

**How do informal teachers practice culturally relevant pedagogy in a community-organized program?**

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**Abstract**

The latest PISA outcomes show a widening gap in learning outcomes between students with ethnic minority background and their ethnic majority peers. Students' academic performance is closely connected with students' sense of belonging (Kirby & Thomas, 2022) and teachers play a key role in fostering students' sense of belonging (Osterman, 2010). This research addresses informal teachers' practices within a community-organized program for primary and secondary school students, focusing on classroom relationships and instructional practices. I conducted eight in-depth interviews with informal teachers using insights from the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) by Powell and Rightmyer (2012). The study reveals that teachers in community-organized programs incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy by drawing on their backgrounds and experiences, emphasizing the connections between relationships and instructional practices, and fostering parental involvement.

*Keywords: Culturally relevant teacher pedagogy, students' sense of belonging, classroom relationship, instructional practices, community-organized program in the Netherlands.*

## Content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Literature review</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Belonging .....	6
Belonging and Community-organized Programs .....	7
Belonging and Pedagogical Practices .....	8
<b>Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Classroom Relationships and Belonging, Instructional Practices and Belonging .....	9
Present study .....	10
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Research Design .....	11
Positionality.....	11
Participants .....	12
Data collection.....	13
Procedure.....	14
Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations .....	14
Data analysis .....	15
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Teachers Personal Backgrounds and Experiences Inform Instruction.....	16
Teachers' Relational Strategies in Connecting with Students .....	19
Promoting Social Development Alongside Academic Success .....	21

Involvement of Parents Inform Instruction .....	22
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Teachers use their Background and Experience to Build Relationships with the Students and Inform Instructional Practices .....	25
Relationships and Instructional Practices are Interconnected .....	25
Involving Parents in Education: Enhancing Student Success .....	25
Limitations .....	26
Implications .....	27
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Reference list .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	
1. Observation protocol .....	34
2. Semi-structured interview guideline .....	48
3. Informed Consent Letter .....	54
4. FERB-approval .....	56
5. AI Acknowledgement .....	57

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 results reveal significant academic performance gaps among students of diverse cultural backgrounds in the Netherlands. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds scored lower in mathematics and reading, even when adjusted for socioeconomic factors (OECD, 2023). Language barriers and negative implicit attitudes from teachers contribute to these disparities (Costa et al., 2021; OECD, 2016). Tackling the ethnic achievement gap requires teachers' awareness of implicit biases of institutions and other teachers, teachers who offer targeted support, and teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching, to promote students' sense of belonging.

Addressing the unique challenges faced by ethnic minorities, such as discrimination and exclusion based on ethnic background, or language and cultural challenges, increases the sense of belonging (Colak et al., 2020; Gray et al., 2018; Louie et al., 2022). One of the main factors that positively influences academic performance, motivation, and psychological well-being, is students' sense of belonging (Allen, 2021a; Borman et al. 2019; Çolak, 2024; Freeman et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2018; Louie et al., 2022). Research on the experiences of ethnic minority students in the Netherlands by Kennedy et al. (2023) suggests that teachers should increase their awareness of the backgrounds of minoritized students and work to create inclusive environments that foster a sense of belonging.

To foster a sense of belonging, teachers should help ethnic minority students who require different experiences than their peers, by creating inclusive environments (Gray et al., 2018; Kennedy et al, 2023; Louie et al., 2022). For instance, caring and supportive teachers who know about their students' cultural backgrounds and correctly pronounce students' names enhance their sense of belonging and contribute to an inclusive environment (Kirby & Thomas, 2022; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Teachers can also contribute to student's sense of belonging by providing classroom materials that represent minoritized students or by using examples that minoritized students can relate to (Ladson-Billings, 1992). These findings highlight the key role of teachers, particularly in shaping student belonging through their relational and instructional strategies, which ultimately contribute to students' motivation and achievement (Freeman et al., 2007).

One place where belonging and the unique educational needs of ethnic minority students are potentially addressed is community-organized programs (Tikly et al., 2004). These programs go beyond traditional schooling, offering holistic support, cultural relevance, and personalized approaches. In conventional schools, the focus is often on academic performance and discipline. Strobel et al. (2008) found that the community-organized program that they studied, emphasized holistic development through nurturing relationships and informal interactions. Research by others (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Fusco, 2008; Schnittka et al., 2016) suggests that such programs are particularly effective in advancing equity goals within the educational system. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) found that personalized mentorship and conflict management in after-school programs enhances students' sense of belonging by providing individualized attention and support. Fusco (2008) noted that these programs focus on comprehensive development, promoting personal, social, and emotional growth in addition to academic support.

Research on the experiences of teachers in community-organized programs within the Dutch context is limited. My focus is specifically on the role of informal teachers within community-organized programs. The term "informal teachers" refers to volunteers in community-organized programs, who may lack formal pedagogical training. This study examines the pedagogical practices of informal teachers to increase students' sense of belonging using the insights of the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) (Powell & Rightmyer, 2012).

## **Literature Review**

In this literature review, I examine the concept of belonging in educational contexts, adopting a definition. I highlight the role of teachers' practices in fostering a sense of belonging among students and explore community-organized programs in the context of belonging. Furthermore, this review underscores the impact of pedagogical practices on both academic performance and students' sense of belonging, emphasizing the importance of caring and supportive teachers in enhancing educational outcomes for marginalized groups.

### ***Belonging***

The concept of belonging lacks scientific clarity, but St-Amand et al. (2017) found that previous research identified four defining attributes of belonging: positive emotions, positive social relations, involvement, and harmonization. This thesis adopts Goodenow's (1993) definition, which addresses all four components of St-Amand et al. (2017): "... *students' sense of belonging or psychological membership in the school or classroom, that is, the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment*" (Goodenow, 1993, p80). This study focuses on teachers' practices and their potential role in contributing to students' sense of belonging.

### ***Belonging and Community-organized Programs***

For this thesis, the term "community-organized programs" refers to educational programs organized by ethnic minority communities in after-school hours. These programs also termed after-school or supplementary educational programs, involve informal teachers who support homework and organize social activities. The programs provide safe environments for students to cultivate meaningful relationships with supportive adults (Schnittka et al., 2016).

Durlak and Weissberg (2007) found that just as successful after-school programs provided personalized mentorship and conflict management, teachers could improve belonging by offering individualized attention and support to students, helping them navigate social and academic challenges. Fusco (2008) reports that after-school programs differ in their approach to youth development, relationships, and instructional practices by focusing on holistic development and providing opportunities for personal, social, and emotional growth alongside academic support. These programs allow youth to explore new roles, express emotions, and develop relational skills in a flexible, adaptive environment.

Relationships in these programs are built through supportive, mentoring interactions between staff and youth, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging through informal, unstructured engagement. Steenwegen et al. (2023) researched supplementary schools, in Flanders, northern Belgium, that teach community languages and cultures while fostering a sense of belonging to one's ethnic community by nurturing heritage and ethnocultural identity. The schools respond to the complex social challenges and dynamics that

ethnic minority students may face (Steenwegen et al., 2023), such as issues related to cultural adaptation, discrimination, exclusion, language proficiency, and other socio-cultural factors.

### ***Belonging and Pedagogical Practices***

Teachers significantly impact students' academic performance and lifetime outcomes (Blazar, 2017; Burroughs et al., 2019). Pedagogical practices, including teaching styles, classroom management, and instructional strategies, affect students' academic performance (Blazar, 2017). Kirby and Thomas (2022) argue that caring and supportive teachers can help students' sense of belonging, especially for marginalized groups. This shows that teacher practices not only shape academic achievements but also are crucial in fostering a sense of belonging.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) will guide this research, emphasizing the needs of students from various cultures. Ladson-Billings (1995) defined CRP as a form of education that addresses structural inequities, similar to critical pedagogy. Ladson-Billings states: "*A theory of culturally relevant pedagogy would necessarily propose to do three things; produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order.*" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p474). In essence, CRP seeks to create an educational environment where students not only achieve academic success but also develop an understanding of their cultural identity and develop critical awareness to challenge social injustices collectively. The theory leads to three broad propositions; firstly, culturally relevant teachers recognize their own cultural identities, experiences, and biases, including understanding the cultural backgrounds, identities, and needs of their students. Secondly, they intentionally foster positive relationships among students, by promoting collaboration, respect, and empathy across diverse cultural backgrounds. Lastly, culturally relevant teachers recognize that knowledge is not neutral; it reflects cultural perspectives and biases.

Ladson-Billings' framework addresses structural racial inequities within the context of the United States, and Essed's (1984) work on race and ethnicity in the Dutch context informs my study of challenging structures



of inequality, which affect belonging experiences and eventually academic outcomes of ethnic minority students in educational contexts. Essed's insights are useful in this study for understanding the need for a community-organized program that responds to the racial and ethnic inequalities in society and education by serving predominantly students with an ethnic minority background.

Classroom relationships and instructional practices are the main components of effective teaching, linked with students' motivation, achievement, and belonging (Freeman et al., 2007). These components are fundamental for promoting student engagement, social-emotional development, and academic growth (Gutierrez & Buckley, 2019)

### ***Classroom Relationships, Instructional Practices and Belonging***

Effective classroom relationships impact instructional practices and vice versa, and both can have a positive impact on students' sense of belonging (Allen et al. 2021b; Osterman, 2010). Teachers can foster relationships by establishing personal connections, ensuring students feel cared for and supported, setting high expectations, and providing constructive guidance (Freeman et al., 2007) by enacting CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Powell et al., 2016). CRP is divided into three functional dimensions: the institutional, focusing on the cultural factors that impact the organizational structures of schools; the personal, focusing on awareness of personal biases of the instructor; and the instructional, which refers to the instructional practices used and challenges associated with implementing cultural responsiveness in the classroom (Irvine, 2009). Creating an inclusive classroom environment and fostering positive and meaningful relationships, help students feel more connected to their school community, which can lead to improved academic achievement, belonging, and overall well-being (Blazar, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Powell & Rightmyer, 2012).

Powell et al. (2016) operationalized Culturally Relevant Instruction (CRI), highlighting the role of positive relationships in a supportive learning environment where students feel seen, heard, and valued. Instructional practices within CRI (Powell et al., 2016) and Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework for CRP emphasize the importance of understanding students' cultural backgrounds and creating a learning environment that students can relate to. CRI is a teaching approach that recognizes students' diverse cultural backgrounds and

practices (Powel et al., 2016), connecting learning to real-life experiences. CRI enhances engagement, improves learning outcomes, and creates a positive classroom environment that contributes to students' understanding of their cultural identity and ability to critically engage with societal issues (Powel et al., 2016). Furthermore, CRI incorporates cultural and linguistic knowledge (Powell & Cantrell, 2021; Osterman, 2010) stressing the importance of language and communication by recognizing the linguistic diversity of students and tailoring instructional methods accordingly (Liu et al., 2021; Powel et al., 2016). For instance, rather than relying solely on mainstream-language materials, a CRI approach might include incorporating texts, examples, and discussions that reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students (Liu et al., 2022)

### **Present Study**

This research focuses on informal teacher practices in a community-organized program for ethnic minority students. Building on Ladson-Billings' (1995) propositions and using CRIOP (Powell & Rightmyer, 2012), this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the practices of informal teachers in a community-organized program in the Netherlands. It focuses on ethnic minority students, aiming to provide insights into how teachers build relationships and teach them in culturally responsive ways. This focus is important for two reasons; 1. It highlights the role of culturally responsive teaching and inclusive practices in addressing academic performance gaps among ethnic minority students in the Netherlands, informing educational strategies to enhance belonging. 2. By emphasizing the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and personalized support for ethnic minority students, this study underscores the need for systemic changes in educational practices to promote inclusivity, improve academic outcomes, and support the psychological well-being of all students. My focus is specifically on the role of informal teachers within community-organized programs. The main research question is: How do informal teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized programs? This is explored through the following sub-questions:

1: How do teachers establish culturally relevant relationships in the classroom?

2: How do teachers use teaching methods to make instruction culturally relevant?

### **Methodology**

## **Research Design**

This case study explores teachers' pedagogical practices within a community-organized program. I gathered in-depth data through semi-structured interviews to investigate teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices, aligning with a social constructionist paradigm. I recognize reality as socially constructed and subjective, with no objective truth. I believe people actively participate in the construction of knowledge, and that learning is a social process. Knowledge is created through social interactions and collaboration (Ernest, 2013). The interpretive approach for this research emphasizes understanding and interpreting findings rather than aiming for objective or statistical analysis.

## ***Positionality***

Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes the role of ideological commitments in shaping knowledge claims, underscoring the importance of my positionality as a researcher. When I initially applied to research students' sense of belonging, I focused on marginalized students with low socio-economic status (SES). My 14 years of experience as a social worker at a shelter for homeless adolescents has shown me the challenges faced by youth who lack a sense of belonging in various aspects of life, including school, work, and society. My awareness of inequalities was primarily rooted in an understanding of socio-economic circumstances rather than race. I recognized the significant impact of one's place of birth and family background on the opportunities available in life. As I delved into discussions and literature on students' sense of belonging, I encountered critical race theory. Before, I had not considered the role of factors such as skin color, racism, discrimination, or oppression as shaping students' sense of belonging. I realized I was relying on a 'colorblind' view (Gotanda, 1991), which refers to the practice of ignoring or disregarding racial differences and treating everyone as if they were the same, without acknowledging or addressing the historical and social realities of race and racism. The idea is that by claiming not to see or consider race, one is attempting to be neutral or unbiased and yet overlooking the inequality experienced by ethnic minority students. This realization has helped me become more aware of these ethnic and racial inequities. By documenting my growth and challenges, I aim to transparently reflect on my biases, personal experiences, and shifts in perspective.

## Participants

To select cases, I inquired through email, which informal teachers were willing to share details about their classroom and instructional practices. I aimed to interview ten informal teachers in a community-organized program in Utrecht, with the sole condition that they had been working at the program for at least four months, and could share their insights and experiences. This purposeful sampling is mentioned by Flyvbjerg (2011) as an information-oriented selection. It maximizes the utility of information for the research question. The goal of information-oriented selection is to identify cases that provide the most useful information for the research question, rather than selecting cases based on their representativeness or statistical properties. This approach is beneficial when the research question requires an in-depth understanding of a particular case or phenomenon. Eventually, I received eight responses from volunteer teachers who would to share their knowledge and experiences.

**Table 1.**

*Demographics of the Participants*

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Profession	years of experience as a volunteer
Jos	Male	66 years old	White Dutch	Works for the government	2 years
Adam	Male	27 years old	Moroccan Dutch	Works as an HR advisor / active in the football world	1 year 6 months
Alex	Male	48 years old	White Dutch	Teaching as an instructor for the Navy	1 year and 2 months
May	Female	24 years old	Moroccan Dutch	HR employee	6 months

Mariam	Female	28 years old	Moroccan Dutch	Works in the financial world after studying business economics	8 months
Sofia	Female	29 years old	White Dutch	Studied law Works for 3 days at an appeal judge, will start as a researcher	more than 3 years
Noah	Male	27 years old	Moroccan Dutch	Working at a college in a big city	7 months
Mason	Male	24 years old	Moroccan Dutch	Working in Finance and studying to become an economics teacher	almost 3 years

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## Data Collection

For this case study, I collected data through semi-structured interviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This approach enables a detailed exploration of how teachers enact CRP in a community-organized program. Data collection reflects the interpretive approach, aligning with Stake's (1995) and Merriam's (1988) case study approaches. The CRIOP by Powell and Rightmyer (2012) operationalizes culturally responsive practices across six themes: Classroom Relationships, Family Collaboration, Assessment Practices, Instructional Practices, Discourse, and Critical Consciousness. Powell and Rightmyer's (2012) findings underscore the significant impact of teachers connecting with students, classroom relationships, and adapting instructional techniques, emphasizing the importance of culturally relevant teaching. Thus, my semi-structured interview guidelines focus on these themes. While I can not cover all CRIOP criteria to avoid overwhelming participants, I addressed research questions effectively. Given the absence of a clear, specific definition or measurement point for

culturally responsive instruction in CRIOP (Powell & Rightmyer, 2012), thorough participant questioning is crucial.

## **Procedure**

I contacted the community-organized program's representative via email, including my recruitment letter. The representative approached the volunteers and provided the contact information of those who expressed interest, allowing me to schedule appointments. Before arranging the interviews, I sent the volunteers an informed consent letter, which they returned with their approval.

At the agreed date and time, I started each interview by introducing myself and explaining my research. I conducted semi-structured interviews using a prepared guideline informed by the themes of Classroom Relationships and Instructional Practices, described in CRIOP (Powell & Rightmyer, 2012). The interview format allowed additional questions and topics to emerge during the conversation.

## ***Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations***

To uphold trustworthiness, I conducted member checks and peer reviews for consistency. After I transcribed the interviews I emailed the transcription to the participants and asked them if I understood them correctly. They could correct my understanding of their responses. By using thick descriptions, I provided detailed insights, ensuring the findings' transferability. I maintained a detailed record of my research process, including decisions, changes, and justifications. I reflected on my biases and how they might have influenced the findings to ensure that my research was fair to all participants. Considering practical implications aligns with Guba and Lincoln's (1994) Guba and Lincoln's criteria for evaluating rigor, known as trustworthiness in qualitative research, remains widely used. These criteria also called the Four-Dimensions Criteria (FDC), include Credibility (equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research), Dependability (equivalent to reliability), Confirmability (equivalent to objectivity), and Transferability (equivalent to external validity or generalizability). In addition, I received ethical approval from the FERB before I was allowed to start the data collection (See Appendix 4).

I followed Israel and Hay's (2006) six principles for research with human participants. 1) The participants were free to choose whether or not to participate in the study, and they could withdraw at any time without explanation or consequences. 2) Participants were informed about the aims of the research in advance and provided active written consent before data could be collected. This is referred to as Informed Consent. 3) Participants' identities were kept confidential, and their responses were anonymous. 4) I ensured that participants' personal information was kept confidential and secure, and minimized the potential harm to participants, both physical and psychological. I considered the questions and phrased them as friendly and easy to answer. I conducted a pilot interview to revise my questions and make adjustments where necessary. 5) I aim to communicate the results of the study to participants clearly and understandably. 6) I ensured that the research process and interpretations were fair to all participants, regardless of their background or characteristics. I conducted fair participant recruitment, with the sole condition that they had worked at the program for four months or longer. For storing my data I used software developed by the UU, called Yoda. Yoda is a research data management service that enables secure storage, sharing, documenting, publishing, and archiving amounts of research data. Working with Yoda is in line with the FAIR principles and open science.

### **Data Analysis**

I conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews following the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first phase involved immersing myself in the data to develop a sense of the content and identify initial patterns. This immersion was achieved by transcribing the interviews and reading them thoroughly. In the second phase, I systematically coded interesting features of the data using a matrix. This involved connecting data segments to concepts relevant to the research question. I used the concepts as codes. I created a matrix with the codes derived from the literature and began coding by linking the participants' answers to these codes. Each participant had their matrix. Some answers could not be connected to the existing codes from the literature; these answers, about participants' backgrounds, experiences, and critical consciousness, were added as new codes to each matrix. In the third phase, I identified themes based on shared meanings and patterns once all relevant answers were coded. I summarized the answers into narratives, creating a narrative per

participant per code. I then made a comprehensive matrix where all narratives could be cross-checked to identify overarching themes. The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining the potential themes to ensure coherence and consistency. In the final phase, I defined and named the themes, refining them to capture the essence of the data. I wrote a detailed analysis, interpreting the findings and presenting them in the findings section below in a coherent narrative supported by illustrative examples from the data. It is important to acknowledge that this analysis is a non-linear, recursive process that involves moving back and forth between phases as needed, rather than progressing linearly from one phase to the next (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Findings**

All participants acknowledged working with marginalized youth in the community-organized program, although their levels of critical awareness varied. A common theme emerged of teachers leveraging their backgrounds to enhance their teaching practices. It also became evident that all teachers strive to connect with their students and emphasize the importance of social development alongside academic growth. Additionally, the program aims to increase parental involvement, a goal highlighted by all the teachers. This section will describe and explain these four themes, incorporating quotes to provide deeper insight.

#### **Teachers Personal Backgrounds and Experiences Inform Instruction**

This theme explores how teachers' backgrounds influence the relationship with the students and their teaching methods. Teachers adapt their teaching methods based on students' needs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. They incorporate diverse perspectives, experiences, and examples into their lessons to make them relatable and engaging for all students. Adam (27, Moroccan Dutch) shares his experiences while explaining why he volunteered for the program. His friend, the founder, spoke about the youth he wanted to help, and Adam says:

Well, it's also just those ethnic minorities again, I think, such a group that always feels somewhat disadvantaged. Feeling like they may have fewer opportunities. I can relate to that because I experienced it at the beginning of my career, right? So, it's about always having to work harder than, for example, a native classmate or colleague. With that feeling in mind, if I at least can give them that extra push to get



the best out of themselves, then that is the least I can do. You can see that the gap is only getting bigger. I just want to do my best to help, even if my contribution is small. If I have ten students and one succeeds, I consider that a success.

Here, Adam expresses how his own experiences drive him to help the students in the program. Noah (27, Moroccan Dutch) has a similar story; he is particularly aware of under-advising because he has experienced it himself. Reflecting on his educational journey and the biases of his teachers, Noah:

I dare say that it's not consciously done (teachers acting on biases); rather, it's probably somewhere in the subconscious where assumptions are made without real basis. [...] I was advised to pursue HAVO/VWO in elementary school, and I did so in high school. However, by a margin of 0.1%, I transitioned from HAVO/VWO to VMBO. During my second year of VMBO-T, I found it quite easy and achieved mostly grades 8 and 9. The teachers were puzzled, [...] Later, I moved back to HAVO for grades 4 and 5, which I also passed without much trouble. So, it raises the question: how many chances do we give a student?

In our discussion, Noah emphasized biases among teachers regarding students' academic capabilities influenced by their cultural backgrounds. He observed that non-Western students are frequently directed towards lower academic tracks, whereas Western students are more commonly recommended for higher tracks. Noah believes teachers assume Western students receive sufficient support. These biases are perceived as subconscious rather than deliberate, reflecting unfounded assumptions about students' potential. Noah also discusses having a more diverse teacher population as a possible solution. Just like Noah, Jos (66, White Dutch) thinks having teachers as role models could help students with believing in themselves. Jos:

It would also be useful to have class helpers or school counselors from the same target group. They understand the difficult circumstances or complicated home situations. These (ethnic minority) kids might not open up to a [white] teacher, but they might talk to someone from their background, someone who speaks their language and understands their context.

Sofia (29, White Dutch) is aware that she did not experience the same things as her students: "I always take into account, of course, that we come from different backgrounds, [...] I don't think I emphasize it very much beyond that." And when she wants to use examples she asks for input from her students:

For example, I once used an example that my grandfather used to smoke a cigar in the shed where his study was. That's not something they can relate to. It's from a different time altogether, so I ask them (the students) more about their experiences.

This practice of sharing personal stories may help bridge cultural gaps and could create a deeper connection by showing students that their teacher is asking them to help her understand diverse cultural experiences. It also helps with making instructions relevant for the students, they have the opportunity to tell and use their own experiences in instruction.

Mason (24, Moroccan Dutch) leverages his age and personal experiences of living and playing soccer in Dutch and ethnically diverse communities to relate to his students. His familiarity with different cultural environments helps him connect and motivate students by understanding their perspectives and social dynamics, he also uses his mother tongue occasionally with the students.

Occasionally, as a joke, you say something in the mother tongue. Then they laugh. If it's a new student, or if you are new to the class, you always get the question if you speak Arabic or Berber. [...] The real answer was that I speak both, and then they don't try to fool you anymore. Sometimes you do use words like 'quiet' or 'sit down', yes, those are things you can laugh about.

Noah not only uses his own experiences for teaching, he also found motivation for volunteering at the program, as he used to go to a similar program to seek help with his homework.

I am a first-generation college student, so I was the first in my family to pursue higher education. I found myself navigating through a lot of uncertainty about how higher education works, what challenges I might face, and how to handle them. My parents came to the Netherlands from Morocco when they were nineteen years old; [...] I felt morally supported by them, but I couldn't turn to them for help with the questions. So, I sought assistance outside of home and found it at a similar foundation in my

neighborhood where my parents lived. There, I could get homework support and help with any questions I had.

All teachers use their experiences and show awareness of their backgrounds while teaching the students in the program. They use their background and experiences to shape both relationships and instructional practices.

### **Teachers' Relational Strategies in Connecting with Students**

This theme is about personal connections, individual attention and support, and creating a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. All teachers mentioned striving for a personal connection and are attentive to the well-being and needs of their students. Noah (27, Moroccan Dutch):

It's about building a genuine connection and having a sincere interest in the student, who they are and what they bring to the table, including their background and personal experiences. By acknowledging these factors, we can create an environment where the student feels understood and supported. This approach enables us to help them achieve their dreams, adapting our methods as needed along the way.

All the teachers stated that they aim to help students reach their full potential. They greet the students as they arrive for class. May (24, Moroccan Dutch) always starts with a game just like Mariam (28, Moroccan Dutch): "Typically, we start with a game as an icebreaker. It can be a simple game or an educational one. Sometimes, it involves words or varies in form. Our goal is to engage the children and get them relaxed."

Adam, Sofia, Marriam, and Noah talk about one-on-one conversations to get to know the students. For example, Marriam (28, Moroccan Dutch) talks about one-on-one conversations to correct unwanted behavior, and when she does so, she says that she learns more about the students:

Look, in the lesson, I try to maintain order, so maybe I'm a bit stricter then. But if a person is quite disruptive, I always take them aside, right? I go outside with them and then I can just have a one-on-one conversation with the kid. When he has that one-on-one attention and can talk to me, things come out that he normally wouldn't say so quickly. So I think a bit of individual attention is also appropriate.

One-on-one conversations are a key strategy used by all teachers to get to know their students, which helps in understanding their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Noah, May, and Sofia strive for open

communication and a positive atmosphere in the classroom, where students feel seen, heard, and valued. Sofia (29, White Dutch): "Yes, I always try to maintain an open attitude so that children feel comfortable discussing anything." And Noah (27, Moroccan Dutch) says about feeling safe:

We focus on addressing the areas where they struggle the most, aiming for growth in those areas. This growth is fostered by creating a safe environment where the child feels secure and comfortable making mistakes. It's crucial that they don't feel discouraged or pressured whenever they make a mistake, as constantly re-explaining things doesn't work well for young children. We maintain a positive approach, emphasizing that 'everyone makes mistakes,' and there's no need to feel ashamed or afraid.

This illustrates a commitment to student well-being and nurturing a supportive classroom environment helpful for learning and development. I asked the teachers if they used cultural knowledge during their lessons. Mason (24, Moroccan Dutch) creates examples per person, not by ethnic background.

I try to tailor my examples to each individual. Recently, someone had questions about linear equations in math. I explained it simply to one boy, and he understood. But another person didn't grasp it. So, I used an analogy: 'Imagine going to a restaurant where entering costs €20, and each dish adds €10. After adapting the example to her interests, she understood after two tries. Understanding her interests first helped me connect the concept to her.

I asked Mason why he does this and he told me:

I try to approach it differently for each person. It's not necessarily about culture, although I can incorporate that too, as I aim to teach in a way that resonates with them, creating an immediate connection. Even if you're joking about buying Moroccan dresses at a market, it's all about building a connection. We laugh, but I'm still teaching.

By tailoring his teaching methods to each student's unique needs and interests, he demonstrates a commitment to understanding and connecting with his students on a personal level.

### **Promoting Social Development Alongside Academic Success**

This theme explores the multifaceted goals and approaches of educators and volunteers within the program. Jos (66, White Dutch) discussed his goal of raising students' self-expectations. He highlighted that many students carry "backpacks" filled with negative thoughts, believing they cannot succeed in education due to the messages they receive from their environment. Jos mentions that the program aims to improve the students' self-confidence. Jos:

That is somewhat the underlying objective of the program: to provide these children with that kind of awareness and those 'backpacks.' So that they say, 'I can do this! Why wouldn't I be able to?' and with that attitude, 'I can do this too.'

Jos does not focus on increasing academic results; instead, he emphasizes boosting self-confidence. On the other hand, Alex (48, White Dutch) takes a different perspective, prioritizing learning outcomes over social development:

The most important thing you do at school is to achieve learning outcomes... It's fantastic to be able to have discussions, but if your academic results are hopeless, talent development is secondary, in my opinion. If you have that goal, then you still need to focus on academic results.

Alex believes academic achievement works as a motivator. When I asked him how it would help students improve their performance, he said: "I believe the best reward of all is understanding and applying what you've learned. When you think, 'Wow, okay, I've got something,' that's success." So, Alex acknowledges the value of feeling successful and underscores the importance of academic results in the program's goals. Mariam (28, Moroccan Dutch) shares some of these insights with Alex as she mentions her educational goals. Mariam says:

My goal for my lessons is for the children to leave thinking, 'Yes, I've learned something. I've gained new knowledge.' [...] I want them to go to school and, for instance, recognize what works or see the math problems and think, 'Yes, I've received tips on how to understand this better during my tutoring sessions.' My goal is to develop these children (students of the program), to enhance their knowledge.

Next to the goal of developing the students, she also expresses hope for holistic development: "If I may think big, I hope that they have developed both academically and socially because we actually pay quite a bit of

attention to their social development.” May emphasizes integration into society as a crucial goal alongside academic success. May (24, Moroccan Dutch):

What I hope to achieve is that the children will not only be successful academically and achieve good grades but also be able to easily integrate into society. That's actually my main goal because, ultimately, bluntly speaking, it's of no use if your child only scores perfect grades but can't participate or function within society.

These perspectives illustrate the diverse motivations and priorities among those involved in the program, highlighting social development alongside academic success as key pillars of their educational practices. These differing motivations and priorities among teachers in the program could be connected to their own experiences and backgrounds. Jos emphasizes boosting confidence and Alex conversely focuses on learning outcomes, this tells us something about their priorities, which could be shaped by what they experienced themselves.

### **Involvement of Parents Inform Instruction**

This theme encompasses communication with parents, their involvement, and organizing collaborative support for students by connecting the parents, the school, and the community-organized program. The teachers recognize the importance of parental involvement and communication with parents to optimally support the students. All the teachers mentioned that the program intends to increase contact with the parents of the students in the future. The emphasis on parental involvement varies among teachers. Adam (27, Moroccan Dutch):

Some parents from this neighborhood find it difficult to get the best out of school, and I am talking about encouraging their children. [...] This doesn't always succeed, and we are aware of that. We try to put in some extra effort to address this, it increases awareness among the students themselves. They know that their parents are involved, so they receive support from all sides. At the same time, parents provide us with completely different insights. Sometimes we have conversations without the student present, where we ask questions like, 'How does the student manage their homework at home?' [...] Because even if you have a good relationship with a student, there may always be something they hide, which can be challenging.

In this way, Adam ensures he learns more about his students through his interactions with their parents. He also demonstrates an awareness of the challenges parents may face in encouraging their children. The teachers also help the parents with advice and guidance about contact with the school. Noah (27, Moroccan Dutch) says:

I have had conversations with the parents of elementary school students, with the child present as well. This way, you get to know them and understand what's happening at home, and how we can work together to ensure the child continues to develop and grow to achieve their goals. We are not involved in school discussions with parents, but we try to support them if they have questions, if they feel that teachers at the school don't understand them, or if their child is possibly underestimated. [...] We try to brainstorm for solutions with the parents.

All the teachers mentioned that the program intends to increase contact with the parents of the students in the future believing it will help the students achieve their potential. However, the emphasis on parental involvement varies among teachers. Noah shows that contact with parents helps him support students because the parents let Noah know what the school has communicated to them. To incorporate parental insights into his teaching methods, Noah uses the information gathered from parents to adjust his teaching methods and address specific academic challenges students face:

If we invest time in contact with parents, I also notice that parents find it easier to ask questions via WhatsApp, for example, if there is something wrong or they then send an app from the school, we are told that the child is having difficulty with fractions.

This practice allows Noah to address academic needs more effectively by incorporating insights from the student's home and school environments. Adam (27, Moroccan Dutch) addresses inviting parents to discussions to get a complete picture of the student's needs. At the same time, letting the students know that they are supported by both sides, the teacher and the parents. Mason (24, Moroccan Dutch) points out the importance of getting to know the students directly but also acknowledges the need to increase parental involvement as the students are minors, Mason: "From secondary school onwards, you try to bond with the students. Parental involvement is something they (the program) want to increase, to involve the parents a little more alongside the

student because the students remain minors.” This theme relates to my research questions by demonstrating how teachers use teaching methods that incorporate insights from parents. By maintaining contact with parents and seeking their input in the educational process, teachers can create a more holistic support system and adapt instruction to meet the needs of the students.

## **Discussion**

In this section, I address the research questions by synthesizing the findings and relating them to existing literature. The main research question of this study is: How do informal teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized programs? With the following sub-questions:

- 1: How do teachers establish culturally relevant relationships in the classroom?
- 2: How do teachers use teaching methods to make instruction culturally relevant?

From the data four themes emerged; individual attention, social development alongside academic success, personal experiences and background of teachers, and involvement of parents. These themes lead to three main findings.

### **Teachers use their Background and Experience to Build Relationships with the Students and Inform Instructional Practices**

Teachers utilize their backgrounds and experiences to build relationships with students and inform their instructional practices. Teachers in the community program draw on their own cultural identities, experiences, and backgrounds to better understand and connect with their students. This approach helps them build meaningful relationships and tailor their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. This practice aligns with Ladson-Billings' (1995) concept of culturally relevant teaching, which involves recognizing your cultural identity and biases to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Teachers who share similar backgrounds with their students can offer relatable and meaningful support, aligning with the recent findings of Kennedy et al. (2024). Conversely, teachers from different backgrounds acknowledge their limitations in fully understanding their students' backgrounds. They can ask students to talk about their experiences and listen to their stories. They can also talk about their background and talk about



differences. This aligns with research by Michie (2007) which found how White teachers could work more effectively and respectfully with African-American and Latino students. According to Michie's findings, the program's white teachers critically examine their privilege and whiteness, acknowledge gaps in their understanding, and demonstrate a commitment to further learning. They ask for input from students to come up with relevant instruction. All teachers of the program uphold high standards for the students (Michie, 2007).

As long as there is an acknowledgment of diverse or similar backgrounds, it will help build classroom relationships and therefore instructional practices, according to the findings of this study. It aligns with CRI which recognizes students' diverse cultures as it values diversity, promotes inclusion, and connects learning to real-life experiences. (Powel et al., 2016).

### **Relationships and Instructional Practices are Interconnected**

The findings in this study suggest that teachers' relational and instructional practices are strongly intertwined. This is in line with the literature review that showed that pedagogical practices, including teaching styles, classroom management, and instructional strategies, are connected (Blazar, 2017; Burroughs et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2007; Kirby & Thomas 2022), and that effective classroom relationships impact instructional practices and vice versa (Allen et al. 2021b; Osterman, 2010). The teachers in the program engage in open communication and one-on-one conversations to create a positive atmosphere that can lead to trust and connection with the students, which then can lead to improved academic achievement and overall well-being. The importance of personal connections and individual attention is known to be a significant factor in establishing culturally relevant relationships (Blazar, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Powell & Rightmyer, 2012). The teachers use the relationship with the students to inform their instructions for that specific student (Kennedy et al., 2024). Strategies such as using culturally relevant examples, asking students for examples, and promoting social development alongside academic success to foster a sense of belonging are employed. These efforts could potentially support students in feeling represented and understood in the classroom environment (Blazar, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Powell & Rightmyer, 2012).

### **Involving Parents in Education: Enhancing Student Success**

Engaging parents in the educational process strengthens relationships with students and informs instructional practices. All teachers in the program emphasized their intention to increase contact with parents, believing this would help students achieve their full potential. By incorporating parental insights, teachers can create a more holistic support system and adapt their teaching methods to better meet students' needs. Although parental involvement is not explicitly highlighted in Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, it emerged as a crucial element in every interview. There is however a lot written about parental involvement. King and Goodwin (2002) wrote a book that emphasizes the critical role of strong parental involvement in a child's education and school environment. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) conducted a four-year study, highlighting the parent-school empowerment process where cooperative relationships between the school and families helped parents understand their children's school experiences and rights. This collaboration led to improved school programs and policies through ongoing dialogue between schools and families, demonstrating a challenging yet achievable approach to supporting Latino children's education. So it is no surprise that this theme emerged from the data as parental involvement plays a role in teaching. Incorporating insights from students' home environments allows teachers to make instruction more accurate and relevant. Parental input ensures students receive the necessary support, helping teachers establish an inclusive support system. Existing literature confirms the need for comprehensive support systems that focus on both academic achievement and holistic development (Powell & Rightmyer, 2012).

### **Limitations**

This study had several limitations that suggest further research. The sample was limited to volunteer teachers, who provided self-reported data on their practices. Observations of actual classroom interactions were not conducted, which limits the ability to verify whether teachers' reported practices align with their actions. Additionally, the study did not include student perspectives, which are crucial for understanding the effectiveness of the teachers' approaches, as shown in other studies (Colak et al. 2020).

Future research should incorporate classroom observations and student interviews to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and perception of culturally relevant pedagogy. This would

help to validate the self-reported practices of teachers and assess the impact of these practices on student outcomes. Moreover, exploring the effects of teacher diversity on student perceptions and outcomes would provide insights into the benefits of having a teaching staff that reflects the student population (Kennedy et al., 2024)

## **Implications**

The findings illustrate how teachers in a community program implement CRP. I recommend investing in teachers' professional development by educating them on CRP. This will help them intentionally apply these strategies. In multicultural societies, teachers must be well-prepared to teach in diverse schools, regardless of their backgrounds (Civitillo & Juang, 2019).

The study validates existing theories on the effectiveness of CRP and provides empirical data for future research and policy development. It aligns with Kennedy et al. (2024), which emphasizes the importance of teachers' awareness of minoritized students' backgrounds and creating inclusive environments to foster belonging. However, CRP needs further exploration in the Dutch context, as it was developed in North America based on black and white student populations (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). These findings underscore the need for educators to develop the skills and awareness to connect with diverse student populations, addressing the ethnic achievement gap through awareness of implicit biases, targeted support, and culturally responsive teaching.

Addressing the unique challenges faced by ethnic minorities, such as discrimination, exclusion, and cultural barriers, can significantly enhance students' sense of belonging (Colak et al., 2020; Gray et al., 2018; Louie et al., 2022). This sense of belonging is crucial for improving academic performance, motivation, and psychological well-being (Allen, 2021a; Borman et al., 2019; Çolak, 2024; Freeman et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2018; Louie et al., 2022). Educational institutions and policymakers should prioritize implementing and supporting CRP to bridge educational gaps and promote equity. Teacher preparation programs should focus on challenging and shaping pre-service teachers' beliefs to ensure equitable education for all students in response to the growing cultural and ethnic diversity in education worldwide (Civitillo et al., 2018).

These findings not only address the academic performance disparities highlighted by PISA but also provide a pathway for improving the overall educational experiences and outcomes for ethnic minority students in the Netherlands.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, I address the main research question: How do informal teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized programs? The study reveals that teachers in community-organized programs incorporate CRP through interconnected relationships and instructional practices, parental involvement, and leveraging their backgrounds and experiences. This aligns closely with Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. The teachers utilize their cultural backgrounds and experiences to build relationships and inform their instructional methods. They practice open communication and one-on-one conversations to foster positive relationships and enhance students' academic performance (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although parental involvement is not explicitly mentioned in Ladson-Billings' framework, it emerged prominently in the data. Existing research (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; King & Goodwin, 2002) highlights the significant role of strong parental involvement in children's education. Given the growing academic gap between ethnic minority students and their peers, it is essential to continue efforts to close this gap. This research provides valuable directions for future initiatives.

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## Appendix 1 Observation protocol CRIOP

### Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol Fourth Revised Edition (January 2017)

Rebecca Powell, Susan Chambers Cantrell, Pamela K. Correll, and Victor Malo-Juvera

Originally Developed by: R. Powell, S. Cantrell, Y. Gallardo Carter, A. Cox,  
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Revised 2012 by: R. Powell (Georgetown College), S. Cantrell (University of Kentucky), P. Correll (University  
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Revised 2017 by: R Powell (Georgetown College), S. Cantrell (University of Kentucky),  
P. Correll (Missouri State University), V. Malo-Juvera (UNC-Wilmington)

School (use assigned number): \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher (assigned number): \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Academic Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Start Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time of Obs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### DIRECTIONS

After the classroom observation, review the field notes for evidence of each “pillar” of Culturally Responsive Instruction. If an example of the following descriptors was observed, place the field notes line number on which that example is found. If a “non-example” of the descriptors was observed, place the line number on which that non-example is found.

Then, make an overall/holistic judgment of the implementation of each component. To what extent and/or effect was the component present?

- 4 – Consistently**
- 3 – Often**
- 2 – Occasionally**
- 1 – Rarely**
- 0 – Never**

Transfer the holistic scores from pp. 2 through 9 to the table below.

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
I. CLASS	

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
IV. INSTR	

II. FAM	
III. ASMT	

V. DISC	
VI. CRITICAL	

**CRIOP © 2012 The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development and The Center for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Funded by the State of Kentucky and the US Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition. Please use the following citation when referencing the CRIOP instrument: Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., Correll, P. K., & Malo-Juvera, V. (2017). Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky College of Education**

**I. CLASS CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS**

**Holistic score**    **4**                    **3**                    **2**                    **1**                    **0**  
    **Rarely Never**                    **Consistently**                    **Often**                    **Occasionally**

<b>CRI Indicator</b>	<b>For example, in a responsive classroom:</b>	<b>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</b>	<b>Field notes: Time or line(s) of example</b>	<b>Field notes: Time or line(s) of non-example</b>	<b>Field notes: No example (✓)</b>	<b>SCORE for Indicator</b>
<p>1. The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding)</p>	<p>Generally Effective Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher refers to students by name, uses personalized language with students</li> <li>• Teacher conveys interest in student's lives and experiences</li> </ul> <p>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a “family-like” environment in the classroom; there is a sense of belonging; students express care for one another in a variety of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher permits and/or promotes negativity in the classroom, e.g., criticisms, negative comments, sarcasm, etc.</li> <li>• Teacher does not address negative comments of one student towards another</li> <li>• Teacher stays behind desk or across table from students; s/he does not get “on their level”</li> <li>• Teacher does not take interest in student's lives and experiences; is primarily concerned with conveying</li> </ul>				

	<p>ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher promotes an environment that is safe and anxiety-free for all students, including culturally and linguistically diverse students; students seem comfortable participating in the classroom</li> <li>• Teacher differentiates patterns of interaction and management techniques to be culturally congruent with the students and families s/he serves (e.g., using a more direct interactive style with students who require it)</li> </ul>	<p>content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher does not seem aware that some students are marginalized and are not participating fully in classroom activities</li> <li>• Some students do not seem comfortable contributing to class discussions and participating in learning activities</li> <li>• Teacher uses the same management techniques and interactive style with all students when it is clear that they do not work for some</li> </ul>				
<p>2. The teacher communicates high expectations for all students</p>	<p>Generally Effective Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an emphasis on learning and higher-level thinking; challenging work is the norm</li> <li>• Students do not hesitate to ask questions that further their learning; there is a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher has low expectations, consistently giving work that is not challenging or frustrating students by giving them unreasonably difficult tasks</li> <li>• The teacher does not call on all students consistently</li> <li>• The teacher allows some</li> </ul>				

	<p>“culture of learning” in the classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher expects every student to participate actively; students are not allowed to be unengaged or off-task</li> <li>• Teacher gives feedback on established high standards and provides students with specific information on how they can meet those standards</li> </ul> <p>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are group goals for success as well as individual goals (e.g., goals and charts posted on walls); every student is expected to achieve</li> <li>• Students are invested in their own and others’ learning; they continuously assist one another</li> <li>• Teacher takes steps to ensure that emerging bilinguals understand</li> </ul>	<p>students to remain unengaged, e.g., never asks them to respond to questions, allows them to sleep, places them in the “corners” of the room, and does not bring them into the instructional conversation, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher does not establish high standards; evaluation criteria require lower-level thinking and will not challenge students</li> <li>• Teacher feedback is subjective and is not tied to targeted learning outcomes and standards</li> <li>• Teacher expresses a deficit model, suggesting through words or actions that some students are not as capable as others</li> <li>• Teacher does not explicitly assist emerging bilinguals to ensure they understand directions and content</li> </ul>				
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	directions and have access to the same content and learning as native speakers					
3. The teacher creates a learning atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and toward diverse populations	<p>Generally Effective Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher sets a tone for respectful classroom interaction and teaches respectful ways for having dialogue and being in community with one another</li> <li>• Teacher implements practices that teach collaboration and respect, e.g., class meetings, modeling and reinforcing effective interaction, etc.</li> <li>• Students interact in respectful ways and know how to work together effectively</li> <li>• Teacher and students work to understand each other's perspectives</li> </ul> <p>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and affirming messages and images</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher shows impatience and intolerance for certain student behaviors</li> <li>• Lack of respectful interaction among students may be an issue</li> <li>• Teacher establishes a competitive environment whereby students try to out-perform one another</li> <li>• Teacher does not encourage student questions or ridicule students when they ask for clarification</li> <li>• Posters and displays do not show an acknowledgment and affirmation of students' cultural and racial/ethnic/linguistic identities</li> <li>• Classroom library and other available materials promote ethnocentric positions and/or ignore human diversity</li> <li>• Classroom resources do not</li> </ul>				

	<p>about students' racial and ethnic identities are present throughout the classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher affirms students' language and cultural knowledge by integrating it into classroom conversations</li> <li>• Teacher encourages students to share their stories and to have pride in their history and linguistic and cultural identities</li> <li>• Classroom library and other available materials contain multicultural content that reflects the perspectives of and shows appreciation for diverse groups</li> <li>• Classroom library (including online resources) includes bilingual texts that incorporate students' native languages</li> </ul>	<p>include any bilingual texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher never affirms students' native languages and cultures</li> </ul>				
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<p>4. Students work together productively</p>	<p>Generally Effective Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are continuously viewed as resources for one another and assist one another in learning new concepts</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to have discussions with peers and to work collaboratively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are discouraged from assisting their peers</li> <li>• Students primarily work individually and are not expected to work collaboratively; and/or students have a difficult time collaborating</li> <li>• Teacher dominates the decision-making and does not allow for student voice</li> <li>• The emphasis is on individual achievement</li> <li>• Classroom is arranged for quiet, solitary work, with the teacher being “center stage”</li> </ul>				
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	<p>students' worlds outside of school (e.g., "All About Me" books, student-created alphabet walls, camera projects, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher views students' life experiences as assets and builds on students' cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and "cultural data sets," making connections during instruction in the various content areas</li> <li>• Materials and examples are used that reflect diverse experiences and views</li> <li>• Families' "funds of knowledge" are integrated into learning experiences when possible; parents are invited into the classroom to share their knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>her own or the students' lived experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning experiences are derived almost exclusively from published textbooks and other materials that do not relate to the classroom community or the larger community being served</li> <li>• Families "funds of knowledge" are never incorporated in the curriculum; parents are never invited to share their knowledge</li> </ul>				
<p>2. Students engage in active, hands-on, meaningful learning tasks, including inquiry-based</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning tasks allow students to practice and apply concepts using hands-on activities and manipulatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students work passively at their seats on teacher-directed tasks</li> <li>• Passive student learning is the norm (e.g., listening to</li> </ul>				

learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning activities promote a high level of student engagement</li> <li>• Exploratory learning is encouraged</li> <li>• Teacher engages students in the inquiry process and learns from students' investigations (e.g., inquiry-based and project-based learning)</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to pose questions and find answers to their questions using a variety of resources</li> <li>• Student-generated questions form the basis for further study and investigation</li> </ul>	<p>direct instruction and taking notes, reading the textbook, seatwork, worksheets, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploratory learning is discouraged</li> <li>• Teacher is the authority</li> <li>• Students are not encouraged to challenge or question ideas or to engage in further inquiry</li> <li>• Students are not encouraged to pose their questions</li> <li>• All knowledge/ideas are generated by those in authority (e.g., textbook writers, teachers)</li> </ul>				
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<p>3. The teacher focuses on developing students' academic language</p>	<p>Generally Effective Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an emphasis on learning academic vocabulary in the particular content area</li> <li>• Students are taught independent strategies for learning new vocabulary</li> <li>• Key academic vocabulary and language structures are identified before a study or investigation</li> </ul> <p>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher develops language objectives in addition to content objectives, having specific goals in mind for students' linguistic performance</li> <li>• Teacher articulates expectations for language use (e.g. "I want you to use these vocabulary words in your discussion; I expect you to reply in a complete sentence" etc.)</li> <li>• Teacher scaffolds students'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little attention is paid to learning academic vocabulary in the content area</li> <li>• New words are taught outside of meaningful contexts</li> <li>• Students are not taught independent word-learning strategies</li> <li>• Teacher does not articulate expectations for language use</li> <li>• The teacher does not establish language objectives for students; only content objectives are evident</li> <li>• Teacher does not scaffold students' language development</li> <li>• No attention is given to the language used in particular disciplines; academic language is not addressed</li> <li>• Students are evaluated on their use of academic discourse but it is never</li> </ul>				
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	<p>language development as needed (sentence frames, sentence starters, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic language is taught explicitly (identifying it in written passages, dissecting complex sentences, using mentor texts, creating “learning/language walls,” etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>taught explicitly</p>				
<p>4. The teacher uses instructional techniques that scaffold student learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies to assist students in learning content (e.g., demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, reducing linguistic density, etc.)</li> <li>• Teacher models, explains, and demonstrates skills and concepts and provides appropriate scaffolding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher primarily uses traditional methods for teaching content (e.g., lecture, reading from a textbook) with few scaffolding strategies</li> <li>• The teacher does not always model, explain, and demonstrate new skills and concepts before asking students to apply them</li> </ul>				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher uses “comprehensible input” (e.g., gestures, familiar words and phrases, slower speech, etc.) to facilitate understanding when needed</li> <li>• Teacher builds on student's knowledge of their home languages to teach English (e.g., cognates, letter-sound relationships, syntactic patterns)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher does not use visuals, comprehensible input, etc. to facilitate understanding</li> <li>• Teacher does not build upon students' home languages to teach terms, skills, and concepts in English</li> </ul>				
5. Students have choices based on their experiences, interests, and strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have multiple opportunities to choose texts, writing topics, and modes of expression based on preferences and personal relevance</li> <li>• Students have some choice in assignments</li> <li>• Students have some choice and ownership in what they are learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher selects texts, writing topics, and modes of expression for students</li> <li>• All assignments are teacher-initiated</li> <li>• Students have no choice or ownership in the topic of study or questions that will be addressed</li> </ul>				

## **Appendix 2 Semi-structured Interview Guideline**

### Interview guideline

The thick sentences are the first questions, the thin sentences are questions that could be used to follow up. I will also frequently be asking questions as:

Why?

Can you elaborate on that (after a yes or no question?)

Why do you think that is?

What can you tell me about that?

Can you tell me more about that?

And more...

### **Start**

Hi ...name...

Thank you for doing this interview with me. Did receive my email, with the inform consent?  
Do you have any questions?

I will start the interview and recording now, okay?

### **Introduction**

My name is Ellen, I am 41 year old, student at the UU and I am studying educational science.  
Currently I am conducting a research on culturally relevant teacher pedagogy.

- How do informal teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized programs?
- 1: How do teachers establish culturally relevant relationships in the classroom?
- 2: How do they use teaching methods to make instruction culturally relevant?

Thank you for doing this interview with me. Did receive my email, with the inform consent?  
Do you have any questions?

I will start the interview and recording now, okay?



**Can you tell me something about yourself, your age, your place of birth, ethical background etc.?**

Do you have a pedagogical background?

Do you know about different teaching styles and instructional methods?

Do you like to learn more about them?

**Can you tell me something about why you joined as a volunteer? How long are you doing this?**

What do you do at the program

### **Classroom environment - Interview Questions**

**Can I ask about your students?**

**How many students do you have? Do you know them all by name? Do you know how to pronounce them correctly? Do they use different languages, next to Dutch? How do you deal with that?**

What do you know about the students who live outside the classroom?

Do you know the parents/ caretakers of your students?

**How is the classroom environment?**

Can you walk me through from the moment you walked-in?

How do you greet the students, do you start with check-in?

How is the atmosphere?

How is the room?

How do you close the lesson?

**What can you tell me about the expectations you have from your students?**

What is your teaching goal? What do you hope to achieve with your students? What do you hope your students will achieve?

**Latest Pisa outcomes show different; how do you explain this?**

Student/family language differences?

Or maybe teachers have different expectations?

What do you think that has to happen to solve the differences?

What do you do?

**How do you cope with the learning differences between students?**

Does every student have the same goals, and the same content?

**Instructional practices - Interview questions**

**How do you incorporate students' language and cultural knowledge into the classroom?**

**Do your materials contain multicultural content?**

What can you tell me about the collaboration between students?

What do you do to ensure student engagement?

Can you give me an example?

**How do you connect the cultural aspect into instructional methods/activities?**

**Do you teach using a specific vocabulary?**

Do you allowed to use different languages in the classes, when working with peers?

What are your principals/strategies about using different languages during school? And Why?  
Example

Do your students need help with the Dutch language and how do you facilitate that?

**How do you assist your students in learning content?**

Do use different teaching strategies for different student?

**What opportunities do your students have to choose learning content, assignments etc.?**

How do you decide on your learning content, the curricula, is there room for students to contribute to what they want to learn.

Is there room for students to decide on the topic of the assignment? How much freedom do they have?

**Closing**

**Is there something I should have asked?**

Is there something you would like me to know?

What do you think about the interview?

I will transcribe and analyze this interview, after I am done I would like to email it to you so you can check if I analyzed it correctly? You can add or correct thing if I misinterpreted your words. Is that okay?

**Thank you for your time.**

### **Appendix 3 Informed Consent Letter**

Februari, 2024

Beste deelnemer,

Middels deze brief willen wij u uitnodigen om deel te nemen aan het onderzoeksproject "Hoe passen informele leraren cultureel relevante pedagogie toe in door de gemeenschap georganiseerde programma's."

Het doel van deze studie is om te begrijpen hoe informele leraren bijdragen aan het gevoel van verbondenheid van middelbare scholieren in een door de gemeenschap georganiseerd programma.

#### **Wat wordt er van u als deelnemer verwacht?**

Als u akkoord gaat met de deelname, zouden wij graag een interview van 45-60 minuten met u afnemen.

Tijdens het interview vragen wij u naar uw achtergrond en opvattingen over lesgeven.

#### **Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens**

Persoonlijk identificeerbare gegevens worden als volgt behandeld: interviews zullen worden opgenomen voor transcriptie. Alle persoonlijke identificeerbare gegevens zullen worden verwijderd en audiobestanden worden vernietigd wanneer deze zijn getranscribeerd.

Gegevens die uw identiteit of

andere identificeerbare informatie prijsgeven, worden opgeslagen in een goed beveiligde universitaire server. Deze server is alleen toegankelijk voor de onderzoeker en alle informatie

zal worden vernietigd na afronding van het onderzoek. Dit is in overeenstemming met de richtlijnen van de VSNU Association of Universities in Nederland. Toegang voor andere onderzoekers uit de onderzoeksgroep wordt alleen verleend als zij ermee instellen de vertrouwelijkheid van de informatie te bewaren, zoals in dit formulier wordt gevraagd.

### **Risico's, voordelen en vrijwillige deelname**

Er zijn geen risico's verbonden aan deelname aan dit onderzoek. We verwachten niet dat de onderzoeksresultaten u rechtstreeks ten goede zullen komen. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt op elk gewenst moment besluiten uw deelname te beëindigen, in dat geval kunt u het onderzoek verlaten zonder enige uitleg of negatieve gevolgen. Als u uw deelname beëindigt, zullen wij de tot dan toe verzamelde gegevens gebruiken, tenzij u ons expliciet anders informeert.

Als u een officiële klacht heeft over het onderzoek, dan kunt u een mail sturen naar de klachtenfunctionaris via [klachtenfunctionaris via klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl](mailto:klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl)

Wanneer u akkoord gaat met deze deelname, vragen wij u dit formulier te ondertekenen.

Neem bij vragen contact op met de hoofdonderzoeker via Zehra Colak [[f.z.colak@uu.nl](mailto:f.z.colak@uu.nl)]

Met vriendelijke groet

Ellen Tijs [E.C.J.Tijs@students.uu.nl](mailto:E.C.J.Tijs@students.uu.nl)

## **Informed Consent**

February 2024

Dear participant,

Through this letter, we would like to invite you to participate in the research project titled "How do informal teachers practice culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized programs." This study aims to understand how informal teachers contribute to the sense of belonging of high school students in a community-organized program. The latest research results indicate a growing gap in academic outcomes between students with an ethnic minority background and their peers with an ethnic majority background. This research will explore informal educational practices through interviews with voluntary teachers regarding classroom relationships and instructional practices within a community-organized program, to understand what they do effectively to enhance students' sense of belonging.

### **What is expected of you as a participant?**

If you agree to participate, we would like to conduct a 45- to 60-minute interview with you, online or in person. During the interview, we will ask about your background and perspectives on teaching.

### **Confidentiality of data Personally**

Identifiable information will be handled as follows: interviews will be recorded for transcription. All personally identifiable information will be removed, and audio files will be

destroyed after transcription. Data revealing your identity or other identifiable information will be stored on a securely protected university server. This server is accessible only to the researcher, and all information will be destroyed upon completion of the research. This follows the guidelines of the VSNU Association of Universities in the Netherlands. Access for other researchers from the research group will only be granted if they agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information, as requested in this form.

### **Risks, benefits, and voluntary participation**

There are no risks associated with participating in this research. We do not expect that the research results will directly benefit you. Your participation is voluntary, and you can decide to end your participation at any time, in which case you can withdraw from the study without any explanation or negative consequences. If you decide to withdraw, we will use the data collected up to that point unless you explicitly inform us otherwise. If you have an official complaint about the research, you can send an email to the complaints officer at [ComplaintsOfficer@fetesocwetrduu.nl](mailto:ComplaintsOfficer@fetesocwetrduu.nl). When you agree to participate, we ask you to sign this form.

For any questions, please contact the principal investigator at Zehra Colak [[f.z.colak@uu.nl](mailto:f.z.colak@uu.nl)]

Best regards,

Ellen Tijs

## Appendix 4

### FERB-approval

<p><b>P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht</b></p> <p>The Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences Utrecht University P.O. Box 80.140 3508 TC Utrecht</p>	<p><b>Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences</b></p> <p>Faculty Support Office Ethics Committee</p> <p><b>Visiting Address</b></p> <p>Padualaan 14 3584 CH Utrecht</p>
<p><b>Our Description</b>            24-0182</p> <p><b>Telephone</b>                    030 253 46 33</p> <p><b>E-mail</b>                         FETC-fsw@uu.nl</p> <p><b>Date</b>                             17 January 2024</p> <p><b>Subject</b>                        Ethical approval</p>	

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

Study: How do informal teachers practice culturally relevant pedagogy in community-organized program?

Principal investigator: E.C.J. Tijs

Supervisor: Zehra Colak

The study is approved by the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University. The approval is based on the documents sent by the researchers as requested in the form of the Ethics committee and filed under number 24-0182. The approval is valid through 30 June 2024. The approval of the Ethical Review Board concerns ethical aspects, as well as data management and privacy issues (including the GDPR). It should be noticed that any changes in the research design oblige a renewed review by the Ethical Review Board.

Yours sincerely,

Peter van der Heijden, Ph.D.  
Chair

This is an automatically generated document, therefore it is not signed

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## Appendix 5

### AI acknowledgement

All students are expected to include an acknowledgement at the end of their thesis which includes:

- A statement indicating if you have used generative AI or not.
- If you used generative AI, explain in a clear and detailed way how you used AI. Give at least 3 examples of your exact prompts.
- Explain how you used the output in your thesis.
- To produce this statement, we recommend keeping a record of your use of AI (e.g., saving your prompts, making screen shots)

My statement:

#### **I used AI to help me translate the quotes of the participants:**

Examples of translations:

Translate this [Ja ouderbetrokkenheid is ook echt iets wat wij, wat wij steeds meer op de agenda brengen. Omdat er dan sowieso nog meer bewustzijn is bij de leerling zelf. Dat hij weet van oké, mijn ouders zit erbij, dus ik word vanuit alle kanten gesupport. We proberen daar natuurlijk op een hele nette manier mee om te gaan. Tegelijkertijd krijgen we ook hele andere inzicht vanuit ouders. Kijk, soms hebben we gesprek zonder leerling en dan vragen we hoe die leerling het thuis doet, maakt hij echt huiswerk. Wat zijn de dingen die 24/7 doet, leest hij wel eens boek dat soort zaken, want je krijgt niet te horen, ook al heb je een 90% goede relatie met zo'n leerling. Er zal altijd wel iets zijn dat hij verschuilt. ]

ChatGPT

Sure, here's the translation:

"Yes, parental involvement is something we are increasingly putting on the agenda. Because then there is more awareness in the student himself. He knows, okay, my parents are involved, so I am supported from all sides. We try to handle this in a very proper manner. At the same time, we gain very different insights from parents. Sometimes we have conversations without the student and ask how the student is doing at home, whether he actually does his homework. What are the things he does 24/7, does he ever read a book, that kind of stuff, because you don't hear everything, even if you have a 90% good relationship with such a student. There will always be something he hides."

translate [ basisschool]

ChatGPT

The Dutch term "**basisschool**" translates to "**primary school**" or "**elementary school**" in English.

translate [wat ik veel hoor, is dat docenten ook vooroordelen hebben over wat een leerling wel aan kan, ja of nee. En omdat ze dan het gevoel hebben bij een niet-westerse leerling of een leerling met een niet-westerse achtergrond dat die het thuis bijvoorbeeld moeilijk heeft, straks als hij VWO krijgt als advies, ik zeg maar wat, dat ze dan al heel snel geneigd zijn, laten we hem dan maar op t-havo proberen, terwijl er bij een leerling met een westerse achtergrond wel eigenlijk het risico aangaan wordt van oh ja VWO. Nou laat hem maar VWO doen. Hij heeft dat vangnet vast wel vanuit huis en dat komt vast wel goed]

ChatGPT

Here is the translation to English:

"What I often hear is that teachers also have prejudices about what a student can handle, yes or no. And because they feel that a non-Western student or a student with a non-Western background, for example, has difficulties at home, if they are recommended VWO, just to say something, they are very quickly inclined to suggest, let's try them at T-HAVO instead. Whereas, with a student from a Western background, they are more willing to take the risk and say, oh yes, VWO. Let's let them do VWO. They probably have that safety net from home, and it will probably be fine."

and this [ wat je wat je daar tegen kan doen, is ook gewoon ervoor zorgen dat die docenten populatie ook gewoon een afspiegeling is van de leerlingenpopulatie. Want als zij, ik zeg maar wat, een Turkse docent hebben op de basisschool of een Marokkaanse docent? Ja, die kijkt bijvoorbeeld heel anders naar wat diegene wel kan of niet. En dat is ook een stukje eigen ervaring. Want ja, als je als docent bent, betekent het dat je al HBO gediplomeerd moet zijn, nou als ik HBO kon doen. Waarom kan jij dat niet]

ChatGPT

Here is the translation to English:

"What you can do about that is to ensure that the teacher population also reflects the student population. Because if they have, just to say something, a Turkish teacher in primary school or a Moroccan teacher? Yes, they might look very differently at what the student can or cannot do. And that's also a part of their own experience. Because, yes, if you are a teacher, it means you must already be a higher education graduate. Well, if I could do higher education, why can't you?"

**I used google translate to help me translate the matrix on this website :**

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=nl&sl=nl&tl=en&op=docs>

**I asked feedback on the separate section of my thesis**

For example:

Please give feedback on the findings section of my thesis according to apa guidelines

[[Findings After analyzing the interview four themes emerge from the data. In this section I will describe the themes and explain the content. Then I write what the participants said and give examples. After that I will connect it to this research. Understanding, Building Trust, and Connecting to Individual Students This theme is about the importance of personal connections, individual attention and support and creating a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. All teachers strive for a personal connection and are attentive to the well-being and needs of their students. They all meet the students when they come in, they all pay attention to learning the names of the students, only Alex gave up after a while because it was too difficult for him to remember names, not only at the program, but in every aspect of his life. Jos shows a strong commitment to individual students, striving for a personal bond and paying attention to their well-being and needs. Jos says: "I'm more of a coach. I'm more concerned with those children, about how things are going, or what are you doing?" Adam, Sofia, Marriam and Noah tell about one-on-one conversations to really get to know the students. Noah, May and Sofia strive for open communication and a positive atmosphere in the classroom, where students feel seen, heard and valued. Sofia says: "Yes, I always try to have an open attitude that children can discuss everything, yes." Noah says: "Well, the most important thing is that a teacher or a volunteer here at our foundation simply has an eye for the individual and therefore gives the child the feeling of who he is, what he brings with him and how we ensure that he or she feels good, feels at home, so to speak, and also dares to be open to share what she encounters, because only in this way can we ensure that the child develops further. And also just take that next step. I think that we at the foundation are making quite a good step in this regard. Or at least, let me say, I notice that I do that just fine. I cannot speak for others" Adam advocates connection and understanding of the importance of conversations. He tells me: "yes, many conversations. I think that is the most important thing and is also the basis for raising these kinds of issues, but also for getting input on how they feel. I think it's very important." Marriam talks about one-on-one conversations to correct unwanted behavior and when she does so, she learns more about the students because he has the opportunity to tell her things. "Look, in the lesson, I try to maintain order, so maybe I'm a bit stricter then. But if a person is quite disruptive, I always take them aside, right? I go outside with them and then I can just have a one-on-one conversation with the kid. When he has that one-on-one attention and can talk to me, things come out that he normally wouldn't say so quickly. So I think a bit of individual attention is also appropriate." The teachers seem to place more emphasis on personal connections and individual guidance than on understanding different cultural backgrounds. Some examples of what the participants mentioned. Mason: "No, I try to apply examples per person, not by ethnic background," May: "we don't really have to worry about having to take different cultural backgrounds into account, but there are children who have difficulty with this or that for example, so with 'being different' ... of course yes (we have to take that into account). For example, I have a child in my class who has autism. And she participates very well in the lessons." Marriam: "Am I repurposing things for their culture? No, in principle not. No, because when I talk about language arithmetic, I am not going to talk about culture. During a theme lesson you sometimes ask the children, have you experienced something like this? For example, We're talking about bullying, We're talking about self-confidence, We're talking about this. Then I

ask children, hey, do you see this in their environment, have you experienced something like this? If some sort of examples are mentioned or we show a video; This is what happens to that person and we will ask around. But those are the theme lessons for principle.” Jos and Alex talk about adjusting learning content to multicultural background a bit more: Jos: “... I also believe that education should take more and better account of the composition of society, because I saw some reading books in examples, such as Piet gives money to Jantje and Jantje asks how much. Some adjustments are being made, but I then jokingly remark to the children: hey, only Jantjes and Pietjes live in the Netherlands. No, right?! You can also have a bit of fun with the children.” Alex: “Sometimes yes (I will connect content to the background of the students), but not often. I think you should not forget that they are still quite Dutch children. And I think they really do have the same experiences in the world, like Piet Jan and Klaas.” Alex also mentions that he focusses on learning outcomes in stead of connecting to the experiences of the students: “I come there again to provide homework guidance and not to discuss (for example) the Ramadan. I think that's kind of my point, because I still believe in the system that you can make a difference. Learning outcomes still remain important in a society.” These quotes emphasize the importance of personal connections and individual attention, which is known to be an factor in establishing culturally relevant relationships (Blazar, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Powell & Rightmyer, 2012). Jos, Noah, May, Sofia, and Adam strive to build strong personal bonds with their students. Jos, for instance, sees himself more as a coach who is deeply concerned about how children are doing. One-on-one conversations are a key strategy used by all teachers to really get to know their students, which is helpful for understanding their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Sofia's open attitude allows children to discuss everything, and she hope children feel safe and free to talk to her. Noah emphasizes the importance of making students feel seen, heard, and valued, fostering an inclusive environment where students feel safe to share their cultural experiences and challenges. Adam stress the importance of many conversations to get input on how students feel and to address their individual needs, which could include culturally relevant issues. And Mason, Jos, May, Alex, and Marriam focus more on individual differences rather than broadly categorizing students by their ethnic backgrounds. This individualized approach helps in creating relationships that respect and understand each student's unique (cultural) identity.

**Parental Involvement and Engagement** This theme contains communication with parents, their involvement and organizing collaborative support for students by connecting the parents, school and the community organized program. The teachers recognize the importance of parental involvement and communication with parents to optimally support the students, they also help the parents with advise and guidance about the contact with school. The emphasis on parental involvement varies among teachers. For example, Noah shows that contact with parents helps him to help student, because the parents let Noah know what the school of the student told them: Noah says :” If we invest time in contact with parents, I also notice that parents find it easier to ask questions via WhatsApp, for example, if there is something wrong or that they then send an app from the school, we are told that the child is having difficulty. with fractions. Can you do something with that? Well then we will look at that, so you will notice that there is commitment from both camps.” Adam talks a lot about parental involvement: "Could you not otherwise invite the parents to have that conversation specifically about that? To get a complete picture, and then fill it in with the aim of supporting the student from all sides. This way, he feels supported from all

directions and remains motivated, even if the motivation doesn't come from within himself, but from his parents." And "Yes, parental involvement is something we are increasingly putting on the agenda. Because then there is more awareness in the student himself. He knows, okay, my parents are involved, so I am supported from all sides. We try to handle this in a very proper manner. At the same time, we gain very different insights from parents. Sometimes we have conversations without the student and ask how the student is doing at home, whether he actually does his homework. What are the things he does 24/7, does he ever read a book, that kind of stuff, because you don't hear everything, even if you have a 90% good relationship with such a student. There will always be something he hides." But Mason invests more in getting to know where the students. Mason says: "I know the names of the students. But from the parents not directly, because you have more contact with the student. From secondary school onwards, you really try to make a bond with the student. Parental involvement is something they want to increase, to involve the parents a little more alongside the student, because the students still remain minors. So you also want to involve the parents somewhere. It is true that when they come, you are not teaching. So you don't have a benchmark or anything, so I mean you are indirectly obliged to have conversations with the student; "Where should your learning be improved, show me your list of grades?" So you really try to give the students the lead, so that they also feel responsible, but the steps with the parents? Yes, they should still be made." The theme "Parental Involvement and Engagement" relates to my research questions by demonstrating how teachers use teaching methods that incorporate insights from parents. By keeping in touch with parents and asking them for input in the educational process, teachers can create a more holistic support system and they get to know the cultural background more thoroughly. To incorporate parental insights into teaching methods, Noah uses the information gathered from parents to adjust his teaching methods and address specific academic challenges students face, such as difficulties with fractions. Noah's approach to using platforms like WhatsApp for communication makes it easier for parents to share concerns and updates about their children, fostering a collaborative environment. This practice allows him to address academic needs more effectively by incorporating insights from the students' home and school environments. Adam addresses inviting parents to discussions to get a complete picture of the student's needs and at the same time letting the students know that they are supported from both sides. Mason points out the importance of getting to know the students directly, but also acknowledges the need to increase parental involvement as the students are minors. **Backgrounds and Experiences** This theme is about teachers and students personal backgrounds influencing the teaching methods. The teachers demonstrate how their own backgrounds and experiences shape their approach to the students and their teaching, allowing them to better connect with their students and create an inclusive learning environment. For example Adams experience of disadvantage has taught him the importance of social skills and respectful interactions, and his multicultural background has shaped his involvement in community activities, he says: "that moment when I talk to such a boy and he feels like okay, I probably experienced the same thing. Comes from the same environment, can also talk to me in a completely different way than how I am used to at school. Yes, and that it is in my favor in that sense." And Sofia consciously uses her own background and cultural differences to better connect with her students and adapts her teaching methods based on their needs, by asking them for examples. " So for example, I used one example once when my grandfather used to smoke a cigar in the

shed or something where his office was. Well, that's not something they have the same idea about. It's a different time anyway, so I ask them more about that." Jos is also aware of his different background and he knows that the students know that to: "Then you also know, someone like me, an old white man, has it easy of course. The kids know that, right? Because I had a comfortable upbringing. It's all a bit different, isn't it?" Whereas Masons age and personal background have helped him create a better understanding and connection with his students, allowing him to easily connect and motivate them. "Yes, I actually have my age at the MBO and also my origin at the foundation, which makes it very easy to make contact. I also know what happens. I played football for a number of years with only Dutch people, so I also know what happens in the dressing room. I played football with only foreigners for a number of years. I also know how it works there. So you have learned that constantly, so also through situations you just get to know different cultures and codes of conduct. And I just try to apply that." Mason gives also gives another example Of how he uses his own background to get connected to the students: "Occasionally, as a joke, you say something in the mother tongue. Then they laugh. If it's a new student, or if you are new to the class, you always get the question if you speak Arabic or Berber. Yes, then they know whether or not you will understand them. Well, both. The real answer was that I speak both, and then they don't try to fool you anymore. Yes, sometimes you do use words like 'quiet' or 'sit down', yes, those are things you can laugh about." The theme of " Backgrounds and Experiences" addresses my research questions by illustrating how the personal backgrounds and experiences of the teachers influence their ability to establish culturally relevant relationships and adapt their teaching methods. By using their own cultural insights and experiences, teachers can better connect with their students and create a supportive learning environment. This approach helps the responsiveness to the diverse needs of the students. Adam uses his personal experience of disadvantage and his multicultural background to establish connection with students who come from similar environments. This shared experience allows him to communicate more effectively and understand the challenges of the students, fostering a sense of trust and belonging. Mason uses his age and personal experiences in both Dutch and with minorities to relate to his students. His familiarity with different cultural environments helps him connect and motivate students by understanding their perspectives and social dynamics, he also uses his mother tongue occasionally with the students. Adam and Mason adapt their teaching methods based on their understanding of the cultural contexts their students come from. Sofia uses her background and cultural differences to better connect with her students by sharing personal anecdotes, although the students can not relate to the, It give het an opening to ask for their experiences. This practice of sharing personal stories helps bridge cultural gaps and fosters a deeper connection by showing students that their teacher values and asks them to help her understand diverse cultural experiences. Sofia tailors her examples and teaching methods to understand and show interest in her students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. This makes the instruction more relatable and engaging for the students. Jos is aware that his background is not like the background of the students, simply acknowledging that shows that he has an understanding of the influence of different backgrounds in teaching.

**Equal Opportunities and High Expectations** This theme addresses biases and under-advicing, setting high standards for all students and ensuring equal opportunities for success and wellbeing. Jos says: "and you also speak to them about ambitions, aspirations and that you shouldn't let where you come from hinder you, you know. ... And set your priorities well, you

know.” May does not only talk about learning outcomes but emphasis the social aspects of participating in society. “What I hope the kids will achieve is that the children will not only be successful at school and get good grades and everything, but also be able to participate easily in society. That is actually my main goal, because ultimately, perhaps very bluntly of me, but it is simply of no use to you if your child only scores 10s, but cannot participate in society, cannot function within a society.” Which is in line with what Mariam says: “If I can think very big, well, I hope that they have actually developed their social side a bit, because that is also where we actually pay quite a lot of attention to, their social development. In addition to tutoring for reading and arithmetic, they are also allowed to express themselves and ask questions.” But Marriam also talks about students who get lower middle school advice because of their behavior and she experienced herself that it mainly effected what she calls “foreign” students but what she meant was students with ethnic minority background: “And I also noticed that, because there were so many foreigners, I saw that it happened, with children getting a lower recommendation (advice for middle school) purely because of their behavior, as I also had quite hyperactive students. There were also teachers who were somewhat attuned to this. Those who understood and could really handle foreign children, and that was nice.” And more teachers mentioned that students with a ethnic minority students face under-advising. This means they receive a lower recommendation for middle school than what would be appropriate based on their final test scores at their primary school. Noah mentions: “What I often hear is that teachers also have prejudices about what a student can handle, yes or no. And because they feel that a non-Western student or a student with a non-Western background, for example, has difficulties at home, if they are recommended VWO, just to say something, they are very quickly inclined to suggest, let's try them at T-HAVO instead. Whereas, with a student from a Western background, they are more willing to take the risk and say, oh yes, VWO. Let's let them do VWO. They probably have that safety net from home, and it will probably be fine... I also dare to say that it is not done consciously, only it is probably somewhere in the subconscious that they make an assumption, even though it is really not based on anything.” He also talks about a possible solution. Noah : “What you can do about that (inequality) is to ensure that the teacher population also reflects the student population. Because if they have, just to say something, a Turkish teacher in primary school or a Moroccan teacher? Yes, they might look very differently at what the student can or cannot do. And that's also a part of their own experience. Because, yes, if you are a teacher, it means you must already be a higher education graduate. Well, if I could do higher education, why can't you?” Alex mentions that it is important to fucus on learning outcomes. He believes that that is the way to show the students that they can become what they want. He says: “I still believe in the system that you can make a difference. Learning outcomes remain important in a society. I really believe that, or not. I think that results are more important. ... But the difference is there and I think it will always remain. And whether you indeed become a baker or an astronaut, as I said before. But it is important because if you become a baker, your certificate is still important. And also for an astronaut. Well, I stand by that ...” The theme of “Equal Opportunities and High Expectations” addresses my research questions by showing how teachers strive to overcome biases, set high expectations, and ensure equal opportunities. These efforts are integral to establishing culturally relevant relationships and implementing teaching methods that are responsive to the diverse needs of students. By challenging biases and fostering holistic development, teachers create an inclusive and supportive educational

environment that is crucial for culturally relevant pedagogy. Noah and Mariam recognize and address the issue of under-advicing, where ethnic minority students receive lower school recommendations due to biases, that teacher unconsciously have. By acknowledging these biases and striving to counteract them, teachers strive for fairness and set high expectations for all students, in education and in society. Jos talks to students about their ambitions and aspirations, encouraging them not to let their backgrounds hinder their goals. This approach motivates students to aim high and believe in their potential. May and Mariam focus on not just academic success but also the social aspects of participating in society. Noah suggests that increasing diversity among teachers can help in reducing biases and providing role models that reflect the student population. And Alex strives for good results of hi students, he really wants to learn the students what they need to get good school results. He believes that focusing on school results is the way for students to reach their full potential. The approach of these teachers ensure that all students feel represented and understood.]

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Overall, your findings section provides a comprehensive analysis of the themes derived from the interview data. Here are some feedback points according to APA guidelines:

#### 1. **Structure and Clarity:**

- Your section is well-organized with clear headings for each theme, making it easy for the reader to follow.
- Each theme is discussed in detail with supporting evidence from the interviews, providing a thorough understanding of the findings.

#### 2. **APA Style:**

- Ensure consistency in formatting throughout the section, including in-text citations and references.
- Double-check the citation format for the references cited in the text to ensure they adhere to APA guidelines.

#### 3. **Language and Tone:**

- The language used is generally clear and concise, which is appropriate for an academic paper.
- Maintain a neutral tone throughout the section, focusing on presenting the findings objectively without bias or personal opinion.

#### 4. **Integration of Findings and Literature:**

- You effectively integrate quotes from the interviews with relevant literature to support your findings.



- Make sure to provide proper citations for all literature referenced in the text.

#### 5. **Depth of Analysis:**

- Your analysis delves into the nuances of each theme, providing insight into the perspectives of the teachers and their practices.
- Continue to explore the implications of the findings in relation to existing research and theories, highlighting any contributions or implications for future research or practice.

#### 6. **Conclusion and Synthesis:**

- Consider including a brief concluding paragraph at the end of the section to summarize the main findings and their significance in relation to your research questions.
- Emphasize any key insights or patterns that emerge from the analysis of the themes.

Overall, your findings section demonstrates a thorough examination of the interview data and effectively connects the findings to relevant literature. With some minor adjustments for APA style and clarity, it will provide a strong foundation for the discussion and conclusion of your thesis.