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### Learning selves

*Learner identity development in school and beyond*

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### Publication date

2021

### Document Version

Other version

### License

Other

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### Citation for published version (APA):

Verhoeven, M. (2021). *Learning selves: Learner identity development in school and beyond*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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## CHAPTER 5

### CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO IDENTIFY WITH LEARNING IN SCHOOL FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING AND LEARNER IDENTITY TRAJECTORIES\*

Quite some adolescents struggle to identify with learning in school. In this ethnographic study, we explored how teachers can address students to provide them with inclusive opportunities to identify with learning in school. These research questions were studied: ‘What learner identity positions foster the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development?’ and ‘What teaching practices convey these learner identity positions?’ We found that addressing students as (1) people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society and (2) people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities, helped diverse students to identify with learning in school. The identified teaching practices that convey these positions are discussed.

#### INTRODUCTION

A fair share of adolescents struggles to identify with learning in school (UNESCO, 2005). Various interrelated explanations of this phenomenon have been identified. First, dependent on students’ interests and their out-of-school knowledge and experiences, what is taught in school may lack meaning to students. When students cannot relate their experiences in school to their out-

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\* Based on: Verhoeven, M., Zijlstra, B.J.H., & Volman, M. *Manuscript submitted to journal.*

of-school lives, they may have trouble identifying with their formal education (Anderson, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Rubin, 2007; Willis, 1977). Second, when only a narrow definition of a competent learner is available that merely recognizes a limited amount of talents and abilities (e.g., getting high grades), many students may be denied the possibility to understand themselves as successful learners, which too may impede their identification with learning in school (Calabrese Barton, Kang, Tan, O'Neill, Bautista-Guerra, & Brecklin, 2013; Gresalfi, 2004; Legette, 2017). These explanations suggest that less opportunities to identify with learning in school are available to "students who, in some way or another, are (seen as) different from the standard student" (Bronkhorst & Akkerman, 2016, p. 24). That the former students struggle to identify with learning in school is problematic, as this may negatively impact their current and future learning engagements (Anderson, 2007; Legette, 2017; Willis, 1977).

To (re-)establish the identification with learning in school in ways that are inclusive of a diverse student population, it is important that all students can connect their education to their out-of-school lives and experience recognition of who they are, what they know and what they are capable of (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999; Horn, 2008). Clearly, providing inclusive education is a challenging task. The ways in which schools may negatively play a role in students' identification with learning in school have been documented extensively (Calabrese Barton et al., 2013; Mortimer, Wortham, & Allard, 2010; Rubin, 2007), but less is known about how the identification with learning in school can be fostered (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004; Verhoeven, Poorthuis, Volman, 2019). Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to explore how teachers can address and teach their students in ways that enhance equal opportunities to identify with learning in school.

#### A LEARNER IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE

The sociocultural learner identity perspective that is adopted in this paper directs our attention to how teaching practices inform students' identification with learning in school (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Rubin, 2007). From this perspective, learning and learner identity development are considered to be intrinsically interwoven: by engaging in learning experiences, individuals are thought to develop new knowledge and skills *and* to come to understand themselves in relation to the knowledge and skills they try to master (Coll &

Falsafi, 2010; Holland, Lachichotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Pollard & Filer, 2007; Silseth & Arnseth, 2011). To illustrate, by engaging in inquiry-based learning, students become familiar with certain research skills, but also come to know themselves as inquiry-based learners: the experience of participating in inquiry-based learning, also informed by how their participation is recognized by others, teaches them things about whether they are gifted as inquiry-based learners, what their strengths and weaknesses as inquiry-based learners are, and whether they enjoy inquiry-based learning. Based on this, students may to a larger or lesser extent come to identify with inquiry-based learning (Black, Williams, Hernandez-Martinez, Davis, Pampaka, & Wake, 2010). People are considered to integrate the more specific learning-related self-understandings they have developed—concerning, for example, inquiry-based learning—into a more abstract sense of themselves as learners that they may take with them across contexts and that thickens over time (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Pollard & Filer, 2007). The rather stable and coherent self-understandings as learners that people thus create, and that inform their current and future learning engagements, are referred to as people's learner identities (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Rubin, 2007).

What processes of learning and learner identity development may take place is dependent on the learning practices that a context affords and constrains (Holland et al., 1998; Wortham, 2006). These context-specific practices are socially and culturally constructed, historically accumulated, and can take the shape of tools, norms, values and activities that inform the actions and judgements of the people participating in these contexts (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Holland et al., 1998; Silseth & Arnseth, 2011; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2006). For example, sixty years ago, due to technological developments, a photographer course was taught in different ways than it would be today. Additionally, in current society, schools may differ in the value they attach to practices such as science learning, critical thinking, or working independently. The affordances and constraints of a particular educational context (e.g., school, school track, classroom) inform what learner identity positions—social roles as learners—are made available to students. These learner identity positions communicate certain messages to students regarding the knowledge and skills that they are and are not supposed to identify with, such as science learning or inquiry-based learning. An educational context's affordances and constraints also convey to students what is needed to take up the learner identity position of a competent learner in that context (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Gresalfi, 2004; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2006): whereas some contexts may mainly

value learners who perform well and work fast, others may be more concerned with the effort students put into their schoolwork (e.g., Calabrese Barton et al., 2013; Horn, 2008).

Adolescents do not only develop their learner identities in relation to the learning practices and learner identity positions in school, but also in relation to those they encounter in other contexts such as at home or in peer groups. As no student moves across exactly the same contexts engaging in exactly the same learning practices, learning and learner identity development are idiosyncratic processes (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Holland et al., 1998; Silseth & Arnseth, 2011). This makes classrooms intrinsically diverse to at least a certain extent; all students bring different levels of identification with different learning practices into the classroom (Gutiérrez et al., 1999b). Dependent on the learning experiences that adolescents have engaged in in various contexts, they may experience a relatively high degree of either continuity or discontinuity between school and out-of-school contexts in the learning practices and learner identity positions that they have encountered there. Continuities are generally demonstrated to foster the connections adolescents experience between school and their out-of-school lives and may support their ability and willingness to comply with their school's definition of competence. Yet, the opposite applies to discontinuities, thereby impeding adolescents' identification with learning in school (Bronkhorst & Akkerman, 2016). To provide inclusive education, it is therefore important that schools make learner identity positions available that all students can and want to identify with, also when they experience a relatively high degree of discontinuity between their school and out-of-school contexts. This is why the following two research questions are examined in the present paper: 'What learner identity positions foster the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development?' and 'What teaching practices convey these learner identity positions?'. These questions are studied by means of analyzing classroom observation, student interview and student assessment and assignment data collected at three schools with different pedagogical approaches.

#### INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND POSITIONS IN SCHOOL

Many studies have demonstrated and stressed the importance of teaching strategies that are relevant and sensitive to students' existing knowledge and skills to foster their identification with learning in school. When it comes to

connecting the formal curriculum to adolescents' out-of-school lives, some studies have examined what teachers can do *for* their students to foster continuities. First, explicitly mentioning the connections between what is taught in school and out-of-school contexts has been identified to foster continuities (e.g., Boaler & Staples, 2008). Second, research indicates that authentic learning experiences organized by teachers may help students to see the connections between school and out-of-school contexts more clearly (Anderson, 1998; Boersma, Ten Dam, Volman, & Wardekker, 2010; Greeno, 2006; Hung, Lee, & Lim, 2012; Thompson, 2014). These are learning experiences that mimic real-life situations. Examples concern a class on the bathing of babies (Boersma et al., 2010) or a class where students engage in roleplays in which they, for instance, have to give scientifically informed health advice to a pregnant friend or family member (Thompson, 2014). Authentic learning experiences are found to especially help students identify with learning in school when they get to experience the consequences of their actions and decisions for the people in their direct surroundings or wider communities—something that has been found hard to organize in formal education (Boersma et al., 2010; Thompson, 2014; also see Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2018; 2019; Polman & Hope, 2014). Moreover, whether the studied examples of authentic learning experiences that are organized by teachers foster the identification with learning in school of all generally remains underexposed (Boersma et al., 2010; Hung, et al., 2012; Thompson, 2014). The examples mentioned above may, for instance, not be as meaningful to students who do not feel strong connections with babies.

Third, various scholars contend that teachers may convey how the subject matter is related to students' daily lives by drawing on the knowledge, skills and experiences that can be found in their households, peer groups and interest domains such as popular culture and sports (e.g., Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; González & Moll; Hogg & Volman, 2020; Moll et al., 1992). Illustrations of this teaching practice concern a teacher-organized learning module on candy and a teacher-organized teaching unit on Morocco (Moll et al., 1992; Saubich & Esteban-Guitart, 2011). However, this strand of research is generally concerned with fostering continuities for one particular student or for specific groups of students, such as students with an immigrant background or working-class students (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; González & Moll, 2002; Hogg & Volman, 2020; Saubich & Esteban-Guitart, 2011). Yet, diversity in trajectories of learning and learner identity development occurs both across and within demographic student groups.

Other studies are concerned with how teachers may build connections to students' out-of-school experiences and cultural backgrounds *with* students. First, studies have found that providing students with certain degrees of freedom may allow them to integrate their out-of-school knowledge and experiences into the curriculum. Examples concern instances in which students are requested to bring in personally relevant topics and/or activities for class (Basu, Calabrese Barton, Clairmont, & Locke, 2009; Seiler, 2001; Rahm, 2008; Thompson, 2014) or in which they are invited to engage in a particular activity such as reading, but are granted freedom in selecting a text and genre of their own choice (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Skerrett, 2012). Second and relatedly, researchers have moved beyond this under headings such as 'third space' or 'connected learning' and studied educational programs in which students are not only granted the degrees of freedom mentioned above, but are also assigned an active and agentic role in negotiating how these degrees of freedom should be designed for and what these should entail. In doing so, such programs do not necessarily intend to help bridge discontinuities between home and school. Rather, they aim to create new learning environments with innovative teaching practices in which the learning goals, activities and outcomes of class or program sessions are transformed and expanded. In such learning environments there is even more room for student voice so that additional and more equitable opportunities to identify with learning emerge (Calabrese Barton & Tan 2010, 2018; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Ito et al., 2013; Kumpulainen & Sefton-Green, 2014; Polman & Hope, 2014; Thompson, 2014).

Multiple studies provide support for the relation between teaching practices that negotiate meaningful learning experiences *with* students and adolescents' identification with learning in school. Generally, these teaching practices result in authentic learning experiences too. However, unlike the authentic learning experiences that were discussed before, these are co-organized by teachers and students, which is thought to warrant the meaningfulness of such experiences to the participating students (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; 2010; 2018; 2019; Polman & Hope, 2014). What is more, these learning experiences are often characterized by having concrete and direct consequences to students and their social surroundings. Also, because co-organized learning experiences value a wide variety of knowledge and skills, all students get the chance to both learn and teach about (new) knowledge funds (Basu et al., 2009; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; 2010; 2018; O'Neill, 2010; O'Neill & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Polman & Hope, 2014; Seiler, 2001; Thompson, 2014).



Finally, various studies have been concerned with the learner identity position of a competent learner: with the way in which competence is defined and how this is conveyed to students (Bartlett, 2007; Boaler & Staples, 2008; Gresalfi, 2004; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2006; Horn, 2008; Thompson, 2014). These studies are critical of some schools' and teachers' focus on the speed and success with which students complete tests and assignments, as such narrow definitions of competence only allow some students to position themselves as successful. They suggest that the effort students put into their education—as indicated by, for example, the questions they pose, the partial answers they provide, the ideas they revoice or the relevant, personal stories that they share—should be praised rather than the results of their efforts. In this way, everyone can become a legitimate classroom participant and can, as such, come to identify with learning in school. Additionally, and related to the research that is discussed above, expanding the definition of competence beyond scoring high on standardized tests through valuing a variety of knowledge and skills is another strategy that is argued and found to create more equal opportunities to identify with learning in school (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Gresalfi, 2004; Horn, 2008; Thompson, 2014). This can for example be done by engaging students in multiple ability group work (Boaler & Staples, 2008).

Similar to previously discussed studies on drawing on students' out-of-school knowledge and experiences, studies on teaching practices that allow room for student voice as well as studies on the position of being a competent learner have merely focused on one or two individual students (Bartlett, 2007; Basu et al., 2009) or specific groups of underrepresented students (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; 2018; O'Neill & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Seiler, 2001; Skerrett, 2012; Thompson, 2014) too, without foregrounding that diversity in trajectories of learning and learner identity development is present within these groups as well. Additionally, these practices have almost exclusively been examined in extracurricular settings (Basu et al., 2009; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2018; O'Neill & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Polman & Hope, 2014; Rahm, 2008; Seiler, 2001; Thompson, 2014), or science and mathematics classes (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; Gresalfi, 2004; Horn, 2008; O'Neill, 2010; Polman & Hope, 2014), leaving it unclear whether and how such practices can be incorporated in a broader range of classes in school.

The present paper aims to move research on students' opportunities to identify with learning in school forward in the following ways: By taking the



experiences of multiple students with different backgrounds into account, while, moreover, acknowledging that trajectories of learning and learner identity development are idiosyncratic phenomena, we intend to gain insights into learner identity positions that are inclusive in fostering students' identification with learning in school. In addition, we examine what teaching practices convey these learner identity positions. Furthermore, we study this in different classes of three schools that differ in their pedagogical approaches to contribute to a more comprehensive and robust overview of such teaching practices.

## METHOD

### *Research Context*

The present study is situated in the Netherlands. In this country, almost all schools in secondary education are fully funded by the government (Inspectorate of Education, 2020; Statistics Netherlands, 2019). Among the publicly funded schools, a variety of pedagogical approaches and religious denominations can be found. Schools have great liberties when it comes to organizing education, as warranted by article 23 of the Dutch constitution. Yet, in return for funding, they have to comply with national laws regarding the quality and accessibility of publicly funded education. For example, it is legally established what subject matter should at least be taught in each grade. Also, students are required to take the nationally standardized final exams at the end of high school and can only graduate when they pass these with an average grade of at least 5.5/10.

The Netherlands has a tracked secondary education system. Students are allocated to separate tracks in either the first or second year of high school (grade seven or eight, respectively), by the age of twelve to thirteen. This allocation is based on teacher recommendations, students' standardized test scores at the end of primary school, and/or on the students' test results and work attitude during the first year of high school. In total, there are three subtracks of a four year long prevocational track (ranging from more hands-on to more theoretically-oriented education) that prepare students for subsequent vocational programs. There is also a five year long intermediate track which provides students access to higher professional education. Two six year long pre-university subtracks (of which one includes Latin and ancient Greek) prepare students for university. In Dutch society, the prevocational tracks are –

in contrast to the intermediate track and especially in contrast to the pre-university tracks—generally associated with limited career prospects, yet unrightfully so, in terms of finding a job. Students in these tracks are often stigmatized as not being able to learn (e.g., Van den Bulk, 2011).

As a variety of pedagogical approaches, religious denominations and school tracks can be found in the Dutch education system, the available learning practices and learner identity positions in each school and classroom can be expected to be rather different. In this sense, the Netherlands offers an interesting research context for a study on what positions and practices allow students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development to identify with learning in school.

### *Research Design*

The present study is explorative in nature. To answer the first research question, we wanted to access students' own narratives on what ways of positioning and addressing them helps them to connect to school in meaningful and constructive ways (also see Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Therefore, student interviews were performed. To answer the second research question, classroom observation data in the form of field notes, as well as student assessments and assignments were collected in addition to the student interviews. This enabled us to identify the different inclusive teaching practices that were employed in the three schools that participated in our research project.

### *Case Selection*

The first criterion to select schools for our research was that they differed from each other in their pedagogical approach, as we aimed to capture a variety of teaching practices. A second criterion was that the schools offered education on at least a prevocational level and a pre-university level, so that we could study both tracks in our research project. We expected differences between tracks in the promoted teaching strategies (e.g., Solomon, 2007), the definitions of competence (Horn, 2008) and in the students' trajectories of learning and learner identity development (e.g., Van den Bulk, 2011). Through the first author's social network, three schools that respectively provided traditional, Montessori and Waldorf education were recruited for the research project. The schools offering traditional and Montessori education were located in a

large city in the Netherlands. These schools' student populations reflected the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in the Netherlands reasonably well. The school providing Waldorf education was located in an average-sized city in the Netherlands. Native Dutch students from middle- to upper-class families were overrepresented in this school's student population.

After the schools had been recruited, one ninth grade classroom in the prevocational and the pre-university track were selected per school. In the Montessori school, a ninth grade classroom was selected that comprised both students in the intermediate and the pre-university track, though, as this school did not have ninth grade classrooms with exclusively students in the pre-university track. Privacy regulations prevented us to collect data on the students' trajectories of learning and learner identity development before inviting them to participate in student interviews to answer our first research question. Therefore, together with the students' mentors, we selected students for the interviews that demonstrated different levels of identification with learning in school as indicated by their behavioral engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; also see Chapter 3). We did so to warrant different levels of experienced continuities and discontinuities, and therefore diverse trajectories of learning and identification. In total, 22 adolescents participated in the student interviews. Table 5.1 is based on information students later reported in the interviews and presents information on the educational tracks the students were in, their ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, their favorite and least favorite classes, their learning goals, and the extent to which they enjoyed going to school as indications of their diversity. From this table it can be derived that ten students were in the prevocational track, three in the intermediate track and nine in the pre-university track. Unfortunately, we managed to establish less ethnic diversity in our student sample than we had hoped for, yet the sample was quite diverse in terms of students' socioeconomic background. Additionally, the scope of answers to questions about the students' most and least favorite classes, learning goals and enjoyment of going to school most evidently shows the diversity of our sample in terms of the students' learning and learner identity trajectories.

Table 5.1. Information on the interviewed students.

Students	School	School track	Ethnic background <sup>1</sup>	Socioeconomic background <sup>2</sup>	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Iris	Traditional	Prevocational	Native Dutch	Medium/High	Geography	German	Prevocational degree; Becoming an interior designer	Not at all
Richie	Traditional	Prevocational	Native Dutch	Medium	P.E., economics, history	Creative classes	Perhaps an intermediate degree; Working for the navy	Not really
Amanda	Traditional	Prevocational	Native Dutch	High	Math, religion	German	Perhaps an intermediate degree; Working in the medical field	A lot at the beginning of the schoolyear, not at all later on

<sup>1</sup> Students' ethnic background was assessed by the country or countries their parents were born in.

<sup>2</sup> Students' socioeconomic background was assessed by means of the highest attained education level of either parent: students of whom the parents' highest education level was high school or lower were considered to have a low socioeconomic background; students of whom the parents' highest education level was a vocational degree were considered to have a medium socioeconomic background; students of whom the parents' highest education level was a higher professional education or university degree were considered to have a high socioeconomic background. In case students were doubting what the highest attained education level of their parents was, the two levels they were in doubt of were reported in the table.

Students	School	School track	Ethnic background	Socioeconomic background	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Norbu	Traditional	Pre-university	Tibetan	Unreported	P.E., creative classes	Mathematics	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite
Tammy	Traditional	Pre-university	Native Dutch	Unreported	Religion	None	Pre-university degree; Not something science-related	A lot
Fay	Traditional	Pre-university	Native Dutch	High	Geography, P.E.	Physics	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite
Jade	Traditional	Pre-university	Native Dutch	Low	History	Dutch, French	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	A lot
Kay	Montessori	Prevocational	Native Dutch	Medium	P.E., creative classes	Economics, cultural and artistic appreciation	Intermediate degree; Not sure yet	Not really

Students	School	School track	Ethnic background	Socioeconomic background	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Eve	Montessori	Prevocational	Unreported	Unreported	German, mathematics	History, biology	Prevocational degree; Not sure yet	Not really
Kyro	Montessori	Prevocational	Unreported	Unreported	Economics, science, mathematics, geography, P.E.	Dutch	Intermediate degree; Something sports-related	Quite
Miriam	Montessori	Prevocational	Egyptian	High	German, English, P.E.	Geography	Intermediate degree; Working at an Embassy	A lot
Sera	Montessori	Intermediate	Native Dutch	Medium	P.E.	Dutch, French, English, German	Intermediate degree; Not sure yet	Quite

Students	School	School track	Ethnic background	Socioeconomic background	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Liza	Montessori	Intermediate	Iranian	Unreported	Science, biology, English, arts, history, geography	Dutch	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	A lot
Jori	Montessori	Intermediate	Native Dutch	High	History, geography	Mathematics, drawing	None	A lot
Ludwig	Montessori	Pre-university	Native Dutch	High	Science, Dutch	German, French, arts	Pre-university degree; Becoming a programmer	Quite
Andrew	Waldorf	Prevocational	Native Dutch	High	Creative classes, mathematics	German	Intermediate degree; Not something science-related	A lot



Students	School	School track	Ethnic background	Socioeconomic background	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Ayden	Waldorf	Prevocational	Azerbaijani	High	Mathematics, English	Economics, German	Intermediate degree; Detective	Quite a lot
Nessa	Waldorf	Prevocational	Native Dutch	Medium	Creative classes	Mathematics	Prevocational or intermediate degree; Arts school	A lot
Caleb	Waldorf	Pre-university	Native Dutch	High	Science, physics, mathematics	German, French	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite
Rebecca	Waldorf	Pre-university	German/Native Dutch	High	Physics	Biology, German	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite a lot

Students	School	School track	Ethnic background	Socioeconomic background	Favorite class(es)	Least favorite class(es)	School- and profession-related learning goals	Enjoys going to school
Lilly	Waldorf	Pre-university	Native Dutch	Low	Music	Biology	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite
Ethan	Waldorf	Pre-university	Native Dutch	Low	Music, P.E.	Dutch	Pre-university degree; Not sure yet	Quite a lot

When it comes to collecting classroom observation and student assessment and assignment data to answer our second research question, we aimed to collect this data in different domains, covering language classes (e.g., English, French), societal classes (e.g., history, geography, and economics), natural science classes (e.g., biology, physics) and sports or creative classes (e.g., drawing, physical education, music) for each recruited ninth grade classroom. In total, classroom observation and student assessment and assignment data was collected in fifty class sessions, between seven and eleven class sessions per ninth grade classroom (also see Table 5.2).

### *Data and Procedure*

The research data was collected in the schoolyear 2016-2017, after we received approval of our Institutional Ethics Review Board. Semi-structured in-depth student interviews were performed to allow space for adolescents' authentic accounts of their learning experiences in school, while warranting the discussion of key themes in each interview (Rapley, 2007). As the list of interview questions that we had prepared would take more than an hour per respondent, the interview themes were divided over two sessions over the course of the schoolyear. The first session concerned the respondents' educational trajectory thus far, their experiences thereof, their current experiences of going to school, and their self-understandings as a learner within the context of school. The full topic list is presented in Appendix C. The second session addressed the teaching and learning practices that were, according to the students, prevalent in the various contexts they moved across. Also, the respondents were asked to compare the out-of-school learning practices they encountered to those they encountered in school. The topic list for the second interview session can be found in Appendix D. Even though the research participants were offered a €10,- gift voucher for participating in the second session, four students (Iris, Norbu, Eve and Kyro) quit the research project in between the two interview sessions. The interviews with these students were still included in the present paper's analysis, though, as they provided valuable data about these students' experiences of learning in school. Depending on the respondents' preferences, the interviews were held in an empty classroom or a lunch café nearby the respondents' schools. All interviews were performed in Dutch. After receiving the respondents' permission to do so, the interviews were audiotaped. The audiotapes were transcribed verbatim, and pseudonyms were assigned to the respondents to protect their privacy.

Table 5.2. Overview of the amount of observed classes per school and classroom.

<u>School</u>	<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Classes</u>															
		Dutch	Eng- lish	French	Ger- man	Sci- ence	Bi- ology	Math	Geog- raphy	His- tory	Eco- nom- ics	Draw- ing	Gen- eral arts	Drama	Music	P.E.	Tutor Class
Traditional school	Prevocational track	2				1	1			2							1
	Pre-university track	1	1	1		1		1	1		1						1
Montessori school	Prevocational track	1					1	1	1				1			1	1
	Intermediate / Pre-university track		1	1	1	1		1			1	1					
Waldorf school	Prevocational track				1		1	1	2				2			2	1
	Pre-university track	2		1				1	2				2		1	2	

Classroom observation data in the form of field notes, audiotapes, and student assessments and student assignments were collected by the first author during the first eight weeks of the schoolyear and during three weeks in late spring. Every week during the data collection, each school and its two ninth grade classrooms were visited at least once for an observation of a class session. In preparation of collecting classroom observation data, an observation instrument was developed based on prior research in general and two key publications (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Wortham, 2006) in the field of (learner) identity development in particular. As can be derived from Appendix E, the observation instrument directed our attention to what was taught, what learning goals were mentioned, through what activities, through what media or tools, whether and how students' knowledge and skills were assessed, what student contributions were praised and who decided all this.

### *Analysis*

To answer the research question 'What learner identity positions foster the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development?', the first author started by coding the interviews for fragments that indicated what classes and class sessions the various students identified with and why. Fragments that were characterized by the students' use of words such as 'like', 'enjoy', and 'appealing', and that concerned learning experiences, were coded as such. The student interviews were coded too for student reports of not being able to identify with learning in school, as indicated by their use of words such as 'a pity', 'hate', 'useless' or 'boring'. Subsequently, the research team systematically compared the various coded fragments to see whether certain themes came up in the interviews of (almost) all the students as fostering their identification with learning in school. In this process we identified the learner identity positions of 'people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society' and 'people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities' as positions that generally allow students to identify with learning in school.

Subsequently, we examined the research question 'What teaching practices convey these learner identity positions?'. The first author started coding the classroom observation data, the collected student assessments and assignments, and the student interviews for teaching practices through which students appeared to be positioned as people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society. As the students had shared that it

was easier to identify with learning in school when the classes or class sessions were evidently relevant and connected to how they wanted to participate in society, we used themes that we derived from prior studies on meaningful education for the coding process. These themes concern authentic learning experiences; the drawing on students' out-of-school knowledge, skills and experiences; degrees of freedom; creating of third spaces. Examples of how the data was coded for these themes can be found in Table 5.3. Simultaneously, through research team meetings in which preliminary findings were accounted for, the first author forced herself to keep an open mind so as to prevent overseeing possibly additional relevant teaching practices. Next, the data was coded for teaching practices through which students appeared to be positioned as people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities (also see Table 5.3). Again, based on what students reported to need to be positioned as such and related extant studies the data was coded for teachers' recognition of student effort and teachers' valuation of a variety of knowledge and skills while looking for additional relevant strategies through which students appeared to be positioned as people who are allowed to learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities. The second and third author critically monitored the entire coding process of all data sources.

Then, the research team analyzed the findings from the different forms of data in relation to each other, moving back and forth from one source of data to another. In doing so, the student interviews allowed us to give detail to and nuance the findings we had derived from the classroom observation and student assessment and assignment data. However, the student interviews also sometimes supplemented the findings we had originally derived from the other data sources. For example, the theme 'demanding student focus' was first derived from the student interviews and invited us turn back to the classroom observation data to code for this theme as well. By means of this process, the triangulation of data was afforded. In addition, the data was also coded for the more specific classroom activities through which these learning-related practices were conveyed – for example 'a plenary discussion', 'the filling out of worksheets in student pairs', 'the playing of games' or 'collaborative projects' – and whom they concerned – e.g., 'all students'; 'high achieving students'. This was done so that we could provide concrete illustrations of how and under what conditions teaching practices that may enhance equal opportunities to identify with learning in school were found to be provided.

*Table 5.3. Exemplary fragments per code on identified teaching practices.*

Code	Exemplary fragment:
Authentic learning experiences	Assignment in a Dutch class at the pre-university level of the Waldorf school: the students were requested to reply to a letter of a fellow teenager whose advances to the person he was in love with were recently rejected. The assignment involved the writing of a well-structured letter, as well as constructively pointing out how the fictional teenager's moves could be improved and how.
Drawing on students' out-of-school knowledge, skills and experiences	Assignment in a P.E class at the prevocational level of the Waldorf school: The students received a worksheet with a table in which they need to register their own amount of heartbeats per minute after different exercises over the course of a few weeks to learn about their physical condition and how this is related to their pulse.  Observation of a geography class at the pre-university level in the traditional school: Demographic issues and how these are discussed in the election debates in the USA were addressed
Degrees of freedom	Observation of an art history class at the pre-university level in the Waldorf school: During the teacher-led plenary discussion of farao's and how they were honored, a student asked "Was art made for the farao's wives too?". The teacher responded "Ah, you have seen that in Ramses [a movie] huh? Yes, sometimes, but hardly ever art was made for the farao's wives too".  Observation of a German class at the pre-university level of the Montessori school: a student said to the teacher "Do you know that I have such a cardigan too?". Subsequently, the teacher and the student had a short conversation about the cardigan, the teacher's vacation to Turkey and the teacher's siblings. While discussing the latter topic, the teacher switched from Dutch to German.  Assessment in a geography class at the pre-university level of the traditional school: Students were requested to prepare a presentation on climate change, but it was up to them whether they would prepare a presentation about, for example, issues of rising water levels for coastal cities, or on the role of different types of transport in air pollution.



Code	Exemplary fragment:
Recognition of student effort	<p>Observation of an art class at the pre-university level of the Montessori school: The teacher wrapped up the class by saying “Everyone did a great job!”.</p> <p>Observation of a history class at the prevocational level in the traditional school: The class is watching a movie when the teachers paused the video and asked the class “What did she just say? That is such a hard word I cannot even pronounce it”. One of the students tries to repeat it and said “Radididitation” [translated from ‘radididitatie’]. The teacher smiled and said “Yes, that one, ratification, very good!”.</p>
Valuing a variety of knowledge and skills	<p>Observation of a German class at the pre-university level in the Montessori school: On the whiteboard the tasks were listed that students were allowed to work on during this classroom session. They were allowed to either continue to prepare their presentations in small groups of students, read a German novel or work on their grammar assignments.</p>

## RESULTS

### *Inclusive Learner Identity Positions*

Two learner identity positions were derived from the student interviews that appeared to support the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development. The first position regards *the student who is getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society*. Whereas one student (Sera) did not seem to identify with learning in school at all, and Tammy, Fay, Jade, Miriam, Ayden and Ethan identified strongly with learning in school in general, nine students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development (Amanda, Kay, Caleb, Iris, Kyro, Eve, Jori, Liza and Nessa) explicitly mentioned that it was easier and more enjoyable for them to engage in classes that were evidently of use in their current or future lives. To illustrate, one of Eve’s favorite classes was German, because it helped her to communicate with people when visiting her family’s house in Germany. In turn, Kyro really appreciated his economics class, as he considered it useful to learn about insurances and mortgages for his adult life. In addition, these nine and six other students (Richie, Norbu,

Kay, Ludwig, Nessa and Rebecca) reported to not consider their education meaningful when they could not see how it connected to their current lives and the learning trajectories they were setting out for themselves. For instance, Amanda, who wanted to work as a nurse, mentioned about “some science stuff”, “I don’t find it interesting at all, because it makes me wonder ‘Why? I won’t be needing this, will I?’. For example what soap is composed of. Why do we need to know?” (interview #1). Similar concerns were reported about why it is important to learn some of the things in biology (Richie; Iris), Dutch (Rebecca), history (Caleb) or mathematics (Richie) classes. Students sometimes wondered about the usefulness of entire classes too, such as mathematics (Norbu; Nessa) cultural and artistic appreciation (Kay), drawing (Jori), German (Amanda; Kay), and French (Amanda; Kay; Caleb; Ludwig), when they already knew they would not pursue a career or hobby in these fields. The findings above imply that the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development can be fostered when they know how what they learn in school is or will be of use to them personally. Hence, rather than being positioned as people who are expected to jump through certain meaningless hoops that adults invented for them, they want to be addressed as people who are getting prepared to participate in society in ways that they had envisioned for themselves.

The other identified learner identity position concerns *people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities*. Apart from Ludwig who described himself as lazy, some students who were mainly concerned with the grades they received (Fay, Ayden, Nessa and Lilly), and students who experienced to go through high school rather smoothly (Jade, Miriam and Ethan), fourteen students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development reported that they were looking for room for and recognition of their effort rather than of their achievements (this applies to Richie, Iris, Amanda, Tammy, Norbu, Kay, Eve, Kyro, Sera, Liza, Jori, Andrew, Caleb, Rebecca). The interviews with these students demonstrated that when they found classes or class sessions too easy, this could disengage them from their education. For example, Richie and Andrew had moved from the intermediate track in the eighth grade to the prevocational track in the ninth grade because of their GPA at the end of the eighth grade. During the time of the interviews, they both reported to currently find learning in school boring and to not enjoy it anymore as it was too easy for them now. Similarly, we found that students may stop identifying with learning in school when they find it too

challenging: Iris, who had recently changed schools, reported that she did not put an effort into learning at her previous school as she felt that the teachers at that school had given up on her and did not want to help her to master new knowledge and skills. Also when it comes to specific classes or class sessions, rather than to school in general, the student interviews suggested that most students struggle to identify with learning in school when they feel they cannot learn anything new, when they deem the subject matter to be incomprehensible, or when they do not deem the school's expectations to be accomplishable. In such instances, the interviewed students enjoyed learning less (Amanda, Tammy, Fay, Eve, Kyro, Sera, Jori, Liza, Ayden, Andrew, Nessa, Lilly), found it too stressful (Tammy, Nessa, Lilly), or started to work less hard for school (Iris, Kay, Sera). Hence, all students were looking for education that allowed and supported them to learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities.

### *Inclusive Teaching Practices*

*Conveying that students are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society.* We identified various teaching practices that convey the learner identity position of *people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society*. First, we observed three teaching practices through which teachers connected the formal curriculum to adolescents' out-of-school lives. One of them regards the provision of explicit explanations of why the knowledge and skills that are taught in school are useful to the students, irrespective of their trajectories of learning and learner identity development. This was only observed in two classes, during plenary introductions of school assignments. To illustrate, in a tutor class, the students had to prepare a presentation and were told that this would be of use to them in post-secondary education, because presenting is considered an important skill there. This positioned all the students in this classroom as people who are getting better prepared for their future, as was also confirmed in the interviews with the students of this classroom.

A second practice that was observed concerns inviting students to engage in authentic problems. We only saw this once, namely in a Dutch class in the pre-university track of the Waldorf school. This class revolved around learning how to write letters and learning how to provide feedback and give advice. Students were, by means of a fictional case, requested to reply to a letter of a fellow teenager whose advances to the person he was in love with were

recently rejected. The assignment involved the writing of a well-structured letter, as well as constructively pointing out how the fictional teenager's moves could be improved and how. As all people have to write letters or e-mails and would benefit from knowing how to provide constructive feedback, we contend that this teaching practice addressed all students as people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society.

The third practice regards drawing on students' out-of-school experiences in the classroom by making use of generally relatable examples. This was observed in eight classes taught in different school tracks and schools. Some of these classes were part of the societal and natural sciences domains, and others concerned physical education classes. In these instances, issues that all students had encountered or would encounter in their daily lives were addressed during plenary discussions of the subject matter. To illustrate, in a biology class in the prevocational track of the traditional school, fever blisters were used during a plenary discussion as an illustration of viruses (the latter being what the class was actually about). In two geography classes (one in the pre-university track in the traditional school and one in the pre-vocational track of the Montessori school), the subject matter was related to the then upcoming American elections. As these examples could help all students to better understand the world around them, we identified this teaching practice to position students as people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society in an inclusive way.

Then, various teaching practices that allowed students to integrate their out-of-school knowledge and experiences into the curriculum themselves were observed. These teaching practices valued rather than tried to overcome diversity in students' trajectories in learning and learner identity development. In providing equal opportunities to identify with learning in school. First, during teacher-led plenary discussions of the class content it was observed six times (in different tracks, domains and schools) that students were granted and took the opportunity to ask a question about a personally relevant topic that was related to the subject matter. For example, in an economics class, the teacher demonstrated a real-time clip of the increase of the Dutch national debt per second that caused one of the students to ask 'How do we get rid of this?', which ignited a classroom discussion on whether it is intrinsically bad to have a debt or not. However, what we observed too is that questions asked by one of the students to bring in personally relevant topics during teacher-led plenary discussions, would sometimes be rather specific and therefore not

relatable to other students' interests, which appeared to impede their identification with learning in school.

Next, in seven classes we observed that teachers, in the school assignments and assessments, provided students with certain formats that could be applied to a theme or issue of each student's choice. For example, in various language classes, students were required to read a novel, but were free to pick a novel that intrigued them. In a music class students had to write lyrics to an existing protest song, but about a topic that appealed to them. We found similar examples in different school tracks and schools, yet not in the domain of the natural sciences. This enabled students to learn more about a genre and/or topic that was of concern to them, thereby allowing all students to understand themselves as people who are getting prepared for participation in society in ways that connected to their interests and goals.

*Conveying that students learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities.* We identified several practices that position students as *learning in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities* by either appreciating, supporting or expecting students' effort. The first practice through which students' efforts were appreciated regards teacher compliments on students' invested time and energy into school. This practice was observed in various domains, school tracks and schools, and usually took the form of teachers thanking all their students at once for their hard work at the end of class, thereby conveying that students' effort mattered and not only the extent to which they mastered certain types of knowledge and skills. However, none of the student interviews indicated that such remarks were considered rewarding. Interviews with five students in the prevocational track (Richie, Iris, Miriam, Andrew and Ayden) suggest that student-specific teacher compliments on their work ethos did, in contrast, foster their identification with learning in school. As Andrew said, such compliments "really motivate me, like 'now I'm doing well, so let's keep up the good work'" (interview #1). Yet, such compliments were only observed once in the classroom observation sessions. Compliments on students' achievements were found to be more common.

Additionally, we identified the explicit valuing of and building on students' not yet impeccable classroom contributions as a teaching practice through which students' effort was appreciated. Two types of this practice could be distinguished. The first concerns valuing the provision of partial rather than full answers during teacher-led plenary discussions of the subject matter. We found similar instances of this practice in drama, geography,

economics, and Dutch classes at different schools and in different school tracks. In some of these cases, moreover, it was not the teacher but fellow students who completed the initially provided answer(s), and collective knowledge construction was observed. We contend that validating such participations conveys to students that they are not expected to fully master the subject matter at once in order to be considered competent classroom participants. This allows students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development to deem the learning process feasible.

The second type of valuing not yet impeccable classroom contributions concerned valuing and building on incorrect participations. For example, in a history and a Dutch class we observed teachers to stress, right before students had to read a text out loud, that it did not matter if students would struggle with the pronunciations of words. Additionally, in one French class we observed the acceptance of student contributions in which words from two different languages were mixed to construe a sentence that was, moreover, grammatically flawed (e.g., “est la goed?”, rather than ‘*C’est bien?*’, which translates to ‘is that alright?’). The appreciation of such contributions is likely to lower barriers for student participation, thereby fostering the identification with learning in school among students with diverse abilities. However, this does require teachers to have the skills to prevent confusion among students regarding what, in out-of-school contexts, are and are not adequate participations. The appreciation of and building on incorrect participations, examples could be found in all school tracks and schools. Yet, they were mainly found in language classes, and additionally in an economics, a history and a physical education class.

Four teaching practices were found through which the effort of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development was supported. The first concerns allowing students to ask questions in class when they do not understand something. Although this may seem to be a straightforward teaching practice that is applied at all times, five students (Amanda, Fay, Sera, Liza, Lilly) mentioned in the interviews how frustrating it could be when they were not allowed to ask questions during class. For example, Fay and Lilly reported how limiting it was when their teachers refused to answer questions during ‘silent time’, when none of the students were supposed to talk. As Lilly said, “Then you cannot continue and you are lost, not knowing what to do” (interview #1). This implies that providing students with the opportunity to ask questions when they do not understand the subject matter is

an important practice to be inclusive of students' diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development. Luckily, we observed room to ask questions in all different domains, school tracks and schools—something which was mainly made use of by the students during parts of classes in which they were expected to work on their own assignments. The interviews indicate that this can be explained by the fact that students did not want to bother their classmates with questions that may not be relevant to them during teacher-led plenary discussions of the subject matter. This appears to be related to our previous finding that students may get distracted when one of their fellow students brings in a personally relevant topic during a plenary session. Additionally, in the Montessori school, where students were expected to work rather independently, we found that students were more inclined to help each other out with the questions they had, rather than asking questions to their teachers.

Second, we observed in eleven classes (in different domains, tracks and schools) that possible areas for improvement were identified for or by each of the students. Sometimes this was done by having students take (not to be graded) formative tests, often in preparation for future summative tests. This allowed students to individually assess their current level of mastery of the subject matter and pointed out to them what knowledge and skills they could focus on to make progress in their learning process. In other instances, students were requested, after having taken a summative test, to write brief reflections on what or how they could have studied better, or to give each other feedback. This too stimulated students to reflect upon what knowledge and skills they could still improve. What is more, these practices were often followed by student-specific teacher suggestions on how students could improve their knowledge and skills, thereby reinforcing their positioning of students who can learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities.

The third practice involved engaging students in multiple ability group work. In the classroom observations, this was only observed once, namely during a physical education class. In this class, the teacher explicitly expected the students to collaborate in ways that allowed everyone to participate and learn. During a session of dodgeball the teacher, for example, introduced a time-out so that each team could discuss how they could better collaborate—something they were all held accountable for—so as to make sure that “it is fun for everyone”. In doing so, the teacher aimed to make sure that students who were relatively less skilled in ball sports were supported to improve their required skills and to make that more feasible to them, while inviting the most



skilled ball sports students to further expand their team player skills by becoming co-teachers. The teacher seemingly tried to prevent the class session to be too boring or frustrating for anyone, and to provide everyone with opportunities to learn.

Then, the student interviews pointed out the importance of variation in classroom activities to support the effort they could put into school. Twelve students with diverse abilities (Amanda, Iris, Tammy, Fay, Jade, Liza, Sera, Andrew, Nessa, Ayden, Rebecca, Lilly and Caleb) reported to find it easier to work hard for school when they could engage in different classroom activities in class sessions. The students explained that this helped them to stay focused rather than get bored. Also, variety in the classroom activities made sure that students who, for example, considered themselves as people who best learn by watching movies, creating and constructing things or running lab tests rather than by reading books or by 'sitting still' could learn too in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities. This practice was observed in most classes.

Finally, we identified one teaching practice, demanding students' focus, that not only conveyed to students that they could learn in accordance with their own abilities, but that they were also expected to do so. This practice exclusively concerned students who were, at particular moments, demonstrating relatively low levels of school engagement. For example, we observed that students who appeared to be distracted during teacher-led plenary discussions of the subject matter were assigned turns to answer teacher questions. We also found that teachers would sometimes look rather strictly to students who were not doing their schoolwork or would simply ask them things such as 'Will you please make sure you're getting started?' when they were not focused. The former strategy was mainly observed in the various classes of the traditional school, whereas the latter strategies were found in all different domains, school tracks, and schools. In the interviews, Kay, Iris, Norbu, Kyro and Ayden elaborated on these teacher strategies. All these students reported to get distracted rather easily, no matter in what classroom activity they engaged in. Some of them were also diagnosed with ADD or ADHD. They explained that it helped them to engage in schoolwork when their teachers explicitly demanded their focus and attention. Rather than experiencing such interactions with teachers as negative sanctions, the students felt that through these interactions their sometimes diagnosed learning disabilities were acknowledged in constructive ways; they were addressed as allowed and

supported to learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities, without having to hide parts of who they were.

## DISCUSSION

Students whose trajectories of learning and learner identity development are considered to deviate from 'the standard student' relatively often struggle to identify with learning in school. For some of them, this is related to the disproportionate amount of discontinuities they tend to encounter in learning practices between school and out-of-school contexts (Bronkhorst & Akkerman, 2016; also see Chapter 3). Rather than adopting a deficit view and blaming the school disengagement of these students on deficiencies on their part, this study's premise is that *all* students, irrespective of their trajectories of learning and learner identity development, can be addressed in ways that engage them in learning. Therefore, it was examined how adolescents can be addressed and taught in ways that are inclusive of students' diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development so as to enhance equal opportunities to identify with learning in school. Extant research has already presented important insights into how the identification with learning of one particular student or relatively homogeneous groups of underrepresented students can be fostered (Bartlett, 2007; Basu et al., 2009; Boaler & Staples, 2008; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; 2018; O'Neill & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Seiler, 2001; Skerrett, 2012; Thompson, 2014). Our study added to this body of research by studying the needs of multiple students with different backgrounds to identify with learning in school while acknowledging that trajectories of learning and learner identity development are idiosyncratic phenomena. Additionally, we aimed to contribute to the research field by focusing on a variety of subjects in the formal curriculum instead of on extracurricular settings (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2018; Polman & Hope, 2014; Seiler, 2001) or science and mathematics classes (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; Gresalfi, 2004; Horn, 2008; Polman & Hope, 2014). This allowed us to examine whether teaching practices that were found to foster students' identification with learning in previous research can also be found in (a wider range of) formal educational contexts, while exploring whether additional teaching practices that do so could be found.

The learner identity perspective we employed allowed us to study how students can be addressed in schools in inclusive ways. It enabled us to study what learner identity positions (social roles as learners) that are offered by

teachers are inclusive of students' diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development in fostering their identification with learning in school. We found two learner identity positions that enhance equal opportunities to identify with learning in school. The first one addresses students as *people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society*. Studies on enhancing equal opportunities to identify with learning have mainly been concerned with building connections to students' out-of-school knowledge, skills and experiences to make education more relatable to them (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Boersma et al., 2010; Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2009; Moll et al., 1992; Saubich & Esteban-Giutart, 2011). Our study suggests that it is even more important that students understand what the meaning of what is taught in school is outside of high school and, moreover, not only now, but also in the futures they envision for themselves. A similar point has been made by the recently emerged research field on funds of identity (e.g., Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Hogg & Volman, 2020), and is endorsed too by empirical third space and connected learning research that stresses the importance of experienced consequences to make learning meaningful to students (e.g., Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2010; Ito et al., 2013; Polman & Hope, 2014).

The second learner identity position we identified involves addressing students as *people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities*. Rather than merely making sure that everyone's effort is appreciated (e.g., Bartlett, 2007), our study underscores the importance of also warranting that mastering the curriculum is perceived as neither too hard nor too easy by students with diverse (perceived) abilities. We found that the interviewed students usually did not mind going to school as long as they could learn something new in, preferably challenging yet accomplishable ways; in ways that were part of their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Various teaching practices were found to address students as people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society. Some of these did so, in line with previous research (e.g., Boersma et al., 2010; Hung et al., 2012; Moll et al., 1992; Saubich & Esteban-Guitart, 2011), by building connections between school and current and future out-of-school contexts for students. These teaching practices concern the provision of explicit explanations of the usefulness of the subject matter, engaging students in authentic learning experiences and drawing on students' out-of-school experiences by making use of relatable examples. Others involved, also in line with extant studies (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Polman & Hope, 2014; Seiler, 2001; Skerrett, 2012), making connections *with* students by allowing them to integrate their

out-of-school knowledge and experiences into the curriculum. These teaching practices regard providing students with degrees of freedom that enabled them to bring in personally relevant topics themselves during teacher-led plenary discussions or while working on school assignments.

Additionally, we identified three types of teaching practices that address students as people who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities. The first type of teaching practices did so by *appreciating* all students' efforts through teacher compliments on students' invested time and energy, and the valuing of not yet impeccable classroom contributions. These practices have previously been found in research on inclusive notions of school success to contribute to students' opportunities to identify with learning in informal and in some formal educational contexts (Bartlett, 2007; Boaler & Staples, 2008; Gresalfi, 2004; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2006; Horn, 2008; Thompson, 2014). Our research adds to extant studies, though, by demonstrating that not only partial answers but also incorrect contributions are worth valuing as these lower barriers for students to participate in the classroom. Second, allowing students to ask questions in class, engaging students in multiple ability group work and engaging them in a variety of classroom activities are previously identified teaching practices that *support* the investment of effort into school for students with diverse abilities that we found too (Bartlett, 2007; Boaler & Staples, 2008; Gresalfi, 2004; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2006; Horn, 2008; Thompson, 2014). In addition, we observed that teachers helped students identify their possible areas for improvement, for example through formative tests, to point out how they could best invest their time and energy into schoolwork. The third type of teaching practices addressed students as learners who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities by *expecting* students to work hard for school by demanding their focus.

Our research shows that there are ways to address students that can indeed foster the identification with learning in school of students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development. Yet, the present study also suggests that many teaching practices that can do so are rather scarce in formal educational settings. To illustrate, some teaching practices were only found once or twice (providing authentic learning experiences; providing explicit explanations of the usefulness of the subject matter), or merely in certain domains (integrating personally relevant topics into assignments). We had expected more differences between school tracks and schools with different pedagogical approaches in this respect. Alternative teaching practices have been identified in previous research, but were not observed in

the present study (e.g. the sharing of relevant experiences and the creation of third spaces). Additionally, while having identified teaching practices that can convey inclusive learner identity positions, it remains unclear to what extent students recognize that these learner identity positions are actually available to them. Especially for some teaching practices (e.g., authentic learning experiences; drawing on students' out-of-school experiences by making use of generally relatable examples) only limited evidence of their effectiveness has been found in this and previous studies. From this it follows that future research can build on these findings in at least two ways: First, by further examining how the identified teaching practices can be implemented in a wide array of domains, tracks and schools, and how this can be done effectively. Second, by studying how teachers can be trained and encouraged to employ teaching practices that convey to students that they are people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society and who learn in accordance with their own (perceived) abilities.

When it comes to implications for educational practitioners, the present study first emphasizes the need for more awareness of teaching practices that convey inclusive learner identity positions. Especially practices that address students as people who are getting better prepared for their envisioned participation in society were hardly observed, despite the fact that preparing students for participating in different domains of life (e.g., the labor market, civic society) is a key task of formal education. It struck us, for example, how scarce instances were in which teachers explained to students why they had to learn the things that they were taught in school. Our research indicates though, that if teachers want to enhance equal opportunities to identify with learning in school, they cannot afford to assume that their students intuitively understand why they are expected to learn the subject matter at stake. Explicit and convincing explanations of the usefulness of the curriculum content are required that allow students with diverse trajectories of learning and learner identity development to connect their education to their current and future lives. This appears to be especially important to students who already made up their mind about not pursuing a career in certain domains. Additionally, the present study suggests that teachers may foster their students' identification with learning in school in an inclusive way when they create room for and recognition of all students' efforts and abilities. To conclude, we would like to stress that we do not argue that students should not be expected to learn things that they find irrelevant or that, at a certain moment in time, are too difficult for them. We also acknowledge that it may be challenging to

make each student feel valued, irrespective of his or her (perceived) abilities, in a world that is strongly focused on student performance. Yet we contend that all students, irrespective of their trajectories of learning and learner identity development, need recognition in school of who they are, what they know and what they think they are capable of in order to be able to identify with learning in school and grow as learners.