Dutch” is activated, those activities are likely to come to mind and guide behavior. People actively select recreational activities that they associate with particular self-images (Williams, 2002).

### ***Multiplicity of identities***

People do not belong to one collective but can be considered as members of different groups. A Dutch native may be a man, woman, young, old, student, and so forth. All identities may have different behavioral implications, including for outdoor recreation. Having multiple identities also offers the possibility of having combinations of identities closely connected or articulated in relation to each other (Verkuyten, 2005).

Which identities could potentially influence outdoor recreation? In various writings on identity, two dimensions of identity are distinguished: collective identities and personal identities (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2004; Stets & Burke, 2000; Verkuyten, 2005). A collective identity is one that is shared with a group of others who have (or are perceived to have) some characteristic(s) in common (Ashmore et al., 2004). Collective identities are formed mainly in interactions and experiences with social groups. They may play a role in outdoor recreation. For example, earlier research showed that religious practices contain specific images of what nature is and how to appropriately behave toward nature or use it (Schouten, 2005). In some readings of the Quran, nature, as a reflection of Allah’s beauty, is represented as well organized and managed and without disorder (Islam, 2012; Schouten, 2005). A Muslim identity based on these readings of the Quran may incorporate this image of nature and influence outdoor recreation, possibly leading into a preference for ordered, neat, natural areas over wild, untamed land.

Contrary to collective identities, personal identities are not directly related to other people but to an individual’s unique biography, experiences, and personal characteristics (Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999). Various personal identities can influence outdoor recreation. People can have a strong personal bond with specific places (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983) or nature in general (Clayton & Opatow, 2004), or can strongly identify with specific outdoor activities (Jun & Kyle, 2011; Peters, 2010). They may, for example, see themselves as a nature lover or a hiker. Depending on the context, such identities can be interwoven with specific behaviors, including recreation (Clayton, 2004; Proshansky et al., 1983). Childhood experiences are often influential in forming personal identities (Ward Thompson, Aspinall, & Montarzino, 2008).

### ***Contextuality of identities: Identity activation***

While people have multiple identities, not all identities are important at all times. In a specific situation, one or a few identities will become “activated.” Ideas on identity activation have mainly been developed in sociology and psychology, such as in Stryker’s identity theory (1987), Tajfel’s social identity theory (1974), and Turner’s subsequent self-categorization theory (1985). Although the emphasis in the various theories differs, all stipulate that identity activation in a specific situation depends not only on the “importance,” “centrality,” or “relative accessibility” of a specific identity but also on the way it “fits” into a specific situation or context.

Central identities are those to which people personally feel strongly attached. People are likely to primarily enact a central identity in the situations they enter into and make



behavioral choices according to the perceptions and expectations attached to that identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Because outdoor recreation usually takes place in informal situations in which people have a freedom of choice of activity, recreation provides a good opportunity to express central identities (Peters, 2011; Williams, 2002). However, people do have to consider the physical properties of public space and deal with other people in it. The activation of an identity, therefore, also depends on the context, that is, on the perceived “fit” between the identity category and people’s perceptions of the situation, and on ascriptions by others (Howarth, 2002).

Contexts can constrain and enable identities. A clear example of an identity-specific constraint is perceived discrimination, that is, people feeling excluded, restricted, or favored based on one specific identity. Studies have described perceived discrimination as being a constraining factor for immigrants’ outdoor recreation (e.g., Kloek, Peters, & Sijtsma, 2013; Krymkowski et al., 2014; Stodolska, 2005). Constraints can also be identity-specific in the sense that they inhibit specific activities associated with a certain identity. If barbecuing for a Turkish immigrant would be part of a Turkish identity, for example, rules prohibiting building a fire in greenspace may constrain the enactment of that identity. Contexts do not necessarily have to be restrictive; they can also be enabling or activating. If a forester approaches participants of an excursion as immigrants, different behaviors, meanings, preferences, ideological positions and narratives may come to mind compared to when these people are approached as nature lovers.

People thus have multiple identities, personal and collective, which can be linked to recreational behavior in greenspace. This study seeks to add to the body of much-needed literature on behavioral variations between and within ethnic groups by examining the multiple identities shaping outdoor recreational patterns of young adults of non-immigrant and Turkish and Chinese immigrant backgrounds.

## Methodology

This research used a qualitative methodology. It was grounded in symbolic interactionism and constructivism, which consider the meanings individuals attribute to things as constructed in a process of interaction with others and on-going interpretations of such interactions (Blumer, 1969). In our study, we used group interviews to examine people’s multiple identities and related outdoor recreational behaviors. During group interviews, interactions and identity processes actually take place, while participants respond to and build on the views expressed by others in the group, making the group interview a method particularly suited for researching the construction of identity and social behavior (Hennink, 2007; Munday, 2006). A limitation of this method is that it is less suitable for understanding individual thoughts, feelings, or experiences compared to individual interviews (Hollander, 2004).

## Group composition

In our study, we included people of two immigrant backgrounds (Turkish and Chinese descent) and nonimmigrants. Group interviews were organized by country of origin and gender. This resulted in six (three ethnic backgrounds \* two genders) types of groups. Regarding age, we focused solely on young adults (between 18 and 35 years of age). Young adults are an interesting research group because they potentially form both current and future greenspace users and may have unique outdoor recreational patterns. We only included second-generation immigrant participants, meaning that their parents were born

**Table 1.** Group interview composition.

Group number	Ethnicity	Gender	Total number of participants	Number of 1st generation immigrants	Number of 2nd generation immigrants
1	Chinese	Male	3	1	2
2	Chinese	Male	3	1	2
3	Chinese	Female	4	1	3
4	Chinese	Female	2	0	2
5	Dutch	Male	6	n/a	n/a
6	Dutch	Female	6	n/a	n/a
7	Turkish	Male	8	3	5
8	Turkish	Female	5	1	4
9	Turkish	Female	2	0	2

abroad while they themselves were born in the Netherlands, and one-and-a-half-generation immigrants who were born abroad but spent most of their youth in the Netherlands. We chose to focus on this group since, through their parents and family, they have been in contact with the culture of their country of origin, and through school and participation in the society, they have been in touch with Dutch culture. Focusing on this group can show how acculturation in the recreation domain is shaped and how persistent ethnic behavioral patterns are.

Possible participants were contacted through organizations such as the Chinese Association Region Arnhem and the Turkish Ayasofia Mosque, and through Facebook. Gate-keepers, persons in these organizations having a large social network, helped the authors to find participants and to organize the group interviews. We aimed to have for every type of group one interview with six to nine people. Due to late cancellations and logistic difficulties, some groups were, however, smaller than six people. In those cases, another group interview was organized with participants of the same gender and ethnic background. All group sessions were conducted in Dutch. Interviews lasted until both the participants and the moderator had the feeling that all matters had been dealt with extensively and no issues had been overlooked. The group interviews generally took about 75 minutes, with some taking longer, also depending on the size of the group. Participants did not receive a financial compensation, except for traveling costs. All interviews were conducted between December 2011 and April 2012. In total, nine interviews were conducted in which 42 people participated, with an average age of 27 years (see Table 1). Most of the interviewees of Chinese and Turkish descent were second-generation immigrants. Except for one female of Turkish descent, two males of Turkish descent and one female of Chinese descent, the participants did not have children.

### ***Conducting the group interviews***

We conducted the study in the city of Arnhem, the Netherlands. In 2012, 18% of Arnhem's population of nearly 150,000 inhabitants had a non-Western immigrant background, (30% Turkish and 5% Chinese background) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2015). The natural surroundings of Arnhem are varied. Within a few kilometers from the city, you can find forests, the river Rhine with riverbank reserves, heather dominated landscapes (heathland), agricultural land, and hilly areas. These areas are accessible within half an hour by car and about one hour by public transport. Arnhem also has various large city parks, which are easily accessible by bike or on foot.

Topics discussed during the group interviews were, among others, recreational behavior and motivations, constraints and enabling environments, cultural differences, and collective



and personal identities. Our research focused on recreational activities performed in public nonurban and urban greenspace (e.g., enjoying nature, cycling, running), and did not include sports activities performed in green areas managed by sporting clubs (e.g., soccer on official soccer fields). To establish people's collective and personal identities, we asked questions such as, "Do you see differences or similarities in your recreational behavior compared to other (groups of) people?"; "Can you distinguish different groups in society with regards to outdoor recreational behavior and to which groups do you belong?"; and "How would you describe yourself in relation to your recreational behavior?" We used photos of landscapes ranging from urban greenspace to wilderness and photos of various outdoor recreational activities to elicit more responses. We tried to enhance trustworthiness by becoming familiar with existing organizations through preliminary visits, and by organizing the interviews together with a gatekeeper of the same background as the participants. Furthermore, we tried to create an informal and comfortable setting with snacks and drinks in a location familiar to the participants. The first author, a female of nonimmigrant Dutch background, moderated all group interviews, sometimes with the assistance of the gatekeepers.

All interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed verbatim, including the moderator's observations of the interactions and processes during the interviews. We coded and analyzed all interviews using the software package Atlas.ti. We created the codes beforehand from literature and added additional codes for new issues that emerged from the data. We tried to enhance the reliability of the analysis process by applying investigator triangulation and an iterative analysis process. The first author coded the transcripts, and two other authors read all transcripts and checked and commented on the coding, findings, and interpretations. Pseudonyms are used in the result section to distinguish between different participants and to ensure the participants' anonymity. Pseudonyms start with two letters that indicate country of origin (D = Dutch nonimmigrants, C = Chinese immigrants, T = Turkish immigrants) and gender (M = male, F = female).

## Results

Personal identities and two collective identities, namely identities based on ethnic background and being a youngster, stood out prominently in almost all group interviews as shaping outdoor recreational behavior. These will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

### *Personal identities*

A few of the participants (one or two per group interview) engaged in outdoor activities often, at least multiple times per month. Only in one of the group interviews with females of Chinese descent and in one of the group interviews with females of Turkish descent, no one participated in outdoor recreation frequently. The participants who frequently engaged in outdoor activities either had a very strong attachment to a specific outdoor recreational activity or related strongly to nature. The nonimmigrant DM\_Ruben, for example, described himself as a sailor who tried to spend every spare minute in a boat on the water. He was very perseverant in negotiating any constraint to this activity. Participants with a strong relation to nature often described themselves as nature lovers. They felt less bothered by constraints to outdoor recreation than others in the group interviews, as the following example of CM\_Sulaymaan illustrates:

Interviewer: Do you think outdoor recreation is important?

CM\_Sulaymaan: I think it's very important. To me it doesn't matter whether or not the weather is nice. I would also go out if the sun didn't shine.

CM\_Shaohan: But do you really *do* that?

CM\_Sulaymaan: Yes. To me, yes, it's important. And yes, it's like with many other things ... For many people, it's like this: if you don't want to do something, you'll find many excuses. But if you really want to go out into nature, you would do it, whatever the weather is like, no matter the accessibility. If you think it's important, you will go anyway. So for me those things don't matter. I go out into nature anyway.

As they had a very personal connection to outdoor recreation or nature, their exact behaviors and the kinds of greenspace that these frequent participants visited varied and did not seem to be related to their ethnic background. For example, DM\_Ruben mainly visited lakes, waterways, and islands in Friesland, a province in the north of the Netherlands; CM\_Sulaymaan visited various nonurban green areas all around the Netherlands, and TF\_Nawar mainly visited green areas at a walking distance. However, they often described the same kind of motivation. They were either motivated by the activity itself and the result of the activity, for example the rush of it, or by a strong need to experience nature. These strong attachments to a recreational activity or to nature can be described as a personal identity and can be compared to what in previous research has been called a leisure identity (e.g., Williams, 2002) or an environmental identity (e.g., Clayton & Opatow, 2004). Leisure identities and environmental identities are suggested to be strongly influenced by experiences in people's youth and by personal characteristics (Ward Thompson et al., 2008). Although we did not specifically ask the participants with a leisure or environmental identity about the history of their behavior, several of them mentioned that they had engaged in the respective activities for years or even as a child.

It is interesting to note that in all ethnic groups there were participants who strongly identified with nature or a specific outdoor recreational activity and who visited greenspace often. In their personal love for nature or for a specific outdoor recreational activity, all participants saw themselves as "differing" from others in the group and from their peers, as the following example illustrates:

Interviewer: With whom do you go out?

CM\_Sying: On my own, all alone. Sometimes I ask, to be sure ... friends whether they want to join. Well, most of the time they won't. So then I go by myself.

CM\_Sheng-Du: That's remarkable, that you go by yourself ...

CM\_Sagwau: I would not easily do that.

CM\_Sheng-Du: I would never think: 'nobody joins; I'll go on my own!' For me, I wouldn't go to the park alone, but you are really a nature-lover, CM\_Sying!

CM\_Sying: Actually, I do love to explore nature, yeah. I have been like that since I was young, such a type of person.

Among participants of Turkish and Chinese descent, environmental identities were experienced as more deviating from the norm than among nonimmigrant Dutch. Participants of Turkish and Chinese descent who did not frequently visit greenspace were rather surprised to discover that someone of their age and ethnic background would visit greenspace frequently, which was not so much the case for nonimmigrants. Nature lovers of Turkish and Chinese descent also expressed more explicitly that they felt they were "different." The remark TF\_Nawar made about her love for visiting nature by herself is a good example: "I don't mind, they may call me the village idiot." This might even have made the nature lovers of Turkish and Chinese descent more determined to persist in their behavior.

### **Being a youngster**

While only a few participants described personal nature-related identities, being a youngster came up as very influential in outdoor recreational behavior in all groups. Almost all

participants considered themselves youngsters. Participants who were asked to distinguish groups of people with the same outdoor recreational behavior as their own mostly indicated people of the same age, who they described as “youngsters”:

Interviewer: Do you see any differences or similarities between what you do in outdoor recreation and what other people do?

DF\_Maaik: Well, when you look at who is taking a walk in the forest on an average day ... You barely see people of our age in the forest, only very few ... extremely few.

DF\_Melinda: I do see people between 20–30, who go for a run in the woods, or in parks ... I increasingly see such youngsters, going outside for a run. But not to ... well, just to go running.

Descriptions of what it is like to be a youngster in relation to outdoor recreation were quite similar in all ethnic groups. Most commonly, participants related being a youngster to a low frequency of outdoor recreational behavior. They described going outdoors to experience nature as something youngsters would not easily do. They did sometimes visit greenspace for sports activities like running and mountain biking and for social activities like “hanging out in the park.” These activities generally took place in greenspace in the close vicinity of the participants’ homes and usually together with peers, although sports activities were sometimes practiced alone. The natural world then mainly was a décor for recreation. Chinese and Turkish immigrants mentioned social activities as typical for youngsters more often than non-immigrants did. In all ethnic groups, participants described motivations such as socializing with peers and exercising/maintaining a good health as more important than motivations related to nature itself. In the words of CM\_Shaohan:

For me it’s like, when you are with a group of peers you just want to do something, instead of just sitting at home. One of the options is going to the forest, or whatever, to the park or the Hoge Veluwe [Dutch conserved natural area]. But it’s more like you are together with others and want to do something, no matter what. The forest itself is never the aim.

Other motivations for outdoor recreation mentioned in all ethnic groups were to have a moment’s quiet and to experience freedom. The participants described their lives as busy and demanding, and greenspace formed a more relaxing counterpart to their daily lives. Furthermore, greenspace formed a place where youngsters felt free to be who they were and do what they wanted to do among their peers. The importance of freedom also showed from the participants’ dislike of regulations. As TM\_Askari mentioned: “There are enough places where you have to mind the rules. In nature, I don’t want to think about rules, I want to relax and experience freedom.” In most groups, rules on barbecuing and picking fruits and nuts were brought into question. Nonimmigrant males also mentioned a dislike of rules on building fires and walking off the pathways. The dislike of regulations seemed to be strongest among males of Turkish descent and nonimmigrant males.

Important constraints to outdoor recreation related to an identity of “being a youngster” were time constraints, accessibility, having no company, and the regulations described above. Time restrictions were closely related to accessibility: the interviewees indicated that when greenspace is close by and easily accessible, it is possible to visit it just for a short time or between other activities. Although most participants did not frequently take part in outdoor recreation, they all had a positive attitude toward nature. The participants assumed that when they grew older and started a family, they would increase their visits to nature, as became evident from a discussion among males of Turkish descent:

Interviewer: What are your most important motivations for outdoor recreation?

TM\_Ayman: I think it's doing something together with a group of people. I'm not going to ... whatever ... to observe nature or something like that. I don't uh ...

TM\_Ali [35, oldest participant in this group, who did not so much consider himself a youngster]: When you reach a certain age, you do visit nature for that reason. When you have a child ... For me, that's the case.

TM\_Ayman: Yes, but I haven't reached that age. [...]

TM\_Ali: Yes, I know it from my own experience. Five years ago, I did not go ... I went out to see my friends or for sports or to do something together. Not for nature itself. But now I see that it is important as well.

Both Turkish and Chinese immigrants distinguished recreational behaviors as youngsters from behaviors related to their ethnicity, as the following discussion shows:

CM\_Sagwan [in reaction on one of the pictures]: It strikes me that these two groups on the picture are very segregated. I don't know whether this ... I think they are all from Turkish or Moroccan descent.

CM\_Sying: They keep to themselves a lot, you know.

Interviewer: Do you experience that yourself as well?

CM\_Sagwan: Yeah. The Chinese and Western culture are also quite different.

CM\_Sheng-Du: But only when you talk about family outings, then the Chinese form a close community. But if you visit the outdoors with friends, what I normally would do, you don't say: 'you sit here, I sit there because I'm Chinese' ... No, of course not!

In the next section we elaborate on how being of Turkish or Chinese descent was related to outdoor recreational behavior.

### ***Identities related to ethnic background***

The participants did not so much distinguish immigrants from nonimmigrants; they did not really perceive immigrants and nonimmigrants as meaningful categories in relation to outdoor recreation. Instead, participants identified with their more specific country of origin, namely being of either Chinese or of Turkish descent. The participants of nonimmigrant Dutch descent rarely referred to ethnicity in relation to outdoor recreation.

Activities related to the collection of food, for example, picking fruits and nuts, formed a special case and were mentioned often by members of all groups. Moreover, almost all flora that participants of Turkish, Chinese, and nonimmigrant Dutch backgrounds talked about were edible, such as chestnut, mushrooms, and berries. However, while the nonimmigrant Dutch participants also practiced these kinds of activities, the participants of Turkish descent saw such pastimes as typically Turkish and the participants of Chinese descent, as typically Chinese. In the following sections, we will elaborate on the perceptions and recreational use of greenspace that participants related to their specific ethnicity.

### ***Being of Turkish descent***

When bringing up the topic of outdoor recreation in groups with participants of Turkish descent, people quickly started to talk enthusiastically about daylong barbecues or picnics with extended families and friends of the same ethnic background. Although much liked, these daylong outings took place infrequently. The main activity during such an event was a large barbecue or picnic, but participants also described going for a walk nearby or playing ball games. Participants related these outings explicitly to their identity as being of Turkish descent. They only went on such outings with people of Turkish descent and clearly distinguished these outings as being unique in comparison to recreational activities in which others, i.e. people not of Turkish descent, engage:

TF\_Noor: Well, I have to say: if we, people of Turkish descent, go for a picnic, we're going to whoop it up. We also do things very exuberantly, I think.

(In the background others are saying 'yes!' and laughing)

TF\_Nawar: Dutch families ... they go ... and what do they take with them? Just some sandwiches! And what do we take with us?

Various participants together: Everything! [...]

TF\_Nawar: Now that I think about it, we are indeed very exuberant. All those things we take with us to go on a picnic ... even the sunflower seeds.

TF\_Nisa: Yes, those should be part of every picnic!

TF\_Noor: I remember one time that I had to go back home for the sunflower seeds. I said to myself: what are we doing here without those seeds?

TF\_Nisa: No picnic without sunflower seeds!

TF\_Noor: And that's something those other people just don't understand.

During these events, greenspace was mainly a background for social activities and socializing was an important motivation. Food played a central role in these events, especially food taken from home. These outings took place in a few specific green areas to which people kept returning. In this respect, the participants of Turkish descent very often mentioned one area along the river Rhine, *De Westerbouwing*, situated about 20 minutes by car from the center of Arnhem. The participants of nonimmigrant Dutch and Chinese backgrounds never mentioned this area. Participants may prefer this area because barbecues are allowed, something that is prohibited in many green areas in the Netherlands. For the participants of Turkish descent it also felt familiar and safe, maybe because the area is mainly visited by immigrants, and especially by people of Turkish descent. As TF\_Nawar explains, "I think we like to go somewhere where we can be ourselves." Although many stories were told about such events, these outings were not frequent activities and took place just a few times a year. Turkish immigrants engaged more frequently in activities that can be related to the identity of being a youngster, such as sports or hanging out with people of the same age.

Being of Turkish descent was more influential on outdoor recreation than just in relation to infrequent daylong outings. Almost all participants of Turkish descent were Muslim, and being of Turkish descent and being Muslim seemed closely intertwined. The Muslim religion was particularly important with respect to how the participants experienced nature. Participants of Turkish descent emphasized that Muslims should feel grateful to Allah for the beauty of nature. As TF\_Noor explained in reaction to the pictures shown: "When I see these pictures, I think: 'Maşallah.' That's what we say from a religious viewpoint to express our feelings about the beauty of the Creation. God, Allah, created this and all pictures, every landscape has its own beauty." Moreover, as a Muslim, they thought it important to take care of nature, and keep nature areas well-tended and clean, also during outings. Furthermore, the mosque sometimes organized outdoor recreational activities for Muslims.

As Nagel (1994) argued, identity is a dialectical process of what you think your identity is and what others think your identity is. Not only did the Turkish immigrants categorize themselves as being of Turkish descent, they also reported that others assigned them as members of this ethnic group. They gave examples of occasions in which they felt excluded or treated negatively because of their ethnicity. Although the participants never explicitly labeled their experiences as discrimination, they could be described as such. Interviewees of Turkish descent were the only ones to mention such occasions; participants of Chinese background did not mention these cases of mistreatment. The following discussion among males of Turkish descent gives an example of such an experience:

TM\_Azzam: Do you remember that night, when we were in the park around midnight, and the next day they found a dead body?

TM\_Ayman: Yes.

TM\_Azzam: Do you understand? Then we thought: 'Ok, we will never go there again at night'. So when we visit the park now, we leave around seven or eight in the evening.

Interviewer: So you won't go there anymore at night because you feel it's dangerous, it's not safe?

TM\_Askari: They immediately think of you as a suspect.

TM\_Azzam: You're with a group, you know. As an outsider, you will think: 'Aah, a group of Turkish guys, what are they doing here at midnight?' You're anyway suspicious when you walk somewhere at midnight with a group of Turkish guys.

Interviewer: So you are not so much afraid something will happen to you, but that you get suspected? [ ...]

Various participants together: Yes.

TM\_Azzam: I'm not so much afraid that something will happen to me. But to get suspected of something, that's far worse for me.

Mentioned exclusionary acts were mainly what have been called "low-level" examples of discrimination (Chakraborti, 2010), and included unpleasant looks and negative remarks by other visitors in greenspace as well as by official authorities. Although both females and males of Turkish descent mentioned such incidents, only males said they were seen as "suspicious" or "potential aggressors."

### ***Being of Chinese descent***

Their minority ethnicity seemed to be less central to the participants of Chinese descent than it was to the interviewees of Turkish background. The participants of Chinese descent described that immigration history and the Chinese culture played a major role in outdoor recreational patterns for their parents or other first-generation Chinese immigrants, but that they themselves did not perceive being of Chinese descent as very influential in their outdoor recreational behavior. According to them, the culturally dependent prioritization of work and earning money limited outdoor recreation of first-generation Chinese immigrants. Many first-generation Chinese immigrants were motivated to migrate to the Netherlands in order to earn money for themselves and their families (Linder, Van Oostrom, Van der Linden, & Harmsen, 2011). As one-and-a-half and second-generation immigrants, the participants did not prioritize these, what they described as Chinese, values. They regarded their recreational patterns as quite similar to non-immigrant Dutch or to young people in general.

Still, there were three distinct types of outdoor recreational patterns related to cultural traits among the participants of Chinese background. Activities connected to collecting food, such as picking herbs or chestnuts, as well as food consumption, such as picnicking, were popular among participants of Chinese descent. Such activities were usually carried out in small groups with family members and were seen as typically Chinese (see above). Furthermore, some participants practiced Tai Chi, a type of Chinese martial arts often practiced outdoors, in public parks. Tai Chi was also described by participants as something typically Chinese. Lastly, the participants of Chinese descent reported a preference for comfort and hygiene as part of their Chinese background. Litter and the possibility of getting dirty constrained their outdoor recreation. They especially mentioned comfort and hygiene in relation to camping:

CM\_Sheng-Du: I play hockey myself, so sometimes I go to a tournament with my hockey team. Then they bring a tent and a sleeping bag, and they just stay in a big ... uh ... actually on a field of grass. The first time I joined them, I thought: 'Wow, this is weird, that's typically Dutch! We don't know this.'

(In the background others laugh and agree)

CM\_Sheng-Du: This is really a country of campers. In the forest, along the rivers, outdoors ... That was an eye-opener to me: 'Is that normal!?' Well, apparently it is. And even for little kids, in those tents ... it's really strange [ ...].



CM\_Sagwau: I think that many Chinese ... they don't like these kinds of things. For us, if we want to go somewhere, we prefer a hotel. We do go outdoors, but we're not going to sleep outside in nature.

Camping was perceived in various Chinese interview groups as typically Dutch.

### ***Being of Dutch descent***

While the participants of Turkish and Chinese descent made quite a few references to their ethnic background, the nonimmigrant Dutch barely referred to an identity of "being of Dutch descent." It is likely that the nonimmigrant Dutch were not so much aware of such an ethnic identity. For a dominant group, ethnic identity tends to be less visible and less salient as a result of dominant status and is often taken for granted (Doane, 1997). As members of a majority group, they could consider their behavior and perceptions as "normal behavior," while for outsiders their behavior could be perceived as culturally distinct. Indeed, some perceptions and activities were labeled by participants of Turkish or Chinese descent as typically Dutch or were almost exclusively mentioned by nonimmigrant Dutch participants. Water sports activities, such as sailing and windsurfing, were examples of activities only mentioned by nonimmigrant Dutch, and nonimmigrants were the only ones to speak positively of camping. Furthermore, nonimmigrant Dutch participants described visiting greenspace in order to have a good conversation that was deepened by being in greenspace:

DF\_Marieke: For example, when I go for a walk with my mother, we're just focused on each other, nothing else. For one reason or another, when you are in nature, you talk about different topics than at home or in a bar. How this works, I don't know, but the forest certainly has an influence. I have the most significant conversations in the forest! Maybe you feel freer? Or ... not too busy, no obligations ...

DF\_Maaïke: Nobody can overhear you ...

DF\_Marieke: Yes ... You are more relaxed and don't need to look into each other's eyes, as you're walking next to each other. And in the meantime you're enjoying yourself, so you draw closer together. I'm sure I have different conversations with my mother when I visit her at her home.

This may be an extra motivation for nonimmigrants to visit greenspace. Participants of Chinese and Turkish descent did not seem to perceive conversations in greenspace as being much different from conversations in other places.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This study showed that focusing on immigrant status alone does not give a proper understanding of the diversity in outdoor recreational patterns of ethnic groups. As Buizer and Turnhout (2011) argued, the emphasis on the role of "outsiders," such as immigrants, as a homogeneous group, hides the more diverse and ambiguous practices of greenspace use. Foregrounding immigrant status as the single frame of reference prevents distinguishing alternative relevant frames of reference (Brubaker, 2013). By describing various identities, both personal and collective, that affect outdoor recreational preferences and behaviors, we tried to disentangle the complexity of outdoor recreation. In our study, conducted among young adults of nonimmigrant Dutch and of Chinese and Turkish immigrant backgrounds in the Netherlands, personal identities, being a youngster and ethnicity were most prominent in shaping outdoor recreation. Furthermore, for some women, their gender identity influenced their outdoor recreational behavior as well, particularly regarding the perceived risk of getting assaulted. This resulted in more heterogeneity within groups as well as in more homogeneity between immigrants and nonimmigrants than usually described. This study thereby underlines criticism

voiced by various authors (e.g., Sasidharan, 2002; Shinew et al., 2006; Winter et al., 2004), namely that studies tend to focus too much on finding differences between ethnic groups at the expense of identifying intra-ethnic differences and similarities based on other identities such as age and gender.

When immigrants are considered as a homogeneous group that underparticipates in outdoor recreation, individual immigrants who frequently participate in outdoor recreation are overlooked. In all ethnic groups in this study, at least one participant frequently participated in outdoor recreation. Frequent participants in outdoor recreation related their behavior to personal identities such as an environmental or leisure identity. Being a “nature lover” or “sailor,” for example, largely guided their outdoor recreational behavior. These personal identities were important to the participants. When a collective identity, such as being young, conflicted with their personal identity, participants kept referring to their personal identity and were sometimes even more determined to persist in their behavior. Identity theorists have had difficulties in positioning personal identities in the identity hierarchy, but in general they tended to consider personal identity as easily overridden by collective identities, depending on factors in a specific situation, such as social comparison or normative fit (e.g., Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1974). Our study showed that in the context of outdoor recreation, personal identities can for some people be high up in the identity hierarchy.

For people without such a distinct personal drive to go out into greenspace, a limited number of collective identities seemed to prominently influence their outdoor recreational behavior. Being a youngster was mentioned as influencing outdoor recreation in all ethnic groups. This formed evidence for some homogeneity between immigrants and nonimmigrants in outdoor recreation. Being a youngster was related to a low frequency of outdoor recreation, as well as to sports and social activities with peers of the same age such as “hanging out in the park.” The social activities related to being a youngster clearly differed from, for example, typically Turkish social activities with extended families.

Besides being a youngster, ethnicity was mentioned as influencing outdoor recreational behavior in some situations. Turkish immigrants in our study often discussed outdoor recreation in the light of being Turkish. One specific recreational activity stood out as typically Turkish, namely daylong group outings including a barbecue or picnic. These infrequently performed outings formed a kind of icon of the Turkish identity (Jay & Schraml, 2009; Peters et al., 2010). Furthermore, the subjective identity of being of Turkish descent seemed to be closely related to the identity of being a Muslim, and the religion of participants of Turkish descent was important with respect to how they experienced nature (Buijs, Elands, & Langers, 2009; Schouten, 2005). For Chinese immigrants in our study, being of Chinese descent seemed to be less central in the context of outdoor recreation. However, certain recreational behaviors were affected by their Chinese origin, namely activities connected to food, such as picnicking or picking chestnuts (Dwyer, 1993; Sasidharan et al., 2005), practicing Tai Chi, and a preference for comfort and subsequent dislike of camping.

The findings of our study indicate that acculturation does not progress at the same rate among all ethnic groups, with participants of Turkish descent more focused on their minority ethnicity with respect to outdoor recreation than participants of Chinese descent. Comparable differences in acculturation patterns between Chinese and Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands have also been described for other domains of life, such as education (e.g., Linder et al., 2011). Furthermore, our study also indicates that ethnic identity may be sustained among second and maybe subsequent generations through certain recreational activities. Food collection and food consumption particularly seemed to function as domains in which ethnicity identity can be retained (Breton, Isajiw, Kalbach, & Reitz, 1990; Schösler, 2014).

While the previous paragraphs described identities claimed subjectively, identity can also be collectively ascribed by others (Deaux & Martin, 2003; Nagel, 1994). Ascriptions by others, and particularly ethnic discrimination, have been suggested as a constraint to outdoor recreation for immigrants (Gobster, 2002; Kloek, Peters, et al., 2013; Stodolska, 2005). Bonjour and Lettinga (2012) mentioned that in the Netherlands, nonimmigrant Dutch tend to see traits of migrants as determined by their membership in a specific ethnic group. Also, nonimmigrant Dutch are inclined to see group differences as essential, lasting, and irremediable. By consistently relating to an ethnic nonnative identity, other identities relevant for outdoor recreation may become overlooked, and an “us versus them” distinction may be reinforced. As Risbeth (2004) argued, the psychological containment of ethnic groups in fixed identities can lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes. In our study, this was mainly true for the Turkish group: participants of Turkish descent described a few situations in which they felt treated differently because of their ethnicity, either by other visitors or by authorities. Previous research showed that especially when ethnicity is highly visible, immigrants may perceive discrimination during outdoor recreation (Kloek, Peters, et al., 2013). Indeed, the Turkish group outings are a very visible form of outdoor recreation and a well-known icon.

The main limitations of our study lie in the methodology. A thorough analysis of complex phenomena such as identities and outdoor recreation requires data obtained through various methods. Further research, based for example on (participant) observations or individual interviews, is needed to gain a better understanding of how different identities are activated and practiced through interactions in specific recreational contexts. As we showed that recreational behavior strongly differs between and within ethnic groups, future research should focus on various ethnic groups. It would also be interesting to include other age groups to examine the importance of age in other populations. We could imagine that in middle-aged groups being a parent is perceived as more important than age, something that we hinted at in one of the quotations in the Results section.

This study has been set up in the context of policy makers and nature organizations trying to increase social inclusion in recreational use of greenspace, also because of the potential positive effects of outdoor recreation on health and well-being (Bowler, Buyung-Ali, Knight, & Pullin, 2010; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). We think that the multiplicity of identities offers opportunities to increase inclusion in outdoor recreation. Focusing on multiple identities, such as age or personal identities, may help to come up with other policy and management approaches and may prevent from reinforcing ethnic stereotypes. Important constraints to youngsters seemed to be time constraints and the accessibility of green areas. To encourage youngsters, including young immigrants, to participate in outdoor recreation more often, nature organizations should focus not only on “wild” nature areas but also on easily accessible urban and peri-urban greenspace. Personal nature-related identities could form an interesting opportunity to attract immigrants as well. Individual nature lovers are found in all ethnic groups. As these people are very enthusiastic about outdoor recreation, they may become gatekeepers to larger networks of friends and family. However, immigrants’ possibilities to enact a personal identity may be more constrained compared with nonimmigrants. For example, nonimmigrant Dutch nature lovers often gather in groups, such as the Dutch Youth for Nature Study, in which they share information and experiences. These groups largely consist of non-immigrants. By enabling contacts between immigrants and nonimmigrants with a personal nature-related identity, involvement of immigrants in outdoor recreation could be enhanced. Such an approach may be particularly promising for immigrants who spent (most of) their youth in the Netherlands, as they usually already have more contacts with nonimmigrants.

Nature organizations trying to increase public support and participation should be aware of the extent to which their attempts are based on limited, and especially Western, ideas. The practice of creating greenspace may forge identities and reproduce inequalities (Grove, 2009). For example, possibilities for water sports, a typically Dutch activity, are often provided in Dutch natural areas, while collecting products such as nuts and fruits, an activity practiced in various ways by all studied ethnic groups, is generally forbidden, even though both activities may have hazardous ecological effects. Not only in the Netherlands, but also in other Western countries, attempts to increase public support for nature conservation may be based on Western ideas. For example, Byrne (2011) showed that “white” normative ideas of nature are reflected in the design and layout of American parks, the facilities they contain, and the recreational programs offered.

An identity perspective allows us a more in-depth understanding of different types of recreational behavior, which goes beyond the well-known stereotypes. Taking the multiplicity of identities as a starting point offers fresh theoretical insights and broadens policy and management options to increase inclusion and public support for the conservation of nature, biodiversity and greenspace.

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