

The Assets of Non-Dominant Ethnic Students Regarding Their Educational Experiences: A

Narrative Inquiry with the Use of Photovoice

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Abstract

With the growing cultural diversity in the world, classroom diversity in the Netherlands increases as well. According to research the performances of non-dominant ethnic students show lower scores than the performances of dominant ethnic students. This study uses asset-based pedagogy to find the cultural knowledge non-dominant ethnic students gained from their culture and how this knowledge affects their educational experiences in their perspectives. In this study non-dominant ethnic students are defined as students with a non-western background. Asset-based pedagogy focuses on the strengths and cultural knowledge of students. Teachers can build upon students' cultural knowledge during classroom instruction. This inductive study consists of narrative inquiry with semi-structured interviews and photovoice to define the assets of non-dominant ethnic students. The participants included 10 students from higher education in the Netherlands. Analysis of the study is done with themes found in the narratives that address the cultural assets and educational experiences of the students. The most common assets are family, religion, and cultural norms and values. The cultural backgrounds influence the educational careers of students and gives them perseverance and motivation. Moreover, the students use their assets in helping others.

Keywords: cultural diversity, asset-based pedagogy, non-dominant ethnic students, narrative inquiry, photovoice

As Dutch society becomes more ethnically diverse, so does the diversity of students in classrooms (CBS, 2019; Middelkoop, Ballafhik & Meerman, 2017). Diverse classrooms consist of students from both non-western and western ethnic. The Dutch society grows with international migrants. In 2019, the Netherlands counted 24, 2% immigrants. The biggest groups of people with a non-western migration background come from Turkey, Morocco and Suriname, respectively (CBS, n.d.). Numbers of Centraal Bureau Statistiek show an increase of students with non-western migration backgrounds that follow a bachelor in 2019 relative to 2002 (CBS Statline, 2020).

Due to increasing cultural diversity in the classrooms, schools should act on this diversity to ensure equity of all students (Davis & Armstrong, 2012). Several studies show that non-dominant ethnic students score lower than the dominant ethnic students on performance level and non-dominant ethnic students have fewer transfers to higher education (Driessen, 2000; Jalomo, 2000). In this research "dominant ethnic students" refers to students with the most common Dutch ethnicity, and "non-dominant ethnic students" refers to students who have at least one parent that was not born in the Netherlands (CBS, n.d.-a) and has a non-western racial background. Even when dominant and non-dominant ethnic students attend the same classes, research reveals the two groups do not perform on the same level. Non-dominant ethnic students score lower and drop out of school more frequently than the dominant Dutch students (Driessen, 2000; Maslowski, 2018; Middelkoop et al., 2017; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Vasta, 2007). Despite the equal access for non-dominant ethnic students, the different performances persist and the gap between the groups widens instead of narrows (Middelkoop et al., 2017). Research about non-dominant and dominant ethnic students in the Netherlands of Severiens and Wolff (2008) revealed that non-dominant ethnic students perform less well and get less credits in one year of studying than the dominant

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students. Besides, their research confirmed that the students acquire lower levels of learning than the dominant ethnic students.

The function of the teacher plays an important role in the performance of non-dominant ethnic students. Teachers' expectation on students is positively related to the relationship between teacher and student (Hughes, Gleason & Zhang, 2005; Muller, Katz & Dance, 1999) and the expectation on non-dominant ethnic students of the teacher influences the actual success of those students (Ferguson, 2003; Weinstein, Gregory & Strambler, 2004). According to research of Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (2003), which exists of conducted studies about non-dominant and dominant ethnic students, agreed in the ethnic inequality as most common explanation for the difference in performances. Teachers think in a deficit way about the performances of students (Kennedy & Soutullo 2018; Smit, 2012) which has a negative impact on students' performances (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). Deficit thinking theory describes how educators attribute the school failure of non-dominant ethnic students to the structure of their family, their linguistic background, and their culture (Valencia, 1997, 2010). Deficit thinking results in stereotyping students' abilities and it impacts teachers' expectations and the teaching practice (García & Guerra, 2004; Smit, 2012). These attitudes do not support the students and their progress (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018).

Classroom diversity asks for acting on different needs of the culturally diverse students (Davis & Armstrong, 2012). In this study, culture is defined as social interactions inside and outside ethnic communities and consists of: language, religion, art, music, dress, traditions, and ways of living that define communities and households (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Nagel, 1994). Understanding students' cultural backgrounds can help teachers in their instructional strategies (Ford & Kea, 2009; Rychly & Graves, 2012). Besides, delivery of a curriculum that fits different cultural backgrounds depends on the teacher (Vasta, 2007). Asset based pedagogy uses the strength of students, instead of the failures

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(López, 2017). With this pedagogy, teachers use the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse students, with the aim to teach students more effectively.

Academic skills connect with life experience and references of the students and makes it more personally meaningful (Gay, 2002). But, therefore teachers and schools need to know their students, the cultures and the assets of these students. Knowing the cultures and backgrounds of students can help the asset-based pedagogy (Gay, 2002) and enhances learning (González, Andrade, Civil & Moll, 2001). Funds of knowledge concept of Moll et al. (1992), is useful to discover the assets of students. This concept describes the bodies of knowledge students learned from their households or communities.

To address the performance gap between non-dominant and dominant ethnic students and the increasing classroom diversity, research on the assets of non-dominant ethnic students is necessary. Asset-based pedagogy and funds of knowledge concept by Moll et al. (1992) act as a conceptual framework for this study. To discover the assets of non-dominant ethnic students and to address to their perspectives, this research has the research question: What assets do Dutch students from non-western backgrounds bring with them to their study and how do those students describe how these assets affect their educational experiences?

Conceptual Framework

Asset-Based Pedagogy

Asset based pedagogy refers to educational approaches that consider the cultures of students as strengths. Instead of looking at differences between non-dominant and dominant ethnic students, these approaches look at the students' cultural knowledge, experiences and values, called the assets, students bring to the classroom (Jackson & Boutte, 2018; López, 2017; Missingham, 2017). This pedagogy has the goal to incorporate these assets in the curriculum and teaching practice (López, 2017). The term asset-based pedagogy came out of the culturally sustaining pedagogy of Paris (2012) which aimed for schooling environments

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that embrace diversity and equality. In the period of 1970-1980 various scholars did educational research on marginalized students to provide interventions and pedagogies against deficit thinking (Paris, 2012). Some frameworks that originated out of these studies include: funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), pedagogical third space (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Tejada, 1999) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These studies contribute to honoring the cultures of students and the execution of the social and cultural justice, and fall under the asset-based pedagogy term.

Cultural Funds of Knowledge

Cultural funds of knowledge describe the prior knowledge students have and use when learning. Students bring home experiences to the classroom. According to Moll et al. (1992) cultural funds of knowledge include the bodies of knowledge and skills that are historically and culturally developed and essential for households and individuals. The household of a family functions in connection with other households with diverse social networks. These networks, based on good social relationships, asset knowledge, skills, information and cultural values and norms (Moll, 1992). The research of Moll et al. (1992) investigated the social history, the origin and development, and the labor history of the households to examine where and how the knowledge is formed. In their research they mentioned a couple examples of funds of knowledge in households like economics, household's management, material and scientific knowledge, religion and medicine. For instance, children learn from their parents how to cook and from their grandparents how to repair a car, learning leaded by the interest and questions of the child himself (Moll et al., 1992). The funds of knowledge students bring to school have different aspects of learning than learning in school. In households learning takes place in environments with trusted people in social relationships. Those people also come by in other situations, so they know each other in different contexts and not only as a learner and teacher (Moll et al., 1992).

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Studies about this theory involve not only funds of knowledge, but also the way households use those funds of knowledge. So, situations in which they use those bodies of knowledge and how they exchange skills or knowledge with social relationships (Moll et al., 1992). Besides funds of knowledge within households, they also appear in other environments between households in other contexts, such as parties or religion places, so there is a cultural dynamic exchange in the whole family or community. The bodies of knowledge and skills become a part of the daily life and exchanges in a routine, thus without awareness of their funds of knowledge (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

Asset Based Pedagogy in Educational Research

Regarding the funds of knowledge lens, the communities of students bring resources important for advancing and changing education (Moll, 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Teachers can use students' assets to build up on those assets the students bring with them to the classroom (Hillburn, 2015; Moll et al., 1992).

According to research, the majority of teachers deals with an unawareness of understanding deeper culture and communities and the assets of their students. This has influence on the identity and role of teachers and thus on the instructional design of their classes (García & Guerra, 2004). Teachers can use the assets of students in designing their curriculum or instruction (Hogg, 2011). Research of Moll et al. (1992), gave the example of a teacher who got the idea of collaborating with students' household knowledge by seeing a student selling Mexican candy. The boy sold Mexican candy, using his funds of knowledge in practice and the teacher used this theme in a learning module, in which each student had their own association with candy and thus uses his/her own cultural knowledge. Using the cultural knowledge of students, instruction material and learning experiences become more relevant for the students (Hogg, 2011). Macias and Lalas (2014) named it Cross-Educational

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Teaching, which consist of a lesson plan that copies home dynamics to gain higher academic engagement.

Research of Ennsner-Kananen and Leider (2018) examined manners of instructional design that addressed funds of knowledge of students. They mentioned using multiple and various references by giving students certain information, or using narratives that level with the students' knowledge. Besides, research of Macias and Lalas (2014) revealed that educators could use their students' communities and knowledge in their classroom practices, to create more engagement of the students. Barton and Tan (2008) researched funds of knowledge in classes based on those funds, for example interviewing family members about cooking traditions and letting students present this in the classroom. Their study concluded that students were ready to use their funds of knowledge in school because the teacher actively invited the students to use them in discussions and assignments and this caused a more active participation and achievement in academic performances (Barton & Tan, 2008). López (2017) found a reading achievement among non-dominant ethnic students by using cultural knowledge of the students and incorporating it in the curriculum to co-construct knowledge. Also, the cultural based curriculum of Lipka et al.'s research (2005) showed evidence of improvement of academic performance of non-dominant ethnic students and of the closing achievement gap between dominant and non-dominant ethnic students. Besides they found positive relationships between students and teachers by using the cultural based curriculum.

So, asset-based pedagogy benefits the performances of non-dominant ethnic students. In this study asset-based pedagogy is researched in the perspectives of the non-dominant ethnic students and related to their educational experiences via narrative inquiry in which the students' stories are told.

Methodology

This research draws upon a social constructivist research paradigm with a qualitative approach. The purpose of this narrative inquiry case study is to inductively describe the assets of non-dominant ethnic students in the Netherlands from their perspectives. This approach fits best because research regarding the experiences and lives of participants requires in depth description and analyses (Boeije, 2010). Narrative research collects experiences of individuals, provides unheard voices and collects it into qualitative stories (Moen, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). These stories arise from drawing and representing individuals within social and cultural context (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Using this approach can bring students and researchers together to construct school experiences (Moen, 2006; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), which matches the aim of the current study and therefore is used. The following paragraphs discuss the position of the researcher, followed by descriptive information of the participants and the data collection tools.

Researcher Positionality

As an experienced dance teacher in various educational environments, I came across situations in which students with different cultural backgrounds attended my classes. I discovered that those different cultural backgrounds have various things to offer in the classroom and those students also need their own type of relationship with their teacher. As a teacher and student, I belong to the dominant Dutch culture, with an Indonesian background. My family integrated in the Netherlands years ago, with both of my parents born in the Netherlands and therefore I belong to the dominant students. But because of my Indonesian background, I understand family cultures, traditions and communities. For example, the cooking traditions, and family meetings and differences with Dutch people. Also experiences in working with different ethnic cultures and refugees helped me in understanding different norms, values and behaviors. As a student at the university I am standing in the same

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educational environment as the interviewees, in this way I can understand them when they talk about study related issues and the students will probably feel comfortable.

Data Collection

Participants. Purposive sampling of non-dominant ethnic students from different higher education schools in the Netherlands resulted in the recruitment of 10 participants for this study (see recruitment script in Appendix F). The sample consisted of 1 male and 9 females (see Table 1). All participants signed the consent after explanation and included audio recording of the interviews and taken photos by the participants in terms of their assets (see consent form in Appendix C), with anonymity protected by pseudonyms.

Table 1

Demographic Information Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Cultural Background	Country of Birth
Dounia Alaoui	26	Morocco	Netherlands
Gabby Klimov	36	Syria (Caucasian)	Syria
Jacob Hendriquez	25	Curacao	Curacao
Maria Christina	19	Curacao	Netherlands
Miray Demir	26	Turkey	Netherlands
Nina Royer	23	Aruba	Netherlands
Stephanie Gamire	20	Curacao	Netherlands
Vanessa Marina	36	Suriname	Suriname
Yara Bijl	25	Suriname	Netherlands
Yasmine Amhed	25	Palestina/Syria	Syria

Data Sources. The data sources used for this research were semi-structured open-ended interviews that included the method photovoice (see Appendix D). Semi-structured interviews ensured subjects of the study were covered and ensured talking from the perspective of the participant. Besides, semi-structured interviews are useful for emotional sensitive issues (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The ethnographic nature of the questions of the interview gave participants the possibility to talk narratively and gave the researcher the chance to detect the behavior of cultures (Spradley, 1979). The interviewer listened to the stories and asked for confirmation to retell the stories, without filling in answers of the participants. The interviews were done in Dutch or English, depending on the preference of the participant.

The participants had to be understood from their perspectives and viewpoints to discover the assets in form of a story and therefore the method photovoice is used. Photovoice originally comes from Wang and Burris (1997) and gives people the opportunity to identify, represent and enhance their community with a photographic technique. First, participants can record and reflect strengths and concerns of their communities. Second, it promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about communities. In the current study, participants bring three existing photos to the interview that relate to their households and places that influence their learning with thoughts and written notes about these places or people. The participant got instructions of the photovoice and some questions to think about while choosing the photos (see Appendix E). In the interview the interviewee can describe the photos and tell what is learned or valued by this photo and why this photo was chosen, so the participant can tell his/her own story. After each interview, the transcription was written and if needed translated to English.

Data Analysis Procedures. After transcribing, the interviews were reread and all ten transcriptions were written into narratives. These narratives make meaning of the stories from

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the informants in terms of temporality, sociality and place written in context based on the narrative inquiry method of Clandinin, Pushor and Murray Orr (2007). Those three elements, which they called the commonplaces, formed the framework of the analyses and interpretation. Moving back and forward in time (temporality), looking at the social interactions (sociality) and the different places (place) of all stories resulted in themes that answer the research question (Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007).

After writing the narratives, the researcher reread the narratives and discovered themes that addressed the research question in each narrative apart. These themes were found with looking at repetitions, similarities, differences and theory related material of the transcriptions. Repetitions of experiences in a story of an individual, similarities and differences in changes in experiences of the informant and theory related material is about connecting the experiences with the research question (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Afterwards the narratives and their associated themes were compared with each other and were combined in overall themes (see Table 2). The frequent themes across the narratives were chosen. And afterwards, the three stories that represent these themes best and in a broad sense were chosen to present.

The term reliability is not set in narratives approaches. Instead, the criteria of plausibility and adequacy ensure the quality of the research and narratives. Plausibility deals with the realness of a story, realized in the narratives by keeping close to the words of the participant. Adequacy handles the sufficiently of data and realized with interviewing 10 participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds, ages and countries of birth (see Table 1) (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) using systemic analyzing in each narrative (Morrow, 2005). As a researcher, interviewer and interpreter of all narratives, by being part of the dominant culture, the researcher may have influenced the results. The study would be strengthened

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when the narrators worked together with the researcher to conduct the narratives. Due to the time this was not realized.

Findings

In each of the ten narratives the student has their own cultural assets and experiences related to their assets. In all stories themes were found, see Table 2 for combined themes and additional examples. The themes that emerged as most common and most related to the research question of all stories consists of: *cultural role and influence in life, role of family in life and study* and *study career*. And therefore, three narratives were chosen to present those themes. See appendix G for the other 10 narratives.

The Narratives

The narratives of Dounia, Miray and Yasmine present the stories and themes of the non-dominant ethnic students in this study. Dounia and Miray both are born in the Netherlands and Yasmin lives in the Netherlands for four years now. The three narratives have their own common thread. Dounia showed her ability in adapting to the society to make a chance, that is also why she ended up in a master with her perseverance. Miray found a way in which she could live with her culture and being successful, and uses her educational experiences in helping others. Yasmine notices the freedom and good circumstances she now has in the Netherlands while she has to change her life drastically.

Dounia's story – being the chameleon to make a chance in the society. Dounia Alaoui is a Moroccan woman, eager to tell her story about her educational experiences in the Netherlands. It is immediately clear she has a lot to tell about her busy life in which she is studying, teaching and working. Her parents are both from Morocco, but Dounia is born in the Netherlands and they live together with six in total in an apartment in Utrecht. Because of their age gap, she sees her two younger brothers grow up. She always helped her parents in the household with cleaning and cooking, something she was proud of.

Table 2

Overall Themes of 10 Narratives

Overall Themes	Examples of Narratives
Identifying and adapting to a culture	<p>She feels she has to be busy all the time, work hard, keep working and studying and care for her children.</p> <p>She feels she is mixed in between the Dutch and the Antillean culture but she cannot say why.</p>
Collaborating and learning from and with each other	<p>She learned from her family to work together, to achieve more than when you are on yourself.</p> <p>You broaden your knowledge with people who are different than you, with a different culture and a different way of thinking.</p>
Cultural role and influence in life	<p>She noticed that sometimes she dives very deep into the Dutch culture and then doubts about the things she learned from her own culture.</p> <p>After this experience her religion became increasingly important for her and she applied it more in her life.</p>

Table 2 continued

Overall Themes of 10 Narratives

Overall Themes	Examples of Narratives
Language differences	<p>Almost all children have problems with the second language and understanding what they read.</p> <p>Her parents barely speak the Dutch language, so she always helped her parents in conversations.</p>
Role of family in life and study	<p>She had the feeling her parents could not help her because they did not have the knowledge themselves and she would only get things back that did not help.</p> <p>Education was something very important for her grandfather, and thus for the rest of the family.</p>
Study career	<p>The big steps to moving to the Netherlands and follow a study at university gives her perseverance.</p> <p>She wants to be an added value for the youth that comes in the mosque and help the elderly where possible.</p>
Using cultural assets in classroom	<p>Making it more culturally related would help in understanding.</p>

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In her culture it is something to be proud of to be able to do things with your hands. Her parents barely speak the Dutch language, so Dounia always helped her parents in conversations with Dutch organizations, at school and even had to search her own doctor as a little girl. Also, she is responsible for the progress talks of her younger brothers.

As a child she was raised with the Islamic school in the weekends. But she went, as a Muslim, to a Christian primary school with not many immigrants, and was directly confronted with praying in a Christian way. She felt it was something different than she learned at home. She noticed that she was praying for something else than she was doing at home and did not want to do something wrong in terms of her religion. At this point she already noticed the difference between her, her culture, and her classmates. She as well explains it with a photo of her and her grandmother at an Islamic party, which is very important for her and her family. This event was on a day that she also had to go to college and therefore had to change after the occasion, so that she can go to the university in 'normal' clothes. She transforms like a chameleon to go to school. In the middle of her secondary school she started wearing a headscarf. It was very important for her to do, but immediately she noticed a difference in how people saw and contacted her.

Not only her believe made her different, also her ethnic background. It made her happy when there was an intern teacher at her school with a different cultural background. Emotionally and intensely she tells about a conversation she had with her teachers from primary school. In her last year she got the secondary school advice to do vmbo-t/havo while she wanted to do vwo. When she told her teachers of her plan, they laughed about it. Her mother was with her, but not saying anything, so Dounia felt very lonely and misunderstood. In her eyes, the teachers referred to years earlier and did not trust her cleverness, so they chose the safe route. "It is something that touches you, that such a person can make such a decision for you". At her secondary school, where she did follow vwo, everything went

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smoothly and without much effort. Until her last two years, in which she had trouble with some subjects. After some failed exams she got the strong advice of her mentor to go to mbo. It shocked her and she decided to find out her own path in which she eventually succeeded her havo, afterwards HBO and now she is studying for a master's degree. In her experience, there was not many openness at school from teachers into who she was as a person and in which situation she was. Besides she feels that she is acting what the world wants and dealing with the expectations of the outside world and in her eyes, this will not help in creating equal opportunities. Again, she acts like the chameleon to fit in the expectations of the world. She asks herself, is she still herself when she keeps changing her colors?

With her own experiences at home, where she had to help her parents in conversations and reading letters, and her experiences at school she has become a very motivated and active woman. It gave her the insight of the importance of education. She decided to follow the NT2 training next to her master to become a teacher in 'learning Dutch as second language.' With the completion of this training she can now help others to learn the Dutch language so they can live independently in the society as well.

Miray's story - the growing role of Islam. Miray Demir, a 26-year-old HBO student, born and raised in Arnhem in the Netherlands. Her grandfather moved from Turkey to the Netherlands as a guest worker and so did her parents after an arranged marriage. She grew up with her brother and sisters and she still lives in that same house, together with her parents and one of her sisters. The first thing that she describes about her cultural background is the importance of her nuclear family. Her sisters and brother now have children and Miray sees them a lot. She said: "I attach great importance to this. Family, they are vulnerable, it feels like your own. They can make you the happiest, or hurt you the most. It is very much caring and doing a lot for each other, without being asked or told." She thinks this grew out of the

relationship that her father had with his parents and watered down over the years because of as she named it, unpleasant events.

Next to family, her Islamic religion is important to her and has become more and more important during her life. Earlier, the family was not that strict in practicing their religion. Until the year 2012, in which her father did a pilgrimage. From that moment, the Islam became more important to the whole family and became even more important when Miray lost her grandmother. In 2017 she decided to go to Mecca with her parents and sister. She described it as a special place, the place she thought she will find herself. After this experience her religion became increasingly important for Miray and she applied it more in her life. Since eight months she is involved in the mosque and currently she is an active member of the board of the mosque. Her goal is to improve the education that they provide there. Besides, she wants to be an added value for the youth that comes in the mosque and help the elderly where possible.

Passionately she tells about her current successful study, she ended up in after other study experiences. At her elementary school her class consisted of 14 children, of whom one native Dutch and thirteen immigrant children. Teachers were used to this diversity and adjusted their education, for example in their parenting evenings. Also, they had a teacher that gives Turkish classes. Miray thinks she learned the Dutch language from her brother and sisters and from the environments in which she lived and played. She said: "Almost all children have problems with the second language and understanding what they read. Reading was most of the time about things that we did not know, so making it more culturally related would help in understanding". She named the example of using the word baklava or Turkish in a text or exercise, to ensure better listening and understanding. At her school they did celebrate all Dutch feasts, but they celebrated it with Turkish pastries, Moroccan cookies and other traditional foods that parents brought to school.

After the primary school which she ended up with good results, her secondary school was blond, blond, and blonder. She started her time there with friends of her elementary school, she called it: the foreigners in the safe place. But after her first year she mingled in with the Dutch girls. Homework was something to do in school, if she did it anyway. If that was at home she did it at night, because there was no space or time for homework. She did not have her own room and never had a desk. Her parents were always busy and both worked, her father worked in a car factory and her mother was a cleaning lady. School was not really a subject to be spoken of, she had the feeling her parents could not help her because they did not have the knowledge themselves and she would only get things back that did not help her. Her brother did support her after a progress talk with her teacher. He was shocked to hear she would not make it that year if she continued like she did, so he supported her doing her homework every day at school or together with him. This period has had an impact on her, because she could not do what she wanted. She described her father as being negative and reproaching her, while her brother gave her support. She began to accept there was no possibility from her parents in helping her, so she started to solve and do everything independently.

In her current second study, oral healthcare, she uses her experiences. She now describes herself as an eight-nine-mark student. She tells passionately and self-confident about her plans with this study. "I hope to achieve much bigger things with this, I see a lot of ignorance about the healthcare you can get in the Netherlands among immigrants, I want to help those people and tell them what they are entitled to for their health. I never had braces because my parents did not know it was possible". With all these educational experiences and the growing role of her religion in her life, she can now use it in helping other people at the mosque and in her future job.

Yasmine's story – forcedly moved to a different culture, but it is good to be here.

Yasmine is 25 years old and from Syria. Four and a half years ago she came to the Netherlands because of the wars in her country. She noticed a lot of differences between the two countries she has lived, but she appreciates and likes it here in the Netherlands and this experience made her the person she is. Yasmine followed the study Human Resource Management in Syria for six months when she had to move away because of the wars. From Syria she moved to Lebanon to arrange visas and from there, she moved with her husband and child to the Netherlands. In the Netherlands she started with language courses to improve her Dutch and afterwards she followed a preparatory year that prepared her for an HBO study. She is now continuing her Human Resource Management study in the Netherlands and currently in her second year.

She noticed her study differs much from her study in Syria, content wise but also because of the culture in education. She describes the Netherlands as different in everything and starts with describing the example of time. "Time is really superfast here". She feels she has to be busy all the time, work hard, keep working and studying and care for her children. It goes too fast for her and she dislikes it. In Syria she had more time for everything and especially for her family. After 21 years living in Syria, she is more used to the Syrian rhythm and therefore enjoyed life more there. But she stays positive and she does think that will change when she will find a nice job here. Remarkable is the fact that she talks about the insight she got from being always on time, which is not so normal in Syria. It is about respect, by being on time people show respect to each other. She tells that the respect in terms of time is better in the Netherlands than in Syria.

Besides time, also the educational vision is very different. In her own culture, studying after your secondary school was not really important, working is much more important. As a married woman she is different from the most women in Syria. Married women stay home

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and take care of the children and cook for the husband. A lot of people say you should not study as a married woman, but Yasmine does. Her husband is open and accepts that she does and is very supportive in her study as well. Yasmine and her husband both care for the children and both cook, differently than the most Syrian people would do. Yasmine does not want to be like them, “it would be a boring life”. She also wants to teach her children from her experience. They should study and get certifications in life, like she learned herself from her parents.

In her life and in the education in the Netherlands she notices the freedom she has here. By freedom she means, being able to say everything, something that was not so normal in Syria. There she could not say anything that she thought about her teacher, otherwise she would be in trouble. In the Netherlands, she can tell others when she has trouble with a teacher or when a teacher is absent a lot. Also, asking for help is something she would not do in Syria, because she would be ashamed for it. In the Netherlands she can and does. “I know what my rights and duties are.” In the social aspect she also notices the contact between men and women. In Syria, men stay together and women stay together. But here both groups are mixed, and she changed herself in it as well. She now talks with men and helps them if needed.

Having respect for each other is a very important value for Yasmine. She is amazed by the fact that her daughter can call her neighbor by her first name, while Yasmine learned her daughter to say ‘aunt’ to the neighbor. And this also happens at her study. “Calling a teacher *you*, I tried a lot to finally say it once. Because I am used to the fact that a teacher is hierarchically very high and you must have respect for him or her and have to call them Sir or Miss”. Now, she sees people do have respect in here, but very different. Another important value is her religion, the Islam. Being decent and wearing a headscarf are very important. It is something that stays with her and will not change. “I like my culture. I want to stick to these

things but there are some little things that I think are better here". Yasmine feels a lot of struggles in all the differences every day, but she knows it is better here and all those experiences made her the strong woman she is today.

Themes

Above stories represent the results of all ten narratives. The ten narratives show differences between non-dominant and dominant ethnic students, but also between the cultural norms and values they have. In the next section the three most common themes related to all ten narratives are described.

Cultural Role and Influence in Life. This theme consists the role of the cultural background in the participants' life, and how their culture forms their life. The students have knowledge of their culture, norms and values and their culture is useful and part of their everyday life. As part of their culture, religion comes out as an important asset.

The story of Miray shows the increasing role of her religion in her life, she now uses it more and more. Dounia went to a Christian primary school where she experienced a difference between her own religion and the religion that was practiced at her school. During her life she adapts to other cultures but carries her Islamite religion with her. When she started wearing a headscarf she experienced a different look at her from others and that is why she transforms from her cultural clothing after an Islamic party to more accepted clothing to go to her study to adapt to the Dutch. Maria and Vanessa are actively involved in the church. Maria tells her faith giving her perseverance and Vanessa talked about the togetherness of the people in the church. She says using her value of togetherness learned from her religion could benefit others in education as well. Both Yasmin and Gabby stepped away from their Syrian culture by starting a study as a married woman with children. They both adapt to the Dutch culture in a way, but they want to stick to their culture and religion. Gabby always tries to keep the

culture of her community with their own dances, social traditions and customs intact and she wants to give this through to her children.

Role of Family in Life and Study. The second theme is about the role of family in life and educational experiences of the students. The narratives describe their family as something that is always there and needs care.

Dounia, Jacob, Miray, Nina, Vanessa and Yara describe their family as a warm place that collaborates together and see each other often. They compare it with the Dutch people that are more on themselves, while these students learn to care for each other and keep in contact with their family. Although Miray's and Dounia's family are very important, they do not play a big role in the students' education. Miray's parents were too busy to talk about school, neither to help her. Only after a warning conversation with her teacher she was helped by her brother that saved her from failing. In the story of Dounia the Dutch language is an obstacle for her parents to help her so she felt lonely in it. On the contrary Vanessa's grandfather has played a big role in her educational career, and learned the whole family the importance of education.

Study Career. The third theme is about the forming of the study career of the students. The cultural background played a role in forming their educational experiences. Almost all students have a big amount of motivation and perseverance developed during their sometimes-tough educational experiences. They focus on the future and know the importance of their study.

Nina continued her study with her perseverance learned from her family, even while she felt alone and not supported by her teacher and peer students. This feeling originates out of not knowing each other. But it motivates her in her internship with refugees to make sure everyone is accepted and seen. Yasmin had to stop her study in Syria because of the wars and therefore undergo a different trajectory than she planned. Changing her study to learn a

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different language, afterwards a preparatory year to finally move on with her previous study in another country. Something positive that she discovered on this journey is the freedom. Now, she is critical on the teacher and education she gets. In the story of Miray she tells that her primary school and secondary school differed from each other. Her primary school was culturally diverse and she completed well, while her secondary school time was more blond and less successful for her. But those experiences helped her in her current study, in which she is very motivated. Also, she uses her experiences to help other students with a non-western background in their preparation for exams. Moreover, she tells about her future plans in which she wants to help immigrants with their healthcare. The career experiences of Dounia and Stephanie were without support of teachers and schools and they experienced differences between them and dominant students. After a lot of failing Dounia eventually came to her master and also helps immigrants with the Dutch language. Stephanie uses her experiences and it made her assertive and goal oriented. Jacob describes his primary school as culturally diverse that taught him about different cultures and how to deal with this diversity. He takes it with him to his coming career as dentist.

Additional findings

As seen in Table 2, other themes were found in the ten narratives. Some narrators had troubles with identifying themselves with a certain culture, mostly because they grew up in the Netherlands with their own household culture or because they lived in two or more countries. Yara felt that both the “white” and “dark” society did not accept her. The students adapt to the Dutch culture because they feel they need to, to achieve something in their study or to belong to other students, and thus forget their strengths from their own cultural assets.

Also, the students miss the collaboration and looking after each other in the Dutch culture. They want to learn more together and from each other’s cultures. Nina mentioned we broaden our knowledge by working with people from a different culture than your own, but

this is not happening in her education. Yara as well thinks we should use the differences of all students to connect.

According to the stories of Dounia, Miray and Yasmine, the Dutch language was an obstacle in their education. Because their home language was different, it influenced their school career in terms of understanding but also in the support they got from parents who do not speak Dutch. But, for example Dounia uses her two language in helping immigrants that want to learn the Dutch language.

Miray and Jacob spoke about the usefulness for students of the cultural assets. They say when it will be more related to their culture they would be triggered more to understand and willing to understand the lesson.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to find the assets of non-dominant ethnic students in the Netherlands and to investigate how these students say their assets affect their educational experiences. The most common assets the students describe contain their family, religion and norms and values. The strong band the students have with their family, the amount of time they spend with their family together and their religion form their lives. The differences between their own culture and the Dutch culture influences the progress in the studies of the students. The assets that students bring influence their educational experiences and students are not always able to use those assets in their education. The non-dominant ethnic students do not have the awareness of all strengths from their cultural background, but nevertheless use them, this is in line with the research of Barton and Tan (2008), who discovered this unawareness as well. But the students do use their own experiences as strengths in helping people by making use of their expertise and their own network. On top of that teachers do not recognize students' assets. The students talked about the missing relationship between themselves and teachers. This points out the unawareness of teachers which links to earlier

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research of García and Guerra (2004). This may also indicate that teachers have lower expectations of non-dominant ethnic students (Ewijk, 2011).

The motivation and perseverance of these students is present, because they know how to handle their difficulties and struggles, mostly independently. Andriessen, Phalet and Lens (2006) found out that non-dominant ethnic students attach more value to their future goals than dominant ethnic students and those goals drive their motivation, which is confirmed by the student's perseverance of the current study.

The assets related to the role of family corresponds with the concept of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) because the students learn from their family and households. The religion came out as important asset and forms the identity and lives of students, which is useful for the classroom when teachers have knowledge about those religions (Dallavis, 2011).

The additional findings show that the cultures of the students are not used or talked about in the classroom. Non-dominant ethnic students adapt to the Dutch culture, but they cannot use what they are good at, such as collaboration. Collaboration is missed by the students because of the individual atmosphere in the Dutch culture and the fact that their cultures are not used by the teachers. While collaboration between students with different cultural backgrounds also improves the multicultural attitudes of students (Geel & Vedder, 2010).

Implications

Using the assets in the classroom makes the student and the teacher aware of those assets and strengthen them. This will eventually lead to improvement of the performances, because then success is not only focused on standardized testing (Borrero & Sanchez, 2017). The strengths of those students are useful for teachers and peer students. For the teachers, the expectations on the students can change, what leads to better results and better relationships

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(Ferguson, 2003; Hughes, Gleason & Zhang, 2005). Besides, the students can use their skills and experiences of collaborating and taking care of others in the classroom with peers. This benefits the learning of the dominant ethnic students as well, who can learn from the different cultural assets as research of Hillburn (2015) and Borrero and Sanchez (2017) presented.

The non-dominant ethnic students have a minority role in their schools and in the society and they experience it is difficult to identify themselves to a certain group or culture. Using the assets of students can support them in identifying themselves (López, 2017; Martell, 2013; Missingham, 2017). Besides, by knowing and using the assets for instructional design, the performances of the non-dominant ethnic students improve and eventually the differences between dominant and non-dominant ethnic students can reduce, which supports equity (Borrero & Sanchez, 2017; Missingham, 2017).

Limitations

This study did not focus on the assets of different cultures, so it does not say anything about which assets belong to which non-western culture. Besides, the narrators told their stories in one interview due to lack of time. When conversations were spread over a period of time, the students could think and tell more about their cultural knowledge. Also, some of the students brought photos they made for this study instead of an artifact of their culture. This may be of influence on the amount of in-depth information on cultural assets in the interviews. Furthermore, this research consisted of diverse educational levels, ages and only had one man against nine women, this means the results cannot relate to the educational levels, ages or differences between men and women.

Recommendations

Further research on this topic could investigate the differences between educational levels and the assets of non-dominant ethnic students. Also differences in the years of living in the Netherlands of students and their educational experiences could be interesting. Besides,

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research on the assets of non-dominant ethnic students should focus on the ways of implementing these assets in the classroom to investigate the most effective implementing of each asset in the classroom. Another suggestion is to work with teachers and students together to connect them and find out teachers' knowledge about their students in relation with the assets of non-dominant ethnic students.

Conclusion

Non-dominant ethnic students in the Netherlands have useful assets for the classroom, peers and their own performances. The awareness of teachers and students and the use of these assets could benefit the classroom and the educational careers of non-dominant ethnic students and thus could facilitate equity. More research is needed to focus on the use of cultural knowledge in different educational levels. But, this study adds relevant information about student's perspectives to existing literature and can be used as starting point for more research on asset-based pedagogy in the Netherlands.

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Appendix A

Time plan research

Timetable

Week	Date	Action
46	13/11/19	Group meeting Reading articles
47	20/11/19	Group meeting, talking about core literature articles
48	25/11/19	Individual meeting supervisor, narrowing research question
	27/11/19	Group meeting
49	2-11/12/19	Study 10 articles
50	11/12/19	Study relevant theories/methods
51	18/12/19	Poster session Theories, methods
52		Write introduction and theoretical framework
1		Write introduction, theoretical framework, methods
2		Present introduction/TF/methods to thesis group Write introduction, theoretical framework, methods
3	13/01/20	Deadline Draft Version Research Plan
	15/01/20	Reading feedback and revise plan + prepare questions
4	20/01/20	Individual feedback meeting Brianna
	22/01/20	Group meeting: timeline & methods
	28/01/20	Deadline Final Research Plan
6		Receive feedback, recruit participants
7		Start planning interviews + revise research plan
8		

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		Taking interviews + transcription + translation
9		Taking interviews + transcription + translation
10		Taking interviews + transcription + translation
11		Taking interviews + transcription + translation
12	18/03/20	Analysis interviews
13		Analysis
14		Analysis
15		Analysis
	08/04/20	Thesis theme group meeting
16		Analysis
17		Analysis
18		Analysis
	29/04/20	Start writing
19		Writing
20		Writing
21		Writing/Finishing
22		Finishing
23	29/05/20	Draft Master Thesis
24		Revise
25	10/06/20	Deadline Master Thesis
26	17/06/20	Master Thesis Fair/Presentation

Appendix B

FETC

Section 1: Basic Study Information

1. Name student:

Zoë Vreugdewater

2. Name(s) of the supervisor(s):

Brianna Kennedy

3. Title of the thesis (plan):

Funds of Knowledge and School Experience of Non-dominant Ethnic Dutch Students

4. Does the study concern a multi-center project, e.g. a collaboration with other organizations, universities, a GGZ mental health care institution, or a university medical center?

~~Yes~~/ No

If yes: Explain.

5. Where will the study (data collection) be conducted? If this is abroad, please note that you have to be sure of the local ethical codes of conducts and permissions.

Universities and higher education in the Netherlands.

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Section 2: Study Details I

6. Will you collect data?

Yes / No
Yes → Continue to question 11
No → Continue to question 7

7. Where is the data stored?

8. Is the data publicly available?

Yes / No
If yes: Where?

9. Can participants be identified by the student? (e.g., does the data contain (indirectly retrievable) personal information, video, or audio data?)

Yes / No
If yes: Explain.

10. If the data is pseudonymized, who has the key to permit re-identification?

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Section 3: Participants

1. What age group is included in your study?

Students from higher education or universities, so mostly 16+

2. Will be participants that are recruited be > 16 years? **Yes/No**

3. Will participants be mentally competent (wilsbekwam in Dutch)? **Yes/No**

4. Does the participant population contain vulnerable persons? **Yes/No**
(e.g., incapacitated, children, mentally challenged, traumatized, pregnant)

5. If you answered 'Yes' to any of the three questions above: Please provide reasons to justify why this particular groups of participant is included in your study.

Older than 16 and mentally competent because those students can tell something about their school experience and culture.

6. What possible risk could participating hold for your participants?

They tell something about their personal life, environment and knowledge in the interviews.

7. What measures are implemented to minimize risks (or burden) for the participants?

Using ethnographic interviews and photovoice that fit to the method.

8. What time investment and effort will be requested from participants?

60-90 minutes per participant.

9. Will be participants be reimbursed for their efforts? If yes, how? (financial reimbursement, travelling expenses, otherwise). What is the amount? Will this compensation depend on certain conditions, such as the completion of the study?

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No.

10. How does the burden on the participants compare to the study's potential scientific or practical contribution?

To answer the research question, stories of the participants are needed. This could contribute to practical intervention in classrooms when the funds of knowledge of students are known.

11. What is the number of participants? Provide a power analysis and/or motivation for the number of participants. The current convention is a power of 0.80. If the study deviates from this convention, the FERB would like you to justify why this is necessary.

(Note, you want to include enough participants to be able to answer your research questions adequately, but you do not want to include too many participants and unnecessarily burden participants.)

10

12. How will the participants be recruited? Explain and attach the information letter to this document.

Purposive sampling and make use of snowball sampling if necessary. They will be asked by an email or contacted in real life.

13. How much time will prospective participants have to decide as to whether they will indeed participate in the study?

2 weeks

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14. Please explain the consent procedures. Note, active consent of participants (or their parents) is in principle mandatory. Enclose the consent letters as attachments. You can use the consent forms on Blackboard.

Consent form

15. Are the participants fully free to participate and terminate their participation whenever they want and without stating their grounds for doing so? Explain.

Yes, in advance the goal of the study will be explained, participants can decide whether they want to participate or not.

16. Will the participants be in a dependent relationship with the researcher?

Yes / **No**
If yes: Explain.

17. Is there an independent contact person or a general email address of a complaint officer whom the participant can contact?

No

18. Is there an independent contact person or a general email address of a complaint officer whom the participant can contact in case of complaints?

No

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Section 4: Data management

19. Who has access to the data and who will be responsible for managing (access to) the data?

The student researcher, research team, and supervisor

20. What type of data will you collect or create? Please provide a description of the instruments.

Narrative inquiry approach to collect data with photovoice and semi-structured open-ended interviews.

The photovoice requires 3 photos of each participant with some written text that they prepare before the interview takes place.

The interviews are based on the inquiry narrative which provide the participants to talk in a narrative way to understand their perspective. The interview exists of ethnographic questions to understand the cultural knowledge of the participant.

21. Will you be exchanging (personal) data with organizations/research partners outside the UU?

Yes / **No**

If yes: Explain.

22. If so, will a data processing agreement be made up?

Yes / No

If yes: Please attach the agreement.

If no: Please explain.

23. Where will the data be stored and for how long?

On my recording device. After recording it will be uploaded directly on YODA and deleted on my recording device.

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24. Will the data potentially be used for other purposes than the master’s thesis? (e.g., publication, reporting back to participants, etc.)

Yes , maybe for further research.

25. Will the data potentially be used for other purposes than the master’s thesis? (e.g., publication, reporting back to participants, etc.)

Yes / No
If yes: Explain.

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Appendix C

Consent Form

January 15, 2020

Dear Participant,

By means of this letter, we would like to invite you to participate in the research project called *Perspectives on Teaching and Learning of Teachers and Students From Nondominant Backgrounds*. The purpose of this study is to explore and explain the experiences students who belong to marginalized ethnic groups in order to understand their views on how culture impacts teaching and learning in the diversifying classroom contexts of the Netherlands. We hope to publish the results of the study and share findings with other interested stakeholders.

This study seeks to understand the students with a non-dominant background. Understanding the students' experiences – in addition to why problems are looked at from the perspective of the target group – means that more concrete and tailor-made policies and practices, including effective instructional design, can be implemented.

What is Expected of You as a Participant

If you agree to participate, we will ask you to complete one interview of 60-90 minutes in length. During the interview, we will ask you about your background as well as your views on teaching and learning.

Preparation before interview

In the study the method photovoice will be used, which means that you will bring three photos to the interview with some information about these photos. The photos give an insight into you as a student. Further explanation about this will come to you when you participate. The photos are only used for this research during the interview and will not be published.

Confidentiality of Data Processing

Personally identifiable data will be handled as follows: We will audio record the interviews for the purposes of transcription. Any personally identifiable data will be removed from the transcripts and the audio files will be destroyed after the completion of the transcription. A key linking your identity, or other identifiable information such as school name, to the pseudonyms used in data records will be stored in a password-protected university server during data analysis and then destroyed after the completion of the study. Anonymized interview transcripts will be stored on password-protected servers and stored for at least 10 years. This is in accordance with the guidelines provided by the VSNU Association of Universities in the Netherlands. Other genuine researchers may have access to de-identified data in the future. Access will only be granted if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of

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the information as requested in this form. Their access will also require approval from the original research team.

Risks, Benefits, and Voluntary Participation

We do not anticipate any risks associated with the study. We also do not anticipate that the study findings will directly benefit you. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may decide to end your participation at any time without any explanation and without any negative consequences. If you end your participation, we will use the data collected up to that point unless you explicitly inform us otherwise. If you have an official complaint about the study, you can send an email to the complaints officer at klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl.

If you agree to participate, please return this signed form *within two weeks' time* to a researcher associated with this study. If you have any questions, please contact this study's principal investigator at b.l.kennedy@uu.nl.

Best regards,

Brianna Kennedy and the Research Team

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I hereby declare that I have read the information letter about the *Perspectives on Teaching and Learning of Teachers and Students From Nondominant Backgrounds* study and agree to participate in the study.

Name

Date

Signature

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Appendix D

Introduction

1. Please tell us a bit about yourself.
 - a. What is your age and educational background?
 - b. How would you describe your cultural and ethnic background(s)?
 - c. With whom do you live?
 - d. Have you lived in different places? Which places? How would you briefly compare your experiences living in those different places?
 - e. What other aspects of your personal or cultural history do you think have been important in shaping your educational experiences?
 - f. Could you describe a typical day of yourself? And a typical week? What about a weekend day?

Photovoice Funds of Knowledge in Educational Context

Do you remember I asked you to bring 3 photos? (let them show the photos).
 Could you describe everything that we see in this picture? (each photo).

Picture 1 (skill or knowledge learned)

1. Why do you think you learned this from your family/community?
2. Why did you choose this picture?
3. Are there other things you have learned from your family?

Picture 2 (custom or value)

4. Why do you think this is important in your family?
5. Imagine you are still in primary or secondary school and your teacher wants to use this knowledge/value that is visible on your photographs, how could he/she do that?
6. Can you tell some connections that you can make between your education and the knowledge you learned at home? And differences?
7. Can you use the values/custom/knowledge learned from your family in your life now? How do you use it?
8. What other important values does your family have?
9. Do you talk about your study at home or other places? With whom? What do you talk about the most with them?
10. Could you think of a time where someone supports you academically? How does he/she?

Picture 3 (culture in their life now)

11. How would you describe yourself in your culture now? How do you view your culture is related to the Dutch culture in your life now? How does your culture play a role during your life and has it changed by time?
12. And how would you describe yourself as a student? Could you give an example of something you have done or experienced as a student that illustrates your answer to this question?
13. What factors do you think have contributed to you becoming this type of student?

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Appendix E

Information Sheet and Instruction Photovoice

Understanding the Educational Knowledge and Lives of Students with a Non-Western Cultural Background through Photovoice.

For this research we would like to ask you to bring three photos with you that we will talk about in the interview.

Photo 1

This photo describes a skill or some knowledge you have learned from your family or cultural community before you were an adult. For example, cooking repairing stuff, spiritual knowledge, household things etc.

Photo 2

This photo describes a custom or value that is important in your community, that you learned in your community before you were an adult.

Photo 3

This photo shows one way in which you currently define the role of culture in life. Which culture do you most culturally identify with and how can that culture be seen in your life now?

Important Note

All photos can be from people, places or things that you think describe the things above.

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Appendix F

Recruitment script

Recruitment script: Perspectives of Non-Dominant Students

We are conducting a study about the knowledge that students got from their households, families or communities in connection with their educational experiences. We are defining “nondominant ethnic backgrounds” as groups that can be visibly identified in a social setting and that do not occupy the majority of a society’s institutional positions of power. We will interview each participant at a time and in a location convenient to them regarding their perspectives. The total time commitment for participation will be 60-90 minutes. Do you fit in this group, and if so, would you be interested in participating? If you do not fit in this group, is there anyone you could recommend?

Appendix G

Narratives

Gabby Klimov - Keep the community intact

Gabby Klimov, a 36-year-old married woman, mother and full-time premaster student. Gabby is from Syria and has a Caucasian background. Her forefathers lived in Syria and she is the fourth generation in Syria. She grows up in their own community as she called it. The Caucasian people, a minority group in Syria, have their own language, dances and social traditions and they keep their traditions and customs and have their own association where people of her origin meet in different occasions. “We tried our best to keep what we had, you know, what we brought from our homeland” Gabby said. In her community it is preferred to get married to a person from their own origin, so they do not lose the identity of the Caucasian people. As an ethnic minority she is used to adapting to a country and to the people of that country, but she still tended to go to her own community. Often, the Caucasian people in Syria also live together in neighborhoods. After her marriage she moved to the United Arab Emirates, where she worked as a teacher of Arabic and social studies, to teach non-Arabic students. After a year, Gabby and her husband moved to Africa and then to the Netherlands, where she lives now for four years.

She remembers the role of the Caucasian community in her educational career, her father saw the Caucasians affecting each other in school careers. He wanted the children to finish their studies in a good way, without affection of other Caucasian children, who maybe quit school earlier. So, her parents decided to first focus on the studies and afterwards communicating and socializing with “their people” again. In every stage of education in Syria, she had a subject called Islamic Studies, in which she learned about human beings and the social life. She marked that at school they highly valued the idea of having family and being surrounded by family. It is seen as the basis of life. She not only learned about it, family

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is an important value for her. “We greatly appreciate good relationships with family”. She learned this from her family as well when she was young. Respect to elderly is also something she mentioned. Gabby wants to pass this on to her children. She sees a good atmosphere at home benefits in teaching her children respect and good relationships between family members. She knows they have no family in the Netherlands, but still wants to create it for her children with friends of her. She calls her friends family. During her educational career, she felt a lot of strong support from her family. She can talk with her husband, sister and father about her study progress, but also about the study content. She sees her father and his career as an example that drives her in her current life to combine her study and the upbringing of her children.

Gabby defines a stereotype of a married woman in Syria: “She’s a housewife, she takes care of the children, she cooks and cleans. And when the husband comes back, she offers him all the sweetness and stuff. I would just say that I am not a stereotype married Syrian woman”. But she does face the difficulty of the differences between her Syrian culture and the Dutch culture. Raising her children in her culture in the Netherlands is difficult for her because she is strongly connected with her own society that is not here. Her experiences of her family and studies drive her through her current study. She wants to create a better future for her children, her children are the source of her motivation.

Jacob Hendriquez – Little differences

Jacob is 25 years old and studies dentistry at the university in Nijmegen. For this study he moved to Nijmegen from Almere, where his family still lives. He is half Antillean; his mother is from Curacao and his father is from the Netherlands. Jacob was born in Curacao and when he was three years old they moved to the Netherlands. His mother wanted to send Jacob to a school in the Netherlands and he noticed that he is raised to the Dutch standards. In Almere he went to a primary school with a lot of cultural diversity, he learned a lot from that

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by getting knowledge from people with different cultural backgrounds. He regards it as something he can use in his future work as a dentist, at which maybe he will work with all different cultural backgrounds.

The moments together with his family are very important for Jacob. Mostly what they do is eating together. The food of his Antillean culture is something that stays in his life, not only eating the food, but also cooking it. Because family is important he tries to keep visiting his Dutch family, he learned at home, to stay in contact with family. He does have some family living in Curacao but there is not really contact with them. He says it is because he never saw them, so he does not really know them. The value on this part of the family is less important, “it’s not family that you grew up with”. But he does speak to his grandfather on the phone. He always imagined a white man, and when Jacob met him again, he saw that his skin was as dark as the skin of his mother. He thinks it is because of the distance that the contact with his Antillean family is less important than with the family that lives in the Netherlands. Jacob sees his good friends as a kind of family. He uses the knowledge that he got from home about families in his own life, to create his own family.

Jacob thinks he is more Dutch than Antilleans, he knows he has some Antillean characteristics that he carries, but it does not dominate his life. Although he feels very Dutch there is something he notices in his educational career that makes him different than other students. Sometimes he can be very lax and does not have all his work neatly and structured. In his culture they often think *mañana mañana*, so tomorrow will come tomorrow. He sometimes delays his work and that describes his study style, it is not something he is proud of. He questions if this might come from his cultural background. In primary school he would be more triggered if something of his interests in food or cooking were used in classes. Using it as a theme or a subject would have motivated him.

Recently, when he met two Antillean girls in his study he discovered his cultural background slipped away a bit. The girls said he became very Dutch. He could not speak Papiamentu with them but he felt a home connection with the girls, because they have the same norms and values. He noticed that he does have more connection with his cultural background than he thought. He keeps in touch now with his cultural background with the food, music and dance rituals.

Maria Christina – Togetherness is missing

Maria Christina came to the Netherlands just a few months ago. She came from Curacao to the Netherlands to study. Maria is 19 years old and lives on her own in Rotterdam. Maria is born in the Netherlands and moved with her Antillean family to Curacao when she was seven. Both her parents are from Curacao. She feels she is mixed in between the Dutch and the Antillean culture, but she cannot say why. Maybe it is because she lived her first seven years in the Netherlands, or maybe it is because she is back in the Netherlands now. But she cannot find a way in which the two cultures relate to each other. In her eyes the two cultures really differ from each other, mostly in the way people live together. People in the Netherlands are more on themselves and living individually. In Curacao Maria feels more warmth and love of others, and she can talk to people more. This is something she also experiences in her study, in Curacao she could work more together with peers. Now she studying at the university in the Netherlands, everyone is really on their own. Working more together would be better, and the teacher should help with arranging that. Maria has the feeling that the Dutch students are not interested in her. Those students come to school to study and afterwards they directly return home. The warmth and collaborating are things she learned from her family. Family is very important for her and they will always be together and always ready for each other. Her parents are divorced now, but they both live near her.

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Her mother, father and sister all live in the Netherlands now, so she can keep in touch with them easily.

Another valuable thing is her religion. Maria is raised with the Pentecostal Congregation. She says her faith gives her perseverance to achieve things. She still goes to the church every weekend and helps with the Sunday school for children and sometimes sings with the band in the church. Because of her religion she feels the importance of being together. She has good contact with people of the church where she can talk to about her study and she feels support.

Maria wanted to be the difference in her family by going to university. The big steps to moving to the Netherlands and follow a study at university gives her perseverance in her study, it makes her the student she is. In the beginning she failed a lot of tests and she relates it to the big step to being individually, without teachers or fellow students that helped her. But she did not give up, and came above it. Now, she is not doubting when something goes wrong, she will continue. Even though she misses the contact with other people. Her faith and family are still there.

Nina Royer – We should use each other’s knowledge and collaborate

Nina Royer is 23 years-old and comes from Aruba. She is born in the Netherlands, but when she was one year old, her parents took her back to Aruba, where she lived the rest of her life. Now she is back in the Netherlands to follow HBO Social Work, while her parents still live on Aruba. She describes her own culture as a warm culture in which everyone lives together and helps each other. It becomes clear that she sees this as a difference with the Dutch culture. The most people in the Netherlands are focused on themselves.

She learned from her family to work together, to achieve more than when you are on yourself. Nina believes you can learn more and broaden your knowledge when cooperating with others, especially when others are the opposite of you. She describes it as different

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glasses that everyone wears, in which everyone thinks in a different way. According to Nina you broaden your knowledge with people who are different than you, with a different culture and a different way of thinking. It is therefore that she is also very helpful for others and wants to know what is inside of a person to get to know someone. In communicating she feels that it is too much about a certain reason to talk with people, instead of just getting to know each other without a purpose.

This is something that comes back in her education as well, she likes to have more one-on-one conversations with teachers, to get to know each other. She also thinks about a buddy system to get students in contact with each other. With this she hopes that groups will break and that diversity in groups will originate. During her second year of her study she felt not belonging to a certain group and walked to her tutor to tell him. She felt no support from him, she has to do it on her own. She felt alone. But because of her perseverance she learned from home, she continued her study.

Nina learned a lot from the Dutch culture. It shapes her and it made her the woman she is. She named the example of being more assertively with her own opinion. She noticed that sometimes she dives very deep into the Dutch culture and doubts about the things she learned from her own culture. She started reading a lot about her culture and saw a lot of things that are critical on her we-culture but, there was no critic on the I culture. It makes her think that the Dutch people think more of themselves than of others. She almost lost her own cultural norms and values because of this.

Nina describes herself as an ambitious student and someone who wants to have an eye on everyone and bond together with people, so no one is excluded. She uses all of her own culture and experiences in her internship with refugee work.

Stephanie Gamire – I want to be seen by my teacher

Stephanie Gamire is an Antillean girl with her roots in Curacao. But she is born and raised in the Netherlands. She feels in between the two cultures. She describes she get a lot of the Antillean culture of her mother, but also from the Dutch because of her school experiences. She grew up with her mother and she learned a lot from her.

She describes herself as a quiet student. When talking about her childhood she also calls herself a quiet and shy girl. But she learned to stand up for herself during her life and knows what she wants and what is important to her. She feels she was underestimated in her education because of her culture. She thinks it is because of her appearance, with her brown skin color. Going back to her primary school she experienced a situation in which she felt her cultural background played a role. At a test she scored the same as a Dutch girl, but the Dutch could go to a higher level and Stephanie was not. Stephanie describes it as looking at where she comes from instead of looking at her qualities. It made her the girl she is now, because she will not let anyone walk over her anymore. Besides she knows what she wants and goes for it.

In class she misses interaction with her teacher, especially one-to-one conversations. She needs more attention to her as a student by the teacher. So that they know who she is and what she feels. Stephanie misses the listening of her teacher to the students in class. She compares it with her home situation in which these conversations are done a lot. It is a big difference between school and home for her. This contact is also some important value in her family she describes. To be open and honest to each other and to keep in touch with each other, when you are not open, you cannot be he helped. This value also comes from her Christian religion.

Although this Antillean girl is very integrated in the Dutch culture, she notices differences between the two cultures. She talks about the things she really likes about her cultural background, the food, the way of partying and the people. "It may sound a bit crazy,

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but I think it is more fun”. Comparing to the Dutch culture, what is mostly very general and quiet, being with her family is always cozy and fun. It connects her with her cultural background.

Vanessa Marina – Family and togetherness are important to succeed

Vanessa Marina, is a 36-year-old woman, living in the Netherlands for almost 30 years. Before she came to the Netherlands, she lived in Suriname, her cultural background country. When she was seven years old, she came to the Netherlands with her family. At her 18th it is the first time she visited Suriname and it felt like coming home once she stepped out of the plane. Vanessa does not feel at home in the Netherlands, but there is not a feeling of wanting to go back to Suriname. She is in between the two cultures, “I cannot say I feel Dutch or I feel Surinamese”.

It is clear that family is very important for her. She describes the differences between Dutch and Suriname families, the Surinamese families are more focused on we, which she describes as caring for each other and not living in your own world, like the Dutch people do. Also, the authority of a Surinamese is therefore different, her grandfather had something to say on her future and education, she describes it as a cultural aspect. Education was something very important for her grandfather, and thus for the rest of the family. Her grandfather sent Vanessa’s mother to the Netherlands to study when she was 12. Because of homesickness her mother returned back to Suriname. But the grandfather of Vanessa still thought good education is important, so he decided to go to the Netherlands with the whole family, so everyone could study there. The importance of education passed down through her family, her parents also raised Vanessa with the thought that education was very important. Besides education, Vanessa learned from her grandfather that it is important to be someone in the society, she explains it with being able to join a conversation and building up a good

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network. “Grandfather always thought you should behave and show that you are worthy to be here”.

Her religion is also something valuable for her. She grew up Christian and still goes to the church. According to Vanessa, faith is the reason we exist, something she got from her parents and she still values it and uses it in her life. She thinks that it is something that could be useful in education to be more open about the values of each other, so that children learn to think in we, except only in I. When she is showing a photo of her church, the feeling of family and togetherness comes back. “People just watched me grow up, you are just a tight-knit community”. For Vanessa it feels as a big family in which the people know each other well.

Vanessa still uses her knowledge and values learned from her family and community in her current life and as a student. Knowing who she is and knowing the importance of being someone in the society makes her the student she now is. That is why she is very goal-oriented and does everything with a sense of awareness. Again, she tells that it is because of her grandfather she also sees that education is very important and she always wanted to impress him. All these things make her strong and reflective on herself.

As a teacher she now sees that not every student has these skills she learned from her family. The bar is set very high and students have struggles with that, she worries about it. As she speaks herself, she is happy, she knows herself very well and she can protect herself for the pressure of the society.

Yara Bijl – Belonging to what?

Yara Bijl is a woman of 23-year-old student, living in Rotterdam. Her parents both come from Suriname, but Yara is born in the Netherlands. Although, she cannot identify herself as a Dutch or a Surinamese woman. She never lived in Suriname, and that is why she feels she cannot call herself a Surinamese, but she does not feel she is a Dutch person,

“because I am really too much into my social thinking for that”. In primary school she learned that you do not necessarily have to be or feel part of a culture or place. She noticed she can also be herself apart from the community and during her life increasingly started seeing that everyone is equal despite everything. “I have had a long time that I would be less accepted by the white society than the dark society, but then I had something like the dark society is not going to accept me so I stopped to conform me with either of these groups”. When she shows a picture that focuses on caring for elderly, she compares the Dutch culture with her Surinamese culture. She thinks that the Surinamese community cares much more for the elderly than the Dutch in a family context. There is a very high cohesion in family visits and contact originated from her Christian religion. She describes it as more an inclusion with an overall unity, not looking at a background or economic status, there is interaction.

It is not only in family ways that she notices this, also in educational environments. Yara talks about the possibilities to use the differences of all students and their situations to connect with each other. “It would be very helpful if a teacher had already looked beyond their own garden beforehand and has some kind of mingle in it with people outside of their particular group. The question is, should the interaction be in the class or just among peers?”. She went to a pretty white primary school and secondary school: “I do not think it gets whiter than that, at least not in the center of Rotterdam”. Unless it is a white place, she learned from it, in those environments she was able to adapt very well and she was able to do what she had to do. But, on the other hand she also had the feeling that she was not understood that well and not adapting to her environment led to not fitting in. It causes a hard-working girl to ensure she came along in the social field of school. She describes herself as independently, and relates this to the fact that her parents taught her early to help in the household, she liked doing things independently. Besides, she knew at primary school that she was smart and could get good grades if she wanted, she had the feeling she always came closer to her teacher

than her classmates, in terms of school related knowledge. She also declares this with the fact that her parents did not raise her as a little child.

Yara is a student that wants to get the best out of herself, something she learned from her family. Her mother was the first one that went to college in the family, that drives Yara to study at that level as well. She feels a strong support from both her parents that also tell her to get the most out of herself, but also take more account of herself, she sets the bar very high for herself.