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Birds of a feather flock together:

Cultural Identification with Movies

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ABSTRACT

This research is examining the relation between cultural identification with movies and cultural negotiation. The topic is inspired by our globalizing world, where an increasing number of immigrants are relocating, while the media products available for consumption are more than ever. When discussing cultural globalization, the notion of culture and cultural negotiation should not be ignored, since the latter term deals with the possible outcomes the contact with multiple diverse cultural elements might have. Understanding cultural negotiation, could provide information in the academic world to further research how media products could contribute in the best possible acculturation outcomes. However, it is essential to break away from the static notion of culture utilized in intercultural negotiation studies and adopt a more liquid approach, the one of the critical intercultural communication studies. Thus, the main research question of this thesis is "How do immigrants and ex-immigrants of the millennial generation living in the Netherlands, reflect upon cultural negotiation when discussing cultural identification and their movie consumption?" To answer the research questions, ten (10) semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with current immigrants and Dutch ex-immigrants, residing in the Netherlands. The data collected from the interviews, were analyzed with the method of thematic analysis. Eventually, three (3) main themes emerged; *change as an agent, culture as an outcome,* and *identification as a reflector.* The themes illustrated that change is a major experience in current and ex-immigrants' lives, which, eventually, altered the notion of culture in these individuals' minds. It was found that due to their experience with cultural negotiation processes, which is part of the change, it is hard to feel belonging to a certain group. Thus, immigrants, become culturally very open and flexible identifying solely with their experience of change. Identification with movies reflects this entire process, since immigrants (would like to) identify with learning, part of cultural negotiation, and openness when consuming movie, due their altered personal cultures.

KEYWORDS: Immigrants, Culture, Identification, Movies, the Netherlands

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1 Introduction

1.1 Globalization and culture

It is undeniable that we live in the era of globalization. The notion of globalization is not new, as it is a process that appeared centuries ago, though it was not examined until recently, (James & Steger, 2014). Due to this factor, the term globalization lacks, till this day, a proper definition. The purpose of this paper is not defining globalization but approaching a part of it which is related to culture. Hence, *cultural globalization* is the point of interest and inspiration of this research.

Initially, it is crucial to examine how the concept of cultural globalization has been approached and researched in the past. Hardy (2014) explains how the approach of critical political economy when studying media, illustrates the "*traceable consequences* for the range of discourses, representations and communicative resources in the public domain," (p.10) that derive from the processes of funding and coordinating the production of cultural products. In other words, the author explains that the corporations that can afford large investments are the ones that get to distribute their cultural products, such as music, films and others, worldwide in contrast with smaller firms. This argument sets the ground for the notion of *cultural imperialism*, which signifies that the main actors in cultural production are the transnational media conglomerates, leading to a homogenized culture, (Crane, 2002). In other words, *cultural imperialism* expresses a sort of fear, that the developed countries promote their culture to the developing ones, while the latter just absorb any cultural elements included in the cultural product consumed. However, it has already been academically discussed that *cultural imperialism* is not really happening in this globalized era. Hesmondhalgh (2013), is an academic that has provided arguments against *cultural imperialism*. Specifically, he argues that there are developing countries whose industries are growing, one great example of this case is Bollywood, and in addition to that, numerous cultural products are being *glocalized*, which means that they are adapted, either linguistically or culturally or even both. His last point is that the audience is not passive but active, processing the messages received through cultural products, which leads to different interpretations of the same product around the world. Furthermore, Crane (2002) discusses

another model in her work, which is called *Cultural Globalization as Network Flows*. This model considers as main actors in cultural production, not only the transnational conglomerates but the regional players as well, leading to a *hybridization* of culture. In other words, the local influences the global and vice versa, creating a global culture which is an amalgam of numerous cultures. It is noted, thus, that there is a shift of how cultural globalization is perceived, transitioning from a homogenized global culture idea, to a more alloyed one.

1.2   The notion of culture

At this point I consider essential to pinpoint some problematics in the theoretical approaches discussed in the previous section. It is very interesting to investigate what happens to culture in the era of globalization, especially if one considers the vast amount of diverse cultural products that are available for consumption worldwide. However, I consider the approach to the notion of culture in these conceptual frameworks very problematic.

Culture is a term that lacks a proper definition, an aspect that is not discussed in the aforementioned research frameworks. Not only this issue is not addressed, but the approach taken towards culture is implicitly essentialist. From this perspective, it is understood that culture is considered as an accumulation of characteristics given to individuals, signifying that they are static (Hofstede, 1983; Ting-toomey, 1993). When examining global culture, the authors (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Crane, 2002) assume that a cultural characteristic simply exists, since there is no discussion of its origins in their work. The discussion revolves around whether the preexisting cultural characteristics of individuals are reinforced or replaced by others when consuming international products, leading to homogenization or hybridization of the global culture. However, I use a very different approach to the notion of culture.

From a different point of view, it is suggested that culture is not fixed and is not given but rather, it is constructed through discussion, whether that is between two individuals or between an individual and a cultural product. Culture is constantly negotiated, depending on history, past experiences, ideologies and multiple other elements that might influence the notion of culture, (Dervin, 2011; Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka, 2002; Sommier, 2014). Hence, cultural identity is not a static characteristic, but it constantly changes by being

constructed and deconstructed, depending upon various contextual elements as mentioned above, within the processes of constant negotiation taking place in this globalized world.

Considering the above arguments, I believe that cultural identity in the era of the large availability of diverse cultural products for consumption, in relation with the consumed products needs to be studied further, but this time approaching culture from a constructivist perspective.

1.3   Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between cultural identification with a movie and the selection to consume this particular movie, among young immigrants, either permanent or temporary, current or former immigrants, living in the Netherlands. This is the inspiration of the title of this research *Birds of a feather flock together*, a saying which suggests that two people who are similar, eventually find each other. In the case of this study, it translates to individuals watching a movie because they identify and relate to it, finding, in a way, something similar to them. The participants of this study will unfold their experiences and viewpoints through interviews, which will provide ground for me, as a researcher, to analyze the data using thematic analysis, and discover the main themes that describe the relation between cultural identification and movie consumption. Thus, this research will try to answer the research question:

> **RQ:** *"How do immigrants and ex-immigrants of the millennial generation living in the Netherlands, reflect upon cultural negotiation when discussing cultural identification and their movie consumption?"*
>
> **SQ1:** *"In the participants' views, how has living abroad altered the way they understand the notion of culture?"*
>
> **SQ2:** *"How do the participants talk about the role of movies in relation to their cultural identification?"*

1.4   Academic & Societal relevance

As already underlined above, most previous studies regarding the impacts of cultural globalization upon culture, have approached the notion of culture from an essentialist perspective. Considering the approach to culture in this study, I believe that further research conducted from a constructivist viewpoint, is necessary to explore the transformation of culture in the era of globalization. In this manner, this study is seeking to initiate further research in cultural globalization which will treat culture as liquid instead of static, since the latter approach treats culture as detached from its historical and political context which contributes into reinforcement of the existing inequalities by associating culture more with the notions of race, nationality and religion.

Furthermore, this research is not merely an effort to advance the academic debate regarding cultural globalization but it is also seeking to provide some insights for the society, which is undergoing transformation due to the phenomenon of globalization. According to United Nation's Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Migration report (2016), an increasing number of migrants is moving to and within Europe. This occurs either because of better job opportunities, given the economic crisis that has hit Europe and not only, or to pursue better higher education opportunities, (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2014). Moreover, the increasing number of exchange students, for at least the past 5 years, especially in Europe, influences the amount of transnational relationships (Brandenburg et al., 2014), raising the issue of culture in the social sphere even more. This research can operate as a starting point to discover the role and processes of cultural identification between people of different backgrounds or between people and cultural products of different origins, to better understand immigrants.

2   Theoretical Framework

2.1   Culture and cultural identity

In this section, the notion of culture and cultural identity will be discussed, by offering an overview of previous approaches to the subject, such as the social scientific approach and the interpretive intercultural communication studies, and, eventually, by explaining and justifying the stance I take in this research, which is the one of critical intercultural communication studies.

To begin with, the social scientific approaches and their limitations will be discussed. Many scholars (Gudykunst, 1983; Hofstede, 1983; Ting-Toomey, 1993) have examined culture and cultural identity as something fixed and given prior to communication. In this perspective, culture is constituted by several elements which hold the same meaning and stimulate each one of its members in a similar way. This signifies that a member of a certain culture is expected to behave and communicate in a specific way, which is in accordance with the 'given' elements of their culture. Hofstede's (1983) work on the dimensions of national cultures, constitutes a great example, in which national cultures are perceived to be static. In such a case, individuals that belong to the same culture are homogenous and understand each other clearly while communicating. Even though culture has been academically approached in such a way, I consider this perspective insufficient and strongly support the limitations that Mendoza et al. (2002) propose when they argue that "this vein of research has not fully explored the nature of cultural identification, or what it means to be a member of a particular ethnic group, and how this in itself is historically and politically situated," (p.313). Thus, I believe that the social scientific approaches are inadequate for this research.

To continue, in this paragraph the interpretive intercultural communication studies will be explored and their limitations will be discussed. In this case, culture is constituted by a mix of common values and symbols which are situated within the culture (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Carbaugh, 1990). Since common elements of culture are situated historically, culture is considered, once again, fixed and given. Members of different cultural groups will interpret the same thing in different manners, a process which depends heavily on the *context*, a term which is very central in interpretive intercultural communication studies. To make my point

clearer, a simple example will be provided; a woman expresses her identity differently depending on the context, which means that her identity is negotiated in a certain way in her workplace as a businesswoman but differently at home as a mother, if she has children, and as a wife, in the case she is married. In this example, the limitations of the interpretative intercultural communication approach emerge. The different identities of the individual, which depend upon the context, are already fixed and they are expressed through communication, which enables researchers to study these cultures "as emergent patterned conduct around a particular thematic identity," (Collier, 1989, p.295). Regarding this approach, I disagree and point out its limitations.

Although interpretive intercultural communication studies recognize that cultural identity is negotiated differently when situated in diverse contexts, I still consider it limiting as a theoretical foundation for this research. In this case as well, culture becomes fixed and static for every different context. In other words, this approach might consider the different circumstances that influence cultural identity and its expression, however, identity is yet considered given, while the manners in which it is negotiated within each different context are treated as fixed. Furthermore, this approach overlooks the relation between the current situated context of an individual in relation with the larger historical and political contexts, such as gender, social class and others, constituting the interpretive intercultural communication approach inappropriate as the foundation of this study, (Mendoza et al., 2012; Sommier, 2014)

The approach considered appropriate for this research is the one of the critical intercultural communication studies. Per Dervin (2011), there are "three types of intercultural discourses: *solid*, *liquid*, and *Janusian*," (p. 38). Through the lens of critical intercultural communication studies, the approach to identity is not fixed, in contrast to the previous studies, but it is *liquid*, an approach which is built upon the suggestion that "knowledge, society and subjectivity are all dynamic and contextual phenomena which can be theorized in terms of dialogues between different (real and imagined) perspectives," (Gillespie & Cornish 2009, p.15). Cultural identities do not just exist by nature but they are constructed historically (Mendoza et al., 2002). In that sense, identities are not existent prior to communication but

are shaped during the communication processes. Mendoza et al. (2002) determine five practices through which identity undergoes construction when communicating; *narrativization*, *representation*, *ideological interpellation*, *performativity* and *symbolic resignifications*. These actions illustrate the process of identity formation and re-formation of an individual during communication, which carries power inequalities, as identity formation is "always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between . . . two resultant poles—man/woman, etc," (Laclau as cited in Hall, 1996, p. 5). In other words, critical intercultural communication studies consider the cultural identity of an individual as "the image they wish to project at a particular time rather than as evidence of an essentialist culture," (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004, p.12). Thus, with such a theoretical ground, this study will examine identity formation and identification at the given moment of the interview conduct, rather than observe the expression of an underlying and already existing identity that might or might not have altered by the experience of the participants abroad.

2.2   Acculturation

Since the research question of this study revolves around the negotiation of culture that takes place in immigrants' and ex-immigrants' minds, it is essential to understand the processes underlying acculturation. The term will further be explained and discussed in terms of relevance with this study. Acculturation is not central to this research, however, the essence of how immigrants adjust within a culture and the diverse possible outcomes, are retained for the purpose of this study. In other words, since this research focuses on current and ex-immigrants, acculturation will shed light on how culture is negotiated when moving abroad, providing ground for deeper understanding of the resultant cultural identity of the individuals in interest, which derives from their migration experience.

To begin, defining the term *acculturation*, Berry (1997) refers to the classic interpretation from Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), which is "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups," (p.149). It is essential, first, to underline the theoretical shift from using the term of *assimilation* to *acculturation*. The term *assimilation* has been criticized for its

insufficiency, as it is not the only type of *acculturation* (Berry, 1997), but also for its closeness to the perceived hierarchy of race, ethnicity, religion and other cultures, (Alba & Nee, 1997). Thus, it is clear that with the passage of time, academics treated acculturation with more flexibility, understanding the possibility of diverse results following the process.

To better understand the notion of *acculturation*, the different strategies as discussed by Berry (1997) will be examined. The author describes that the process depends upon two factors; *cultural maintenance* and *contact and participation*. The first refers to the importance of certain cultural elements for the immigrants, as well as the importance to preserve them, while the second factor refers to the interaction between the immigrants with other cultural groups that is intended to take place. Hence, Berry (1997) determined four (4) different paths of acculturation, depending on whether the answers to the factors discussed above are "yes" or "no". One of these outcomes is *assimilation*, where groups do not desire to maintain culture of their elements and pursue contact with different cultural groups. *Separation*, which is the opposite of the previous result, is the second outcome, where groups wish to maintain their culture and desire to avoid interaction with other groups. Another outcome is *integration*, where groups aspire to preserve their own culture but, at the same, time they seek to interact with other cultural groups, and the final possible path is *marginalization*, which is the lack of desire to maintain their culture and do not seek interaction with other groups. Regarding the last outcome, Berry (1997) indicates that immigrants might be pressured to abandon their own culture and/or they are rejected from the host culture for interaction. Considering the strategies suggested by Berry (1997), it is evident that the groups living in a different culture than their original, such as immigrants, have the agency to decide and choose their path throughout cultural negotiation.

Another model concerning acculturation, is Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory, which treats immigrants as groups that actively take part in the cultural negotiation processes. In contrast with Berry's (1997) model, Kim (2001) suggests that acculturation can take place when the two different groups, immigrants and hosts, interact with each other. The path of acculturation, according to Kim (2001) depends on the following factors; *host communication competence, social communication, ethnic communication, environment,* and *predisposition*.

The author explains that the acculturation process carries some stress for the groups undergoing such a process, since they experience a conflict between their aspiration to maintain their original culture and their ambition to adapt in the new culture to achieve well-being. However, as the human species constantly evolves, immigrants adapt in the new environment as well, (Kim, 2001). Hence, Kim (2001) argues that the acculturation process is recurrent, with an upward trend, meaning that every *challenge* faced by the settler is handled with withdrawal, followed by evolution. As it is clear by now, Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory, treats immigrants as individuals who have agency in their acculturation process, rather than passive individuals who assimilate or become marginalized.

Overall, this section examined the two main theories concerning acculturation processes, offering greater understanding of the ways in which immigrants adjust to a new culture. The discussion around this topic has evolved, as mentioned above, since there has been a shift from the term of *assimilation* to the one of *acculturation*. A similar shift is observed within the academic discussion regarding culture, further explained in the previous section, which moved from a static, to a liquid approach. Thus, not only the approach to culture has transformed, but the way we treat immigrants in the academic world has evolved as well. Immigrants are regarded as active decision-makers of their cultural negotiation process, which is line with the theoretical framework regarding culture used in this research. Thus, the paths of cultural negotiation are multiple and can vary depending on the broader contextual and historical elements, since in this research cultural identity is considered as "the image [individuals] wish to project at a particular time rather than as evidence of an essentialist culture," (Holliday et al., 2004, p.12).

2.3   Cultural identification

Given the complexity of the term culture, which derives from the different approaches to intercultural discourse, I recognize the ambiguity that revolves around the term cultural identification as well. Therefore, it is considered essential to explain in more detail what this term is concerned with in this specific study.

In this case, I refer to the orthogonal cultural identification theory, not with the purpose to utilize such a model to measure cultural identification (which is not the purpose of

this research), but to further understand the latter term. Since it is a theory used with the purpose of measuring cultural identification, which signifies an essentialist approach, it is underlined that the element of this theory used in my research is the one of cultural identification and not the one of culture. Initially, the theory will be discussed and further, the aspects used from this theory within this study will be pinpointed.

Oetting (1993) suggests that cultural identification is a human characteristic like all others, implying that it can either evolve or decrease. The author explains the basis of the orthogonal cultural identification theory, which is that both the individual and the culture will prosper if certain needs they both have, are fulfilled. At this point, it is fundamental to point out once again that the needs of the culture are disregarded in this study, since this theory examines culture by a more static approach, considering it an element that already exists, which is opposed to the fluid approach held throughout this research. Rather, what is taken into consideration from this theory along this study, is the nature and process of cultural identification of individuals, as discussed by the author. Oetting (1993) explains that the satisfaction of the cultural needs of an individual can be realized when the person is involved in cultural activities, such as meeting other people that hold similar values and beliefs. During these activities, individuals exchange ideas, values, information, symbol meaning or other elements which determine the compatibility of the individuals with the culture of a certain group. The author pinpoints four steps in this process: (1) *culture presents demands*, (2) *actions respond to demands*, (3) *culture responds to the person's actions* and (4) *needs are met through culture's responses*. Cultural identification occurs in a setting in which individuals communicate with each other but that does not signify that it is impossible to take place through the media. When consuming a media product, such as a book or a movie, the receiver is interacting with the movie or the book, since values, information, ideas and symbol meaning are situated in these products, turning media consumption into a cultural identification activity.

Concerning the orthogonal cultural identification theory, it is considered highly important to underline the negotiation of cultural elements between the individual and culture but not vice versa, for it to be relevant to this research. As discussed above, the

approach to culture in this study is liquid, since it is considered to be negotiated throughout interaction. The orthogonal cultural identification theory is in line with this research's approach to culture, in the sense that it treats cultural identification in a liquid manner. This might sound odd, considering the essentialist lens of the orthogonal identification theory, however, the manner in which the theory in interest and this research are in line, will be further explained. It is suggested, in this theory, that cultural negotiation takes place throughout the individual's interaction with another individual or a media product. In other words, individuals negotiate culture and its elements during the act of communication (achieved through media products as well), which is the basis of the theoretical approach to culture of this study. Recalling Holliday et al. (2004), as quoted further above, it is suggested that cultural identity is the image an individual wants to convey at a specific moment. Considering this point, I suggest that cultural identification, as described in the orthogonal cultural identification theory by Oetting (1993), is in line with the image that the individual wants to reveal at the very moment of interaction, whether that is with a person or with a media product. Another important element implied in this theory, which is taken into consideration in this study as well, is the agency that the individual has to choose whether they culturally identify with another element or not, which once again is in accordance with the critical intercultural communication studies' approach to culture. Once again, the struggle within the individuals of choosing to identify with one element and rejecting another, suggested by critical approaches to culture, is evident in the orthogonal cultural identification theory.

Keeping all this in mind, I suggest that cultural identification, according to the orthogonal identification theory, can vary depending on the individual and the context, meaning that it may (or may not) occur depending on diverse elements at the moment that interaction and communication take place. Moreover, the cultural identification component of the theory, suggests that identifying with an element of a culture does not negate other elements of the cultural identity of the individuals but, instead, it adds upon those, (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). Thus, it is suggested that an individual might identify with a culture (or not) because of the contextual elements of a given moment in time, since cultural identification

depends upon the broader historical, political and social contexts which influence cultural identity, according to the approach to the notion of culture in this research. Overall, the orthogonal cultural identification model by Oetting (1993), is utilized in this research to recognize the agency of an individual throughout the process of cultural identification, and to highlight the procedure of cultural identification, namely, the moment of interaction with their own or another culture.

2.4   Personality development and mobility

Considering that this research focuses on individuals, regarding their identification with movies and their negotiation of culture, it is essential to understand certain occurrences in individuals' lives, when moving to another country. For the purpose of explaining this, what happens to the personality of residentially mobile individuals, will be described according to theory. This will offer a better understanding concerning the changes that immigrants undergo while living abroad, in another country.

Initially, it is essential to examine the role of relationships in personality development. Neyer and Lehnart (2007) discovered in their study that the changes in an individual's personality are associated with the changes in their social scheme. The authors describe that while individuals are growing older, they take upon different responsibilities due to the different social roles they serve. These changes are associated with "the maturation of personality," (Neyer & Lehnart, 2007, p.21) since an increase of personal traits, such as *conscientiousness, agreeableness,* and *self-esteem*, were observed. Considering what the authors suggest, one can understand the relation of this phenomenon with immigrants. Naturally, residentially mobile individuals change their social environment and their relationships with others when moving abroad, as they find themselves in a context unknown to them. Given the fact that immigrants are establishing relationships with individuals coming from a different background, it is expected that their personality will change, affected not only by relationship development but specifically by cultivating relations with diverse people. Thus, I argue that the identity of immigrants changes abroad as well, considering that their own personality is part of their identity, becoming more open, confident, and conscious.

To continue, it will be examined how the perception of social relationships depends on whether an individual is residentially mobile, to understand the role of a social network for immigrants. Oishi (2010) suggests that individuals who are residentially mobile tend to have a larger network of social relationships, considering their mobile nature. In other words, this type of individuals, such as immigrants, are aware that they might leave the area they live in again or their contacts might do so as well. Residentially mobile individuals, due to their mobility, establish relationships based more upon similarity, which boosts self-esteem, instead of "shared group membership," (Oishi, 2010, p.10). According to the author, well-being lies more in the personal sphere, rather than the interpersonal, suggesting that social support is valuable to residentially mobile individuals until their self-esteem grows, (Oishi, 2010). Particularly, mobile individuals' prosperity does not depend on their social network but on their self-esteem, which is acquired by their social context. Namely, relationships are used to build confidence which will, eventually, lead to happiness. Thus, the identity of these individuals comes from within and not from their identification or belonging to social groups, constituting more likely to identify with a group only if that is favorable, (Oishi, 2010). Taking into consideration the work of Oishi (2010), it can be assumed that immigrants, as residentially mobile individuals, depend mostly upon themselves to become happy, instead of searching for belongingness within a social group. As a result, since residentially mobile individuals can identify with anything, at any given moment, that would boost their self-esteem, it is clear that their identity formation lies within them, as independent from their social environment. In other words, in this section it is argued that individuals' identification with other people or elements depends upon what will serve their self-esteem to achieve well-being, demonstrating that residentially mobile individuals' decisions derive from a personal level and not a social one, in terms of belonging.

Having discussed the role of the social network in personality development, as well as the perception of the social environment and relationships by residentially mobile individuals, it is required to understand how does the personality of the latter, an immigrant, change because of their social context. Zimmerman and Neyer (2013) examine the personality change of individuals that stay abroad for short or longer periods of time. Considering the role of the

social network in relationship development, the authors pinpoint the relationship fluctuation taking place when individuals move abroad, both at home and in the host country. Naturally, when individuals change their current residency, it is expected that some of their relationships will deteriorate or be even completely lost, while when moving to a new place, new relationships will flourish. Zimmerman and Neyer (2013, p.517) suggest that "the available support relationships [are] thus […] partly replaced by new and most likely international relationships," contributing into the personality development of the residentially mobile individuals, such as immigrants. Thus, it was found that individuals that live abroad demonstrate a change in certain traits, with an increase in their *agreeableness* and *openness*, and a decrease in *neuroticism*, (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013).

Taking into consideration the above findings, it is argued that immigrants, whether they are still abroad or have already returned home, undergo personality changes due to their relationship development with international individuals, namely, with people from diverse backgrounds. This change is associated with openness and agreeableness, which is what this research takes into consideration. Concerning this argument, Roberts, Caspi and Moffitt (2003) argue that the selection of the social network, as well as the influences deriving from that, are connected by the *corresponsive principle*, which indicates that the impact that a "life experience [tends to have] on personality development," (p.583) is to reinforce the traits of the individual that contributed into making the decision to go through these experiences. In other words, immigrants and ex-immigrants do not become open merely by their experience abroad, but were already open and, thus, decided to go abroad in the first place. However, experiencing different lifestyles and cultures contributed into enhancing this personality trait.

This section indicated the manner in which individuals' personality changes due to their social network and the significance of social relationships to mobile individuals. Understanding the undergoing processes related to social context and personality development while abroad, which can be considered part of the individuals' identity, it is more evident how residential mobility affects the identity of immigrants and ex-immigrants.

2.5   Films: Social glue & Appreciation

The topic of this research concerns the concepts of culture and cultural identification in relation to movies within popular culture. It is essential, though, to explain the reasons behind the decision to focus on films for this study, which is provided in this section by examining the role of the media within the society, as well as the purpose of film consumption by individuals.

In particular, the media hold some power to influence power relations and social order, (Curran, 1982). The author explains in his work how the Christian Church, during the middle ages, was in the heart of the development of a system of ideologies by its claim of owning the ultimate power derived from God, which constituted the Church infallible and indisputable. The author goes on and suggests that mass media have succeeded the Christian Church by performing the same tasks; deciphering and making sense of the world for the audiences. This, as a result, has the effect of 'social glue' within the society, a term that signifies the unification of diverse individuals through shared experiences that occur by the consumption of media products. It is argued that this is applicable for films specifically as well, as they are media products themselves. Films, thus, operate as a tool for the audience to make sense of the world and construct meaning for any given aspect of life (Nichols, 1994; Cheng, 2007), which I consider ultimately interesting for this research topic.

Furthermore, it should not be ignored that we live in the era of the Internet. Specifically, Meyrowitz (1997) proposes that we live in "postmodern electronic societies," (p.65) in which the physical becomes blurred. Societies are not restrained from the geographical association between individuals or social groups, since the new media technologies have the power to connect people, regardless their current location, which satisfies needs that are not met locally, (Rheingold, 2002). We live in an era which makes it possible to experience affiliation with different social and cultural groups which one would not have been able to encounter without the connectivity of the Internet, (Haythornthwaite, 2005). Films are distributed, nowadays, online through several platforms, like Netflix, or even downloaded illegally. This contributes into the diffusion of diverse types of movies to a much wider audience, enabling individuals to associate with other social and cultural groups among

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the world, expanding, in this way, the variety and number of cultural groups one can associate with.

Finally, choosing to study films and cultural identification, constitutes essential to examine the reasons for which individuals decide to watch movies. From the point of view of the uses and gratification theory, one would choose to watch a film for various purposes such as entertainment, leisure, to experience beauty and for self-confidence, (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). From a different perspective, experiencing certain emotions and understanding other people's feelings is another motivational factor that benefits *self-development*, (Tesser, Millar, & Wu, 1988). In other studies, (Cupchick, 2011; Cupchick, Vartanian, Crawley, & Mikulis, 2009; Cupchick & Gignac, 2007) the authors have found that there are two types of experiences individuals go through while watching a movie; the reactive and the reflective. The first refers to the positive feeling associated with the entertainment value of a movie and sentiments of feeling good, while the latter is associated with the process of understanding the deeper meaning of a movie, which can serve for contemplation about oneself. Moreover, Bartsch (2010, p.241) argues that "emotion metaphors […] entice their viewers into more abstract domains of social-moral reasoning," which is in line with the reflective experiences discussed above. For this research, I pinpoint the importance of self-development and self-reflection as motives.

Taking into account the preceding discussion regarding the process of cultural identification, I consider the two aforementioned motives for movie consumption as elements which belong to the cultural needs of an individual. This, can contain the willingness to experience new things, which might lead to the inclusion within a (new) cultural group, or the need for self-validation, such as justifying through a movie the values that the individual might be holding at that given moment. The last two points form examples of cultural needs and motives. However, I underline that they are not exclusive nor expected as outcomes but they serve solely as examples to illustrate one of the potential associations between cultural needs and movie consumption motives.

To conclude, this study focuses on movies for three main reasons. First of all, films, as they are part of media products, serve as a tool for the powerful (those who control the

media) to influence how individuals interpret the world, by constructing meaning and making sense of life for them, illustrating the impact media products have upon individuals. Second, films have the ability of unifying groups of people by enabling them to share the same experiences. This ability has become even stronger in the era of the Internet, due to the wide range of available movies online, making it possible for people to associate with cultural and social groups from anywhere in the world and connect with each other. Last, considering the motives discussed by academics regarding movie consumption, I believe that they can be considered as cultural needs, since the latter depends on the individual and can be associated with any given motive, such as self-development.

Overall, the theoretical framework utilized in this research, is a composition of diverse, yet carefully selected theoretical discussions. To study how cultural negotiation is reflected upon by current and ex-immigrants while discussing about their cultural identification with movies, in this research the critical intercultural communication studies approach to culture is utilized. The latter, suggests that culture and cultural identity are not preexistent, but are formed during communication, depending upon historical, contextual and other elements. (Mendoza et al., 2012). Furthermore, when moving abroad, immigrants go through the acculturation process, which is the struggle to adapt in the host culture while maintaining (or not) their original culture, (Kim, 2001). Acculturation indicates the agency these individuals have within this process but also the multiple different outcomes migration might have on the personal culture of immigrants, depending upon their decisions. Apart from developments associated with culture in current and ex-immigrants' lives, the path of these individuals' personality development, is highly influenced by their social network, (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013) which completely transforms when moving abroad, (Oishi, 2010), contributing in their cultural negotiation path. In addition, the orthogonal cultural identification theory, (Oetting, 1993), is utilized as a guide to understand cultural identification. Individuals have certain needs which are either met or rejected while interacting with a person or a product from another or the same culture. These needs, as explained by the academic discussion regarding motives for watching movies, are associated with self-development and self-reflection, (Bartsch, 2010). Last, movies are the subject of this study, since the media have the power to unify individuals

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(Curran, 1982) and movies are widely available online, blurring the physical borders, contributing into more extensive diffusion of ideas and unification, (Haythornthwaite, 2005; Rheingold, 2002). The following section will provide details regarding the design and conduct of this research.

3   Research Design and Argumentation

In this chapter, the qualitative in-depth interviews as a method for data collection will be described and rationalized for its appropriateness for this research. Furthermore, the units of analysis and the sampling method with be presented, and an argumentation of the detailed decision-making process will follow. The schedule and the content of the interviews will be provided. In addition, the method of analysis and its will be described, as well as the justification for the selection of such procedure in this project.

3.1   Qualitative semi-structured interviews

The method used to gather data for this research is semi-structured in-depth interviews. Considering the researched topic and the research question, this method is ideal for data collection, since semi-structured in-depth interviews allow the researcher to investigate meaning, rather than testing a hypothesis (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Moreover, the semi-structured format allowed the interviewer to deviate from the initial schedule which carries the possibility of collecting richer information as the researcher could pursue the subjects each participant found more interesting or about which he/she had more knowledge, (Johnson, 2002). During the interview design and conduct, numerous strategies out of the *25 strategies to make a good interview a great one* suggested by Hermanowicz (2002) were utilized (i.e. *converse, listen, find all that your date finds important, probe, sometimes remain quiet, persist, sequence your moves, divide conversation into topical stages, be candid, preserve the integrity of meeting someone new, test your questions before hand, rehearse, start off on a strong note, end on a positive note,* and *tape-record*), offering additional confidence for the quality of the data collection method selected.

It should be noted as well, that in-depth interviews are the most appropriate method to study cultural identification, especially, in regard with the theoretical framework established about culture in this research. The approach taken towards culture is, as already discussed, liquid, which situates the formation of cultural identity within the communication process. In other words, the terms cultural identity and cultural identification are defined during and by the communication processes. These processes are, in the first place, situated between the interviewees and the movies, which were selected by the participants to be

discussed, and in the second place, between the interviewee and the interviewer. Thus, the qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with the participants, did not merely facilitate the collection of observations, but enabled the procedure of defining cultural identity in that given moment.

3.2   Units of analysis and Sampling

In order to study the negotiation of culture, it was essential to collect data from individuals that have lived away from their home country for a certain period of time. That is, due to immigrants' experiences among another culture, which is necessary to stimulate and initiate cultural negotiation. There are some research projects that examine the role of residential mobility in personality development and identity negotiation (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013;), which study individuals living in different locations than the ones considered as their home. However, this excludes the cultural negotiation that takes place in the minds of former immigrants, who have settled back, after living abroad, into their own country. Thus, although this research was primarily focused only on immigrants living in the Netherlands, it later changed by broadening the focal point. In other words, this study includes individuals that either live currently in the Netherlands as immigrants or that have grown up in the Netherlands, regardless of their ethnic background, have at some point lived abroad and then came back to their home country. In this manner, the immigrants and former Dutch immigrants included in this research, have diverse backgrounds, a decision inspired by my aim to move away from studying one national culture exclusively but multiple ones instead, which offered room for richer findings to emerge.

Moreover, the diversity in the sample is illustrated by the different variety of backgrounds for each participant. From a total of ten (10) interviewees, one (1) is a woman born and raised in South Africa whose parents are English, one (1) is a woman from Albania, one (1) is a half Greek and half Greek-Cypriot female, born and raised in Greece, one (1) is a half Greek and half Austrian woman, born and raised in Greece, spending most of her summers in Austria while growing up, one (1) is a half Greek and half German male born and raised in Greece, one (1) is a Greek woman, two (2) of the participants are Dutch, of whom the

female has been back in the Netherlands for less than a year, while the male has been back for two years, one (1) is a Dutch man born and raised in the Netherlands, whose mother is a gypsy descendant, and has been back in the Netherlands for four years and the last one (1) participant is a Dutch woman born in Indonesia and grown up in Curacao from Dutch parents. (See Appendix A). At this point, clearly, the participants are people with very diverse backgrounds, which allowed the study to have a more liquid approach to culture, the basis of this study, offering a richer sample.

Moreover, the participants of the research are between 23 and 32 years old, which situates them within the generation of the Millennials. Although the precise dates of the beginning and the ending of each generation are still debated, for this research, the Millennial generation is defined as individuals born between the years of 1982 and 1994, (Sweeney 2005; Oblinger, 2003). This generation was selected, specifically, for several reasons. Initially, Oblinger (2003) explains in her work how Millennials are different from older generations. Among the generation's characteristics, she mentions their racial and ethnic diversity and the fact they "often (1 in 5) have at least one immigrant parent," (Oblinger, 2003, p.38). As discussed already above, this diversity was one of the focus points of this research. Moreover, Steel and Marsh, (2015) explain the relation between Millennials and the Internet, which establsih them as technologically well informed individuals who prefer the internet as leisure over television. That, was a desired characteristic in the sample, since the rise of the Internet offers numerous ways for individuals to access and watch a wider range of movies closer to their own taste, which was a criterion of the participants in this research. The internet offers a more extensive collection of movies than regular television, not only because of piracy related activities, (Smith & Telang, 2009) but also due to movie and series offering services such as Netflix, Hulu and many others. Hence, another criterion required, which was that the participants have watched at least one (1) movie in the past six (6) months, was confirmed twice, first before setting a meeting with the interviewee, and second before starting the interview.

The last criterion used to select participants was that each one of them should have lived abroad, away from their home country, for at least three (3) years, regardless whether

they spent all three (3) years in the same place or not. This decision was based upon two of the three factors discussed by Tadmor, Hong, Chiu and No (2010), as components that influence the amount of *multicultural knowledge* accumulated during an individual's stay abroad. Out of the factors *quantity*, *voluntariness* and *quality*, this research keeps the first two (2), since both positive and negative experiences have an insight to offer regarding cultural negotiation. Thus, an individual that has *voluntarily* moved abroad might either pursue a university degree or a professional career. Considering that three (3) years is the minimum an international Bachelor's degree lasts, it was decided to set the lowest margin of migration to three (3) years. Hence, the participants of this research have spent three, four, five or up to seven years in total away from their home country, contributing to their appropriateness to be included in this study.

Given the multiplicity of the criteria set for the acquisition of participants for this research it was decided to gather the respondents using snowball sampling. The latter method of sampling, facilitated the detection and acquisition of participants which met all the criteria. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) recognize possible issues that might rise while using this technique of sampling and they suggest solutions, contributing into a useful guide for appropriate collection of interviewees. The initial respondents were not hard to find, considering that the quota required by the participants, are met from people of the researcher's environment, since the latter is part of the researched group. To reassure that the sample collected is diverse enough, different paths of snowball sampling were used, as suggested by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981). In other words, the participants were referred by different individuals and not by merely one or two individuals. Moreover, the participant requirements were made clear to the respondents used to acquire more interviewees and were then crosschecked with the interviewees themselves. Wherever it was possible, third parties were asked to verify the information provided by each interviewee, however, the nature of the interview was such that it would have brought to the surface any participants that did not, indeed, meet the criteria required to participate in this research. Finally, last but not least is an issue discussed by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) regarding the follow-up after the initial interest displayed by some individuals referred by snowball sampling. Some of the

respondents were hard to reach when contacted directly by the researcher, but later became cooperative when the individual that referred them contacted them as well. One respondent that preferred to be contacted by the mediator, eventually never indicated any availability, leading to their dismissal from the research. This last point discussed, illustrates the possible pitfalls snowball sampling might present, however, being aware of these problems, the sample was successfully gathered to collect the data for this research.

3.3   Data collection

As already discussed above, the method of qualitative interviews utilized, is semi-structured, as it seemed the most appropriate process for this research. Johnson (2002) suggests that interviews that are semi-structured, allow the researcher to examine the fields of interest or knowledge of each of the participants. Considering the theoretical approach to culture used as the basis of this study, the freedom to slightly deviate from the structure of the interviews, enabled the researcher to track the points of interest of each interviewee and revolve the discussion around them. In other words, such an open structure did not only provide room for richer data to emerge, but operated as a catalyst for real-time cultural identity construction during communication, which is the main component of the critical intercultural communication studies. Hence, considering that throughout the research a principal interview structure was followed, attached by the freedom to slightly deviate per interviewee, it can be said that the interviews are situated between a structured and semi-structured format, (See Appendix B).

To continue, the manners in which the interviews deviated from the central structure will be discussed and rationalized. First of all, it is necessary to underline the fact that the interviewees were either foreigners or Dutch individuals that have lived abroad, residing in Rotterdam, thus, some questions had to be adjusted for each group accordingly. Particularly, some of the questions were worded differently but were examining the same issue such as "How do you feel being back home?" and "How do you feel being away from home?". Only in very limited cases, Dutch individuals had extra questions such as "Why did you come back?" which would not be applicable for a foreigner living abroad. The deviant structure of the

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interviews is illustrated in the fact that the order of the questions sometimes differed, depending on the issues the respondents discussed. At this point it should be noted that the interview was divided in two main themes, whose order is essential. Taking into consideration the latter point, questions were swapped only when that was possible, without switching themes or the topic of discussion to avoid confusion of the participant or unreliable data. Further, the wording of each question varied for each interviewee, depending on the flow of the discussion or the topic of interest. This happened, mainly, in cases that the interviewee already touched upon the following question or in some cases that the participant did not understand the question clearly. In addition to that, numerous questions were related to components that were brought up by the participants, indicating that the same questions were universally asked to the entire sample, concerning, though, the different elements each interviewee brought into the discussion. Finally, some of the questions were skipped, since they were unfitting in the context of the discussion. This occurred in few cases where, when the participants were asked whether a certain element makes them feel as part of a broader group, their answer was "No." Although, due to the flexible structure of the interviews, the participants were asked more about their answer, it was later impossible to ask questions related to the participants' association with a group. However, all the themes were covered thoroughly throughout each interview. Hence, a semi-structured interview method might be considered less systematic, but in this research, it constitutes the ideal process that allowed cultural negotiation to unfold during data-collection.

Apart from the structure of the interviews, it is essential to review the content discussed with the participants. In this section, not only the content of the interview will be described but also the schedule of the interview will be provided. Two (2) out of the *25* Strategies of Hermanowicz (2002) were followed for this part; *sequence your moves* and *divide conversation into topical stages*. The first refers to the architecture of the interview, suggesting that the initial "questions are often introductory, easy to answer, and nonthreatening" (Hermanowicz, 2002, p.488), the more complex questions are situated "in the middle of the interview" (Hermanowicz, 2002, p.488), while the last questions are more easy-going. The second strategy mentioned, concerns the structure of the interview itself, aiding,

first, both the interviewer and interviewee to follow the discussion, and second, the researcher to conduct a well-organized analysis, (Hermanowicz, 2002). As mentioned above, throughout the meetings there were two themes discussed; the first concerned the participants' movie of choice and their identification with elements from the film, while the second part revolved around identity and their experience abroad. Particularly, the interview started off with some introductory questions, such as the length of the interviewees' stay abroad, the countries they have lived in and initial thoughts about living abroad from their experiences. The interview then, moved to the first part concerning movies, requesting from the participant to think of their favorite movie or a movie they really like. They were then asked what do they like about it particularly and that element was later discussed in relation to their identity and their association to a group. Before moving to the second theme of the discussion, the interviewees were asked whether there are any elements in the movie with which they could *not* identify with and some relevant questions followed. The latter was included since sometimes individuals might be more aware of what they do not like, rather than what they like. The first section of the interview is designed to collect answers regarding **SQ1:** *"In the participants' views, how has living abroad altered the way they understand the notion of culture?"* The second part, which investigates the answers to **SQ2:** "*How do the participants talk about the role of movies in relation to their cultural identification?*", concerned the participants' experience abroad, in relation to personal changes. These changes were discussed in relation to their cultural identity and then the notion of culture was examined. In this section, the notion of identity and culture are introduced in careful wording, not to influence the interviewees' answers and perceptions of the concepts. It is essential, at this point, to underline that during this part of the interview, not only the content of the participants' answers was valuable, but the angle from which their replies were approached offered a relevant insight to their underlying beliefs and ideologies as well. Towards the end of the interview, an overarching question connecting the first theme with the second was posed and, eventually, the participants had the opportunity to add anything they would like to but did not have the opportunity to do so. It is clear, at this point, that the interview, although

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being semi-structured, had a structured and organized core, to reassure reliable data-collection.

After the design process of the interview was completed, the outcome was tested, preceding the conduct of the interviews. In the first place, a pilot interview was carried out with a fellow researcher to determine any shortcomings in the design of the interviews. In this stage, the length of the interview and the quality of the questions were particularly examined. Testing the interviews beforehand, pinpointed the lack of clarity of certain questions and any unfitting words which needed to be altered. Moreover, the pilot helped to identify the possible directions an answer might follow, which contributed into the researcher preparing better and noting extra sub-questions following some of the main interview questions. The sub-questions guided, not only the interviewee in how to approach the main questions, but aided the interviewer as well, in terms of assuring that the proper information was collected by each unit of analysis. After the completion of the appropriate modifications that emerged during the pilot with another researcher, the interview was tested again by myself, not only to reassure the quality of the interview design once again, but to be aware as an interviewer and to understand, as much as possible, the thinking process taking place in the interviewees' mind to answer each of the questions of the interview. Answering myself the interview questions, I realized the complicated nature of certain questions, since the candidates might have never thought about certain issues in question before. Such questions are "How do you relate this element to yourself?" or "Did the notion of culture change by your experience abroad?", which were speculated to receive (and indeed received) more scattered answers, since the participants were actively negotiating their thoughts. To ensure clearer understanding of the interviewees' thoughts, the method of Socratic questioning (Padesky, 1993; Elder & Paul, 1998) was utilized during the interviews. Thus, answering the interview myself, I was more mindful of the longer pauses necessary to think, and of the possible difficulty the interviewees' might have when thinking how to answer a specific question, ensuring the quality of the collected data.

By the time the interview questions had been designed, tested, modified and were ready to be utilized, the participants had been already contacted. All the interviews were

conducted in a quiet personal space, which was either the researcher's or the participants' house, except from one. Since the units of analysis were determined with snowball sampling, it was possible for me, as a researcher, to conduct the interviews in my own house. While most of the interviewees agreed, three (3) of them preferred their own house while one (1) of them wished for a public space. The latter was conducted in a quiet café, which is self-service and is mostly used by students as a study space. This café was purposefully chosen, to avoid any possible disruptions from the staff or patrons, as well as to ensure silence and privacy for the interview to take place. Thus, conducting the interviews in controlled environments, offered privacy and space to the participants to answer the questions, strengthening the quality of the collected material for this research. At this point, it is essential to mention the subjectivity statement situated within this research. Being myself part of the researched group, since I meet all the criteria as well, clearly, I am part of the societal network studied in this project. This, did not only facilitate better understanding of the interviewees difficulty to answer certain questions but it offered additional confidence to the participants to express themselves freely, regardless the complexity of their thoughts. Since the interviewer is a person that has been through similar experiences as the interviewees, the latter felt more comfortable to speak openly for contradictory or complex feelings, with a sense of security and understanding from the researcher's side.

To continue, in this research, the participants' identities remain anonymous, not only to protect the participants' privacy in general, but to ensure the security of the interviewees' privacy as well, contributing into less fear to openly discuss any issues or topics the participants' might desire to do so. The anonymity of the participants is protected by altering their names and using nicknames instead, as well as by disclosing only whether they are occupied or studying, including their current level of study, without specifically revealing any additional details. Taking into consideration the anonymity of the participants, the informed consent form was filled in with the appropriate information regarding this research, and was handed to each participant prior the interview. The interviewees were given the time to read the form and ask any additional questions or information. When the participants completed reading the form, they were asked whether they consent to the recording or not. Since their

identity remains anonymous, they were not required to sign the informed consent form or any other agreement, however, they were requested to give their consent verbally in the beginning of each recording, once again, which operates as a documentation of their consent. Thus, this research respects the ethical boundaries imposed when using personal information of the participants for academic research.

Finally, the procedure of each interview will be explained. Most participants arrived in the appropriate location on time, except from one. Such an occurrence was handled with patience, giving an extra twenty (20) minute timespan to the interviewee to arrive. Luckily, the extra time was not exceeded, which otherwise could potentially interfere with the timeframe available for the participant to conduct the interview in a proper manner. Apart from this one incident, the rest of the interviews were, mostly, easily arranged, including a few changes in the meeting schedule, which were requested by the interviewees. Upon meeting with the participants, first a small talk took place, discussing about the weather or the coffee place or anything relevant to the situation to break the ice with each participant. Some were more comfortable from the beginning while others were slightly more reserved but loosened up during the small chat, indicating its importance. Naturally, I was asked about my thesis and the topic of my research which was used as a starting point for the interviews. After explaining the topic and the aim of the study in a careful manner to not reveal much about culture or identity, to avoid biased answers, each person was asked about their personal details, such as their country of origin, their occupation, date of birth and a general overview of their residentially mobile life. Having noted down their personal information, I clarified my decision to keep their identity anonymous. Further, I handed them the informed consent form and offered some time to the participants to carefully read it and ask any relevant questions or information. In order to reassure the quality of the recording, each participant was required, on tape, to count from number one till five, and I immediately reproduced the recording to determine the clarity of the sound and the speech of both the interviewees and myself. Having controlled the quality of the recording, the interviews begun by requesting the participants consent, once again, on tape, and the process carried on normally. When the interviews were done, the participants were cordially thanked and some of them shared their liking of the

interview and their interest to read the results of the research. Finally, it was requested whether it would be possible to contact them again in case additional information or further clarification is required, to which, even though it was not, eventually, necessary, they all agreed.

3.4   Data analysis

The data set of this research was interpreted by using the method of thematic analysis. The benefit of this method is its flexibility, which makes it suitable for all types of studies, whether those are "essentialist" or "constructionist," (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78). Thematic analysis does not only enable the researcher to identify themes emerging from the data but serves as a tool to decipher those patterns in relation to the researched theme, (Boyatzis, 1998). In addition, although this method of analysis is not based upon a particular theoretical framework, which makes it eligible for any type of research as mentioned above, Braun & Clarke underline the importance of explicitly discussing the "theoretical position" (2006, p.81) of this analysis in the research within which it will be used. Hence, I will further briefly discuss the relation of the thematic analysis as a method, to the theoretical stance taken towards culture in this research, before explaining in detail the way the data set was analyzed.

As already explained, the critical intercultural communication studies approach held in this study, considers culture as a construction which occurs during conversation. This is essential to keep in mind while performing the analysis, since a constructionist approach in thematic analysis can guide the process to, eventually, obtain valuable results. In order to examine what is cultural identity and how it is constructed from a liquid point of view, a method which allows flexibility was required to perform the analysis. Instead of imposing theoretical expectations about cultural identity when examining the data set, I considered more appropriate to be open to the information that emerged from the interviews. In other words, thematic analysis operated as a tool to liberate this study from any associations with previous, essentialist approaches to intercultural communication, which I consider insufficient, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Particularly, to complete the analysis of the collected data, the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were carefully applied. First, any ideas that emerged while conducting

the interviews were noted down, to ensure that all the concepts were documented. That was an essential step, since first impressions could be forgotten by the repetition of the interview with different participants, as well as the passage of time. To continue, the first step suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was completed, by transcribing and printing the interviews produced. The transcription of the data was essential for the researcher to become even more familiar with the data, however, the data was read once again after completing all transcriptions. At this stage, the initial notes regarding first impressions were revisited and revised or additional ones were noted down. Next, initial codes were generated and interesting or relevant quotes were marked and pinpointed throughout the transcripts. This is the second stage, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). At this point, it is important to mention the inductive nature of this research, once again. The initial codes derived by the data and not by the theoretical framework of the research, allowing patterns and information to unfold without expectations, breaking this research free from any possible limitations related to theoretical boundaries. During this stage, the three essential recommendations suggested by Braun and Clarke were followed; "(a) *code for as many potential themes/patterns as possible*, […] (b) *code extracts of data inclusively*, […] (c) *remember that you can code individual extracts of data in as many different 'themes' as they fit into*," (2006, p. 89). Before moving to the third stage, considering the complexity and more chaotic nature of an inductive thematic analysis, the researcher renamed or merged any initial codes that were the same or referred to the same occurrence or observation.

To continue, the analysis passed on to the third phase, which refers to the identification of overarching themes. In order to achieve that, all the initial codes generated by the relevant questions of the interview which address the sub-questions, were put into an excel document. During this stage, the initial thoughts that were noted were used as a guide, without, though, limiting the possible outcome which could derive by the data set. The codes were examined and grouped together, in an effort to determine larger groups (selective codes), which were used to, eventually, discover the themes present in the data (See Appendix C for coding scheme). In order to do so, the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used once again, which suggests the usage of "mind-maps" (2006, p.89) to determine the overarching

themes. During this process, the researcher identified the selective codes, the themes, as well as the link between all these elements, to complete the analysis. After determining the overarching themes, the analysis passed on to the next stage, which is the revision of the themes, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Specifically, the resulting themes were controlled for *internal homogeneity* and *external heterogeneity*, ensuring that the codes included within each theme are appropriately associated with each other and that the resulting themes are unique and different from one another, (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results were refined in two stages; first, the data excerpts were re-examined to determine "if [the] candidate themes do appear to form a coherent pattern" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91) and second, the same process was applied to the entire dataset. Successfully completing this phase, the analysis passed on to the next one, during which the emerging themes were given a name and were further defined, resulting in the following themes: *change as an agent, culture as an outcome,* and *identification as a reflector.* During this stage, not only the core significance of each theme was determined but the relationship between the resulting themes was established, to further understand the data. The sixth and final stage of thematic analysis as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006) concerns the reporting of the analysis, which suggests the inclusion of fragments rich in meaning in relation to the discussed theme, while keeping in mind the necessity for argumentation while reporting, instead of mere description of the findings. The data reporting and discussion following in the next chapter, is done in accordance to the authors' suggestions, to ensure the quality of the overall findings of this research.

Overall, the method of data collection and data analysis have been extensively described in this chapter, contributing into the transparency of this research. The structure of the content and the process of the interviews, as well as the systematic application of thematic analysis on the data, contribute into the reliability and the validity of the findings that emerged in this study. Following the strategies suggested by Hermanowicz (2002) for quality interviews, piloting the designed interview and the usage of the Socratic questions, offer a trustworthy and consistent method for data collection. Similarly, taking into consideration the possible pitfalls that snowball sampling carries as per Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), it was

possible to gather the participants of this study as carefully as possible. Further, conducting

the thematic analysis following the steps and the advice provided by Braun and Clarke (2006),

increases the reliability of the data analysis method. Thus, the provision of detailed account of

the processes required to conduct this research, contributes into the validity and reliability of

the methods used to collect and analyze data throughout this research.

4 Results

In this section, the results will be presented and discussed. As the method of analysis used in this research is thematic analysis, the results will be discussed in themes. Every emerged theme contains smaller sub-groups, which will be used as a guide in the provision of the research results. It should be noted that certain elements from each theme are given more attention, since they are more relevant than others in relation to the research question, which is the aim of this study. At this point, it essential to revisit the research question and sub-questions of this project, since the findings will be discussed in relation to the insight they offer in light of the research question.

> **RQ:** *"How do immigrants and ex-immigrants of the millennial generation living in the Netherlands, reflect upon cultural negotiation when discussing cultural identification and their movie consumption?"*
>
> **SQ1:** *"How has living abroad altered the notion of culture?"*
>
> **SQ2:** "*What is the role of movies in cultural identification?"*

Particularly, the resulting themes *change as an agent, culture as an outcome* and *identification as a reflector*, will be presented and discussed in relation to the theories used as the basis of this research, while providing data excerpts that illustrate the findings. Overall, it was found that the *changes* that occur in migrants' lives while abroad, have an impact on their personal and more general perception of *culture.* The role of cultural identification with movies is to illustrate this shift concerning culture, in current and ex-immigrants' minds, while bringing on the surface their lack of association with any cultural group, whether that is their host country's culture or their original one.

The following section will start off by pinpointing and discussing the changes that occurred in migrants' lives and their significance, while the second section will examine how these changes altered the participants' notion of culture. Starting off with these two themes, will provide ground to, eventually, understand the third and most important section of this research. The latter, will explain the role of identification with movies within the process of

cultural negotiation, which is reflective of the immigrants' experiences and lack of belonging, alongside its deeper meaning for this research to, eventually, answer the research question.

4.1   Change as an agent

Change is quite prevalent in the discussion in many different levels, constituting an entire theme. It plays a crucial role in the processes that take place in current and ex immigrants' lives, as *change* is central to their experience, either physically or mentally. *Change*, although it is not the main point of interest of this study, acted as a catalyst for the processes related to cultural negotiation and identification with movies. Cultural negotiation carries within the notion of change, resonating the strong presence of elements associated with *change* throughout the findings. As *change* characterizes the experience of the participants abroad, it results to a different personal culture for those individuals, which is reflected by their cultural identification with movies. Thus, *change* will be discussed first, to set ground for the following discussion, regarding *culture* and *identification*. First, in the next paragraphs, the changes that immigrants and ex-immigrants underwent will be presented. The significance of this theme in the analysis and, further, its relation to the research question and sub-questions will also be discussed throughout.

To begin with, one of the core types of *change* mentioned by the participants was related to *personality,* which contains developments relevant solely to the self. The observed *personality changes* were reported in a positive light by the participants. These changes were prevalent throughout most of the interviews, since the participants' personality changes were associated with the way certain topics were reflected upon, and vice versa. These developments were described by participants on two different levels, which will be further elaborated in the following sections: transformation on a personal level, and transformation towards participants' environment.

Participants reported that, due to their experiences abroad, they became more self-dependent, independent and more confident. These traits were very notable throughout the entire data-set with all the interviewees, for example when Emily, an Albanian immigrant, said that "[Moving abroad] has changed me, like, 180° degrees... […] If you do so many things for your own self, […] I don't get shit from people anymore, you know? Because I know that I'm

more… worth it, in a way." Nina, a Dutch woman who returned home last year expressed a very similar idea by saying: "Now, I… know I'm gonna relax and if you wanna see me, then, you know, you… put some effort into it," and she went on further, by saying: "I think it changed me in a sense that now I know that if I want something, I have to go and get it and it will not just come to me or anything like that." Participants revealed changes related to their selves, similar to the ones discussed above, including growing up, becoming fearless, less materialistic, more curious, more relaxed, stronger, more open, freer, gaining more variety in life, and becoming more interesting. In the following passage from Caleb's interview, a Dutch man who spent seven (7) years in Asia and Australia, he reflected on changes related to being less materialistic and how that granted him more freedom as well:

> "I'm a lot less materialistic. […] I had the best times in my life um… sleeping in the back of my car in Australia, for example, um… […] it doesn't matter, you know, you can do whatever you want, whenever you want, without, being [restricted] by materialistic prep. […] Then you realize all these… all these… materialistic elements in your life only, holding you down. Rather than to enriching yourself." (Caleb, Dutch)

Apart from *personality changes*, participants expressed changes related to their environment as well. This transformation includes alterations such as becoming more understanding, tolerant, international, aware, more active than passive, and becoming more of an extrovert. It is understandable that these changes are, of course, on a personal level, but they are strongly related to their environment, which will be illustrated by the following data pieces. Ezra, a Dutch man talking about the first time he went abroad in the US by choice, explains how he became more open and extroverted:

> "I lived in a ski town, in a mountain town, so, it was a small community, very different from the large city that I came from... uh, so life was much more flexible and the people were much more friendly to each other compared to

the city where I lived from. So, where I was a little bit, a tough person at that moment, you know, very... more shut off, I became more open, you know, to talk to people or let them talk to me, because I probably, you know... portrayed myself, subconsciously, as a person you shouldn't just talk to unless I know you." (Ezra, Dutch)

A participant from South Africa, Lil, expressed how she felt that she changed and became more understanding: "So, I think, culturally, that was ingrained in me to try and... understand- If someone has something different to you... when is something different to what you know... rather try to understand than just judge."

Looking into the discussion regarding personality development while abroad, Zimmerman and Neyer (2013) suggest that sojourners do change, due to their altered social network. Specifically, the authors propose that the traits of *openness* and *agreeableness* increase, while *neuroticism* decreases, which is in line with the findings of this study. The results of this research suggest that the participants became more open, understanding, and tolerant towards others, alongside with turning into freer, self-dependent and confident individuals, which, I suggest, indicates a decline in *neuroticism*. At this point, since immigrants' personality change is observed, it is expected that the elements with which they identify, are subjected to change as well. Having transformed into more tolerant and open individuals, current and ex-immigrants have undergone cultural changes as well, and might identify with elements which are different and/or new compared to their old self, experiencing identification with films in a different manner. This will be discussed in detail in a further section, however, this chapter will continue with the theme of *change* in terms of the *social context,* first.

The *change of social context,* although a smaller sub-category within the theme of *change as an outcome*, plays quite an important role in how current and ex-immigrants dealt with the overall change. Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that one of the most frequent complications participants dealt with when changing country of residence, was the loss of their social context. This occurrence is discussed by the participants on two different

levels. The first and core aspect of this sub-category is described on a more personal level, since participants expressed the importance of social support when being abroad, alongside the hardships the lack of it might bring into their lives. Specifically, one of the biggest struggles when arriving in a foreign country, is, reportedly, the absence of friends and family. When Lil, the South African woman with British parents, was asked whether it is easy for her to be away from home, she answered:

> "Yeah, I don't think it's easy for anybody... um... It helps if you have, like, some family or people that you're close to when you move here, like, when I moved here, my sister and my brother-in-law lived here already and I lived with them, so that made it a lot easier because you're not alone. Well, *I* wasn't alone but I can imagine it would be much harder if I moved here and was alone." (Lil, South Africa)

Most of the participants expressed the same thoughts about the hardships caused by the lack of social support in the initial stages of moving to another country. Similarly, Dutch participants reported equivalent feelings not only regarding their adjustment to a new and different country, but also concerning their return to the Netherlands. Particularly, since those people were absent from their home country for at least there (3) years, they have somewhat lost the social network they had established prior to their migration. Ezra, a Dutch professional who lived abroad for five (5) years, described how he felt coming back the first time from the United States: "Because you already have your house, you already have your friends, you know, but even though after 3 years, you know, some of these relationships became a little bit like... different, you know, but... yeah."

Revisiting Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory as described by her in her book *Becoming Intercultural*, acculturation is considered "cyclic" (2001, p.56) with an upward trend, illustrating the relationship between "stress, adaptation and growth," (2001, p.57). The personal aspect of *change of social context*, illustrates the stress (and its cause) that

immigrants experience when moving to another country, whether that is a new one or returning home after a long-term absence.

From a social and not personal point of view, the *change of social context* refers to something observed less, but with equal importance. When moving abroad, an individual arrives to a foreign country without having a social context, referring to the latter more as a symbolic meaning. In other words, the individuals in the host country, cannot understand or speculate who the newcomer is or where they are coming from, just by looking at them. In this way, the immigrant ought to put more effort to establish an image within the society they attempt to enter. Jenna, having lived abroad five (5) years till this day, explained that: "It's not easy, because you constantly have to double prove yourself. Because, for example, being in another country, you have to prove that… why, why should they choose you instead of a native, in their country, for example?" Similarly, Nina, a Dutch woman that lived abroad for four (4) years expresses that:

> "I think it's being able […] to live in an environment where, you know, no one knows you, no one knows your, whatever, social class, no one knows like your level of education, no one knows the past you, you don't come […] with a context around you, you know, you just come as you are." (Nina, Dutch)

It is, hence, clear that the lack of symbolic meaning related to the social context, makes the establishment of friendly relationships harder, while they are needed the most. Recalling Oishi's (2010) study regarding residentially mobile individuals and their social network, migrants depend on self-esteem for their well-being, which derives from social interactions. Specifically, social network is important for immigrants in order to acquire self-esteem. Since the importance of the social network is to achieve happiness and reduce stress, these individuals ought to determine a manner through which they can establish supportive relationships with others when moving to another country. Hence, the way they become more open, more understanding and more fearless, as described in the *change of personality* above, might be related to their need to establish a social network, which will eventually boost their

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self-esteem and contribute to their well-being. Revisiting the research question and its sub-questions once again, it is expected that the change of the social context of current and ex-immigrants, alters the way these individuals' cultural identification with movies occurs. It is evident, that migrants have different needs due to their migration, which changes their personality accordingly, which is a part of their cultural negotiation processes. Thus, their identification with films might reflect their new personality and culture or might operate as an apparatus to achieve this personality change, to evolve and gain deeper understanding of the different society or societies they are attempting to enter (or re-enter, for the Dutch participants returning home). The latter point is in line with the theory concerning the reflective reasons for which individuals watch movies, namely, for self-development, (Bartsch, 2010; Cupchick, 2011; Cupchick et al., 2009; Cupchick & Gignac, 2007).

Last point discussed under the theme of change is a sub-section which, although quite small in relation to the previous ones, it remains quite interesting and significant in light of the research question of this study. This *change* refers to the findings, that participants expressed that they sought deeper connections and that they *could* relate with more people now. Seeking for deeper connections is in line with the theory regarding the social network of sojourners, (Oishi, 2010). It hints at the way participants sought relationships that would raise their self-esteem rather than relationships that offer them a sense of belonging within a larger community. This was also evident from the reported lack of feelings of belonging within larger groups, with whom participants shared similar ideas or values. Quite interesting is the fact that according to the theory, sojourners tend to have a larger network of friends, which seems contradictory with the pursuit of deeper connections reported by the participants, who reported to have few but strong relationships.

Apart from that, the fact that participants *could* rather than *did* relate with more people, indicates their openness, the significance of the social network for them, as well as the fluidity of identity. It might be that respondents could relate with more people as an outcome of developing their traits of *openness* and *agreeableness* (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013). However, participants identified and related with other people, probably, depending on their need for self-esteem at the given moment (Oishi, 2010). This assumption is based upon the

observation that the interviewees reported identification with a movie character or element, when the traits were positive rather than negative. In other words, participants would deny identification with a movie character or with an element of a movie, unless that was seemed favorable. One example, would be the interview with Ezra, a Dutch professional who lived abroad for five (5) years, who selected to discuss the movie *The Godfather.* Initially, he denied identification with breaking the law and the rules, in general, but later he agreed with a milder version of such activities, like "with snowboarding... you know, you have a really big jump you have never jumped over it before, you're breaking a certain boundary," when framed differently by the interviewer. Similarly, Klaus, the Greek-German student, who chose the movie *The skin I live in,* which depicts a father committing a violent act because of his love for his wife a daughter, chose to identify with the perfectionist side of the main actor and the abundant love for his family, while expressing his dislike for even the smallest act of violence. Such flexibility indicates the fluidity of their identification and, thus, identity, which depends on the given moment of the interaction as the critical intercultural communication study approach suggests, (Mendoza et al., 2002), as well as the theory of orthogonal cultural identification too, (Oetting, 1993). Thus, the participants' *personality change* is evident in their relevance to other individuals as well, while this change has made their identity more flexible and dependent on the circumstances of the interaction through which identification takes place.

Overall, the theme of *change as an agent* refers to the role that change plays in the negotiation of culture. It is *change*, from many perspectives, that contributed into the personality development of the immigrants and ex-immigrants. It is observed, by now, that the participants have transformed into a persona that could but does not belong in many social groups. This theme, operates as a ground for better understanding the processes that take place within the immigrants' minds, which will facilitate the explanation of the next two emerging themes, *culture as an outcome* and *identification as a reflector*. *Change* is the catalyst of the transformation of the notion of culture and the personal culture of current and ex-immigrants, while movies do not only assist these individuals to develop their personality

by introducing them to diverse worldviews, but they reflect the traits of the new self that immigrants have developed as well, an issue discussed in detail in the appropriate section.

4.2   Culture as an outcome

This second theme revolves around *culture*, which constitutes the outcome of the *change* discussed above. The theme of *culture as an outcome* illustrates what is perceived as culture by the participants, as well as the way the notion of culture changed in the participants' minds by their experience abroad. It includes a description of culture, how the notion of culture changed by the experience abroad, as well as the participants' thoughts about this change and its impact on their lives. This theme, *culture as an outcome,* demonstrates the results that the theme *change as an agent* has on the perception and expression of what culture is in the participants' minds. Moreover, the outcome such a change has on immigrants' feelings of belonging will be discussed, to further understand how and why the role of the movies in cultural identification is to reflect the newly acquired (or ideal) identity of the participants.

Initially, it is essential to examine what are the elements that constitute culture according to the interviewees. Culture was described as norms, values, languages, and traditions. Culture was reflected upon as a mix of different elements, which is much more beyond the national culture. In other words, participants approached culture as a puzzle which includes different elements from different cultural groups. Emily, an Albanian student living in the Netherlands illustrates that by saying that "It's funny because I celebrate Bairam, like, whatever, Ramadan and all kinds of things, and I celebrate Easter and Christmas, I am- It's just a reason to [laughing] have more food on the table and that's it!" Moreover, it was found that people themselves constitute culture, since culture is the communication style, as Jenna, a Greek woman living for the past five (5) years abroad explained: "Culture... it's the relationships you have with people, it's the sort of communication style you have with them." Considering that culture is a communication style and that the latter depends on the cultural norms and the social context, the finding that culture is an option sounds rational. Klaus, the half Greek and half German student explained how culture is a choice which depends upon the

context:

> "If you're Dutch, you only do the [first] drinks and you don't pay the rest. […] Whereas,
> the average Greek person would never say that. […] As a Greek person in Greece, like
> of course the person that is having the birthday is going to pay, […] but if you're in the
> Netherlands, you cannot be expecting from the birthday person to pay for everything
> and it's the norm here, so that's it." (Klaus, Greek-German)

At this point, the adaptability of cultural behavior is clear, considering the flexibility of most of the elements that are perceived as descriptors of culture. In addition to that, I argue, that culture is perceived in a flexible manner by the participants, since that is necessary to 'survive'. That is due to the change of their environment, since they moved to a new location with a different culture, which causes stress, as described by Kim (2001). Thus, immigrants and ex-immigrants tend to perceive culture and discuss about it in a more flexible manner, since that was required from them, to overcome their struggle and, eventually, to become happy in their new residence, which is expressed by the way they culturally identify with their movie selections.

However, it is essential to examine whether culture was perceived as such prior to the participants' decision to migrate, to determine whether migration was the catalyst for such a change. Participants with a diverse background described a more liquid approach to culture, which is possible, since they had to struggle with their cultural identity already at a younger age. This element strongly associates with the "corresponsive principle" (p.583) of Roberts et al. (2003), indicating that those individuals chose to move abroad because of their prior openness. Some other participants explained that they used to have a more fixed notion about culture, such as attributing certain characteristics to certain populations. Ezra, the Dutch man who lived in the US and Turkey explained how he used to think about culture: "you still have a certain mind of how these people really are and stuff like that, you know, and what was in your mind from the way you've grown up... you know, and those weren't always as real as they were." Interestingly, the participant, at this point, is implying that he had certain stereotypes about certain cultures but it is expressed in an indirect way, which suggests more openness,

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which either derives from their change of notion of culture or from their need to appear consistent in their trait of openness. Lastly, the rest of the participants expressed their lack of prior thought regarding culture before leaving their home country. This could be attributed either to the lack of stimuli to initiate cultural negotiation or, I suggest, it could be their desire to come out as the open person they claimed to be throughout the interview, when talking about their cultural identification with movies. The latter point is in line with the example of Ezra above, which illustrates the possibility of an effort to appear as a more open person in general, which rationalizes their choice to go through the struggle of migration and cultural negotiation or helps them deal with the lack of belonging to either their original or their host's culture, a point which will be discussed in detail further.

To continue, it was observed that participants perceive culture in a different way in the present. While interviewees were talking about culture on a personal level, it emerged that culture consists from certain elements, as discussed in the beginning of this theme, but those can vary per person. The participants explain that their culture is a mix and match of different elements they took with them from every place they have lived in. When asked about her culture, Kikee, a half Greek and half Greek-Cypriot student, responded:

"Wow... I don't know! I honestly don't know! What's my culture...? My culture.
My culture is a little mix between... Greek, Greek-Cypriot along with a little bit
of English colonialism in there and some Dutch, culture. Which is, yeah, a very
weird mix, but... eh... that's how I could say it, because I have elements from all
of them at this point..." (Kikee, Greek – Greek Cypriot)

This excerpt does not only illustrate the complexity and multifaceted character of culture as perceived by the participants, but also the active negotiation of cultural identity at that given moment. All the interviewees, in a similar manner as Kikee, approached their personal culture as complex, rich of elements from different cultural groups. This point is in line with the discussion above, that participants perceive (personal) culture as rich and flexible, which might ease any struggles deriving from not belonging anywhere, while they are able to

belong if necessary for their well-being. This point is illustrated by the participants' reported cultural identification with movies, which is in line with the complex and multifaceted nature of their personal culture.

To continue, the way that participants, immigrants and ex-immigrants alike, felt when returning home, has changed because of their acculturation experiences, causing some issues to the individuals. This section concerns the struggles the participants faced and still face when returning home. As reported by the participants, these struggles do not surface during short-term visits but rather during the long-term ones, for current immigrants, or when readjusting home, for returning immigrants. That is due to the excitement and the fun the participants reported having when visiting home for shorter periods of time. The issues and the struggles reported in this category are described as complex, especially by the Dutch participants who have settled back for, at least one (1) year. Overall, the issues discussed, mainly, derive from the fact that the participants felt they had changed while being abroad. Specifically, the participants explained that they felt different from people at home due to their changing socialization norms. In other words, at home, there are certain norms which the participants are expected to follow but that does not happen for two reasons. Current and ex-immigrants have either grown unfamiliar with the culture back home, since the society and the culture there evolves without them being aware of the changes, or they simply do not want to conform, since they consider limiting doing so. Hanna, the Dutch woman born in Singapore and raised in Curacao by Dutch parents, explains that due to her mixed background she already felt that her hometown was limiting, a feeling enhanced by her experience abroad: "I mean, especially when I turned 16 and, or 17, it started feeling smaller but it was still the only place you knew and now […] it seems like the island shrunk as well." It is evident throughout the interviews that home feels, overall, quite limiting. Individuals that belong to social context at home, such as family and old friends, cannot understand the participants and hence, the latter group cannot relate with the locals anymore. Interestingly, some testimonies indicate that the struggle to fit in at home, derives from somewhat of a rejection of the new self the participants developed while abroad, from contacts of their social network prior leaving. Specifically, some old friends at home felt threatened and dislike concerning the new

personality of the participants, which, naturally, had an impact on the participant's feeling of acceptance and thus, belonging. When asked about the way she experiences change, Kikee, a half Greek and half Cypriot-Greek woman living in the Netherlands, answered with a bittersweet tone:

"Oh, that's a toughy one... because I like the way I am now but I... used to have a lot of friends, two friends actually, who told me they don't like the way I've become, because I've become cynical and too realistic and I've lost the inner child in me." (Kikee, Greek - Greek Cypriot)

Thus, participants' testimonies suggest that home feels different because of the *changes* they underwent as discussed throughout the first theme, as well as their different personal culture, which is an overall result of their experience abroad.

Taking into consideration the latter point, the relation between the theme of *change* and the theme of *culture* is quite clear. The issues caused at home are a result of the personality development of sojourners as discussed by Zimmerman and Neyer (2013), as it seems that the type of personality that the immigrants developed is unfit to the social environment at home, or vice versa. Moreover, the *issues at home* are also caused by the process of *deculturation* as described by Kim (2001) and the factor of *cultural maintenance* as suggested by Berry (1997). Both terms refer to a part of the procedure that immigrants follow when adapting to a new environment, which is the abandonment of elements of their original culture and their replacement with new ones. As observed in this research, the process of *deculturation* raises challenges to the individuals in interest, implicating their feeling of belonging back home. This outcome, the lack of belonging to the culture either back home or the host culture, is reflected by the way participants discussed their cultural identification with movies, which is characterized by openness and flexibility as well. Current and ex-immigrants express cultural identification with films in a fluid manner, which could be used differently depending on the context. In other words, the participants of the study reported identification with diversity and new worldviews depicted in movies, which could be associated with any

culture, depending on contextual elements. Not belonging anywhere or having difficulties to do so, current and ex-immigrants identify with elements from films that *could* be associated with any culture, depending on the context of the interaction regarding cultural identification with films, which is while talking about or experiencing cultural identification.

The illustration of the fluid nature of the interviewees' culture in the discussion above, provides ground for the next component, which is the flexibility of culture. It is observed that all prior discussion within the theme of *culture as an outcome*, carries a flexible notion of culture. That is an element which was indeed discovered throughout the analysis. As already discussed, culture is considered by the participants, to be formed by people and their communication style. This implies flexibility, since, naturally, people evolve and, thus, culture evolves along with them. Culture depends on the context, since cultural behavior varies depending on the social and physical environment. The latter point was illustrated in the example of Klaus, a half Greek and half German resident of Rotterdam, regarding birthday norms, where he explains how behavior varies depending on where and with whom he is. Moreover, culture is considered flexible, since within the same culture there can be very diverse individuals. Nina, a Dutch woman who moved from Turkey to Liverpool and then back to Rotterdam explains that:

"when you live somewhere else, there... are things that are very different, you haven't seen them before. […] When you live in a, in a country and you read the news or, you know, you watch movies or whatever and you see that there is one type of, in this case the Turk or the Brit, you know, um... But... being Dutch and living in the Netherlands, you know that there are many different types of Dutch people, you know. Every person doesn't look like one, person. So, I think when you go abroad you also experience this, that you don't know Turkey the same and, you know, some people agree some people disagree, like... their, you know, government [laughter]" (Nina, Dutch)

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In this excerpt, once again the active negotiation is observed, since the interviewee is struggling to organize her thoughts. The point regarding the flexibility of culture, derived from the difficulty the participants had defining the term culture. Particularly, during the interviews, when posing the question which used the term *culture* for the first time to the participants (See Appendix B), almost all of them required further explanation of what is meant with this term. Specifically, the interviewees asked from which point of view they were asked about culture. Since they were invited to answer according to their beliefs, most of them expressed at that point their flexible perception of culture, as they approached the term according to their own, complex and multifaceted personal culture. At this point, it is interesting to underline that some of the participants referred to their national culture, a section which will be very briefly examined in the following paragraph. However, before moving ahead within this theme, it is essential to pinpoint that the flexible notion of culture observed in the data, is in line with two theoretical aspects. First, the fluidity of culture as discussed by Mendoza et al. (2012) is evident, since culture depends heavily upon the contextual elements of the interaction during which culture is expressed. The participants, not only perceive culture as an expression of part of their identity dependent of the context, but those who had a more static notion of culture changed their view by their experience as well. This change, as well as the approach to culture in a fluid manner, points back to the acculturation processes as discussed by Kim (2001) and Berry (1997), since such processes contain flexibility within. According to these academics, acculturation is the abandonment of elements of one's original culture and the acquisition of new ones, a process that suggests flexibility. Thus, it is natural for immigrants and ex-immigrants, that have been through acculturation processes, to approach culture in a flexible manner, an occurrence observed while participants discuss their cultural identification with movies. In other words, participants identify with the element of learning, experiencing something new, and diversity when watching a movie, which are, first, part of the acculturation process they experienced while living abroad and, second, a very flexible and adjustable trait, just like the participants' personal culture.

Last but not least, are the findings relevant to national culture. It was found that national culture (and probably associated with original culture) serves as a point of reference,

since this is the way current and ex-immigrants grew up. National culture is considered as given and inherited but, at the same time, it is not considered culture, overall, as mentioned in the beginning of this theme. Aria, the half Greek and half Austrian student, while referring to the education she received about culture at school, she explained that "it was more traditional, more patriotistic, if you can say that..." and later on agreed when asked whether this is in parallelism with the national culture. This illustrates the detachment, in their minds, of the national culture as the notion of culture in general, which can be considered part of the *deculturation* process, throughout their acculturation path as described by Kim (2001). Moreover, considering cultural identification as an expression of culture, it is implied that during interaction for cultural identification (or not), as explained by the theory of orthogonal cultural identification by Oetting (1993), immigrants compare new symbols, elements and meanings to what they already know, which is their original culture. Thus, during cultural identification, the national (original) culture operates as a guide to determine the results of the cultural interaction, which indicates again their agency in the acculturation process, as well as in the cultural negotiation. This swift in the participants' minds regarding national culture, illustrates their detachment from it and validates the point discussed earlier, concerning their lack of feelings of belonging within their original community. Once again, it is demonstrated why participants select to identify with diversity and learning; these elements do not belong to any cultural group but could do so, if necessary. Moreover, participants' loss of feelings of association with their national culture, leads the current and ex-immigrants to identify with elements that are more universal and flexible by their nature, such as their experiences abroad.

Overall, the theme *culture as an outcome* illustrates the function and nature of culture for immigrants and ex-immigrants. Culture, in this case, is the outcome of *change as an agent* which is reflected through *identification as a reflector*, since the experiences of change that the participants underwent, resulted in a shift in the perception of the notion of culture in their minds and their feelings of belonging to a certain culture. The interviewees' personal culture, as well as their beliefs about culture in general, are the results of the participants' migration adventure. Changing environments and social context, the individuals grew into

more open, less stressed and flexible individuals, whose culture changed in a similar manner alongside their journey. In the next and final section of this chapter, the theme *identification as a reflector* will be explained, alongside with how the cause (*change*) and the result (*culture*) are reflected through identification with people and movies.

4.3 Identification as a reflector

This theme concerns *identification as a reflection* of the experience the participants had when moving abroad, as well as the result moving abroad had on their perception of culture. Identification is approached from three different perspectives; participants' identification with other individuals, the way they identify themselves in general, and their identification with movies. Further, explanation for the participants' flexible cultural identification will be provided. Throughout the discussion regarding this theme, it will be clarified in what ways *identification* operates as a reflector of the themes *change as an agent* and *culture as an outcome.*

The gathered data revealed how the participants identify with others, in other words, on what does it depend whether they feel similar to someone else or not. It was found that due to the trait of openness, it is feasible for interviewees to identify with, almost, everyone, since the characteristic of openness signifies their acceptance of difference. Further, it was observed that the fact that two people might be different, makes it possible to identify with each other, since difference is what connects the two individuals. A Dutch woman, Nina, talked about her experience in Turkey in regards of her community within other international students: "Maybe my social life it was, it was... small but, you had, like, a stronger community because everyone just had each other and no one else." This quotation indicates that this type of individuals, immigrants, were close to each other due to the fact that they were all strangers within that society. Moreover, sharing a similar past or everyday concerns can also make someone relevant. Emily, an Albanian woman, explained why she relates more with individuals who surround her in her everyday life rather than with friends at home: "[you relate more] if you share […] *right now*, […] sharing the same kind of routine, having the same worries like, 'Will I find a job in […] two three months from now, because I'm graduating'." Finally, core values and beliefs play an important role as well, since one would not relate with another with

extremely divergent beliefs, regardless of the person's level of openness and agreeableness. Klaus, the Greek-German student, explained that:

"there are people that really still think in our age that women... don't have the same rights as men, so, with this person, personally, I cannot really connect. […] I would still be nice to them but then just not […] pursue a kind of friendship with them. It's really, it's a very basic thing for me." (Klaus, Greek-German)

Considering the diversity of the factors observed for relating with others, the flexibility of identification with people is apparent, an element strongly related with openness. That is, probably, a natural change, since individuals became more open through their experience, in order to manage to construct a social network around them when moving abroad, which is necessary for their well-being (Oishi, 2010; Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013). Last but not least, is the observation that identification (or not) with another individual takes place through interaction, a communication process, which is in line with the theory of orthogonal cultural identification, (Oetting, 1993).

To continue, the findings regarding the elements that the participants expressed that define them, offer an interesting insight as well. Personality traits, experiences and values are the components that identify the immigrants and ex-immigrants that participated in this study. The participants do not define themselves by culture but from traits and experiences that revolve around the occurrences related to their migration. Such a finding indicates the detachment of these individuals from their original culture as their identity. Possibly, this occurred due to the participants' experience with the process of acculturation, during which, the notion of culture, alongside their personal culture, gets blurred and/or due to the participants' openness of how they perceive themselves or how they would like to be perceived. Thus, finding that the participants are defined by their experience abroad, or traits related to it, indicates the importance of such an event in their lives. Moreover, clearly, the *changes* that occurred because of and during the interviewees' experience abroad, as well as

the result observed in *culture*, is reflected in the way they *identify* themselves, as discussed during the interviews, with movies.

At this point, the flexibility of identity that emerged should be discussed. Reading the above passage, as well as in correlation with the findings, the flexibility of the participants' identity is evident. Lil, a South African woman with English parents, expressed that: "Now I see that [...] you can be very different and... you can change, you can be one way to another person and another way to another person, it doesn't matter. It's your choice." It is observed that one can have multiple identities, whose identification with depends upon contextual elements, such as the environment and the society. Moreover, when abroad, the national identity of the sojourners might be more apparent, without this being universal to the entire dataset, while when at home, a more complicated identity and identification is experienced. That seems to be due to the unfamiliarity with the context within which the immigrants are situated when moving abroad, which leads to the pursuit of anything familiar. Nina, a Dutch woman, explained her experience abroad by bringing the example of peanut butter:

> "For example, even a small thing like going to the supermarket. Like here I do it as well, in Turkey I do it, in England I do it and it's still a supermarket. All those supermarkets are still different and they have different products. So, if I go to... Turkey and I suddenly see like, the Calve peanut butter, you know, like... it is a different experience for me than when I go to like... the NL and I don't even buy the peanut butter, you know." (Nina, Dutch)

In this excerpt, it is evident how identity, and as a result the behavior too, vary depending on where an individual is situated. It can be argued, at this point, that the flexibility of identity and identification is strongly associated with the flexibility of culture, since the latter is part of one's identity. Since culture becomes more flexible, naturally, identity and identification follow the same path, becoming more flexible as well, which is reflected by the participants' identification with movies. Taking this into consideration, the agency that individuals have throughout the process of their acculturation, is evident, since they decide with what to

(culturally) identify depending on the context. Thus, since the participants identify with openness and flexibility, it becomes complicated when returning home, where they ought to conform to the local social norms to fit it, bringing on the surface the lack of feelings of belonging among their original culture. Thus, migrants identify more with openness and difference abroad, while when at home they try to adjust this identification, to conform, in order not to be rejected by their original culture. On the whole, the flexibility of *identity* and identification that emerged from the data, reflects the flexibility of *culture* discussed above, as a result of the participants' experience of *change*, which is, clearly, illustrated in their identification with movies, with diversity and new experiences.

In the last part of this theme *identification as a reflector*, the relation between movies and identification will be examined, as well as the association of the latter point with the rest of the data will be provided. It was observed that the participants watch movies for two reasons; entertainment and to broaden their horizons. Lil, a South African woman, explained why she liked the movie she chose to discuss: "I like that it was a little bit different and it told an alternative story, it told a story that maybe… we don't often show." Similarly, Klaus, the Greek-German student, supported his selection by saying: "I like how [the director] presents stuff, he talks about a different reality, a minority and he really puts things into perspective." According to the theory, individuals, indeed, watch movies for reactive and reflective reasons; the first refers to personal satisfaction, while the latter refers to self-development and self-reflection motives, (Bartsch, 2010; Cupchick, 2011; Cupchick et al., 2009; Cupchick & Gignac, 2007). The point of interest in this research is the latter point, which refers to the possibility of enriching one's knowledge, alongside accessing, experiencing, and understanding different perspectives of the society and, thus, the world. This can operate as a social glue as well, creating feelings of belongingness to the relevant group, since in the era of the internet individuals can connect to each other without any geographical restrictions (Meyrowitz, 1997; Rheingold, 2002). The motives of self-development and self-reflection when watching movies, are very similar to the experiences the participants have been through during their life abroad. The interviewees have had the chance in real life, to understand different cultures and different ways of thinking, enriching them with knowledge and experiences. Thus, participants

do not only watch movies to become intellectually more cultivated, but they enjoy movies with which they identify as well, a point explained in detail in the following paragraph.

To continue, the participants' identification with the movies of their choice will be discussed. It was observed that the selected movies reflect the participants' values and (cultural) identity, an occurrence perceived positively. Nina, a Dutch woman, was able to put this thought in words by saying that: "identification comes from, liking it, so, you know, I like it so that means probably I can relate with it... I can relate to it and I enjoy it as well." Overall, the participants either see themselves in the movie or they see their ideal selves, which seems the most possible. Caleb, a Dutch man who lived in Asia and Australia, when asked about the relation of the movie of his choice with his cultural identity he answered: "That it's scattered all over the place. […] Seven different story lines, seven different time frames, seven different stories, seven different characters... so I guess that's... the diversity." Aria, the Greek-Austrian student, gave a similar answer to the same question: "I can relate with that movie because of the strong element of traveling and... experiencing a new city, so I think that being... my cultural identity being like the globetrotter, it has, like, a lot of similarities." It is clear, that due to the current and ex-immigrants' experiences and their change into more open and flexible individuals, they tend to perceive themselves as such too, since that will facilitate their interaction with any other individual, regardless their background. Apart from that, due to the participants' experience with *acculturation* processes, it seemed easier for them to deal with the influx of new cultural elements shown in movies. This process is another component with which the current and ex-immigrants identify as well, drawing them closer to the selection of movies which contribute into additional knowledge and a peek in other worldviews. Revisiting the theory of orthogonal cultural identification by Oetting (1993), participants culturally identify with the movies they selected to discuss about, since, even if it portrays a very different culture than their own, the component of active cultural negotiation is what they identify with.

Till this point, the role of identification as a reflector has been discussed, as well as its function when studying cultural negotiation. It is essential, though, not only to briefly report the findings regarding the role of their entire experience abroad in their overall personality

development but also to address the *thoughts* of the participants regarding this change, to better understand the reason why current and ex-immigrants culturally identify with their experience rather than other elements, when watching movies. The participants, immigrants and ex-immigrants alike, expressed that, overall, the *experience* itself changed them. This includes the struggles that the participants went through, the diversity they came across, but also the entire process of adjusting in a new lifestyle itself. Ezra, a Dutch man who lived in the US and Turkey, explained: "Well, I changed because I experienced a different thing from what I thought", which clearly illustrates the role of experience in the development of their new personality. At this point, all the discussion above comes together, demonstrating the role of change as a stepping stone within the process of cultural negotiation, which is then reflected through cultural identification with movies. Changing countries, it is expected that individuals should adjust to different lifestyles and socialization norms, which was reported by the participants as well. As mentioned in a sub-chapter above, due to the lack of social context, the participants put more effort in establishing relationships, which resulted in their feelings of independence and fearlessness. Moreover, because of the aforementioned effort, the participants became more open to listen to other individuals, to find commonalities, and to establish relationships with them. This is essential since the support of the social network is crucial for migrants, (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013). This change in personality, socialization norms and lifestyle is part of the *deculturation* process as described by Kim (2001), illustrating the participants' divergence from their original culture. The latter point, raises, once again, issues related with the sense of belonging back home. This brings in light the ambiguity of inclusion to either the host or the original culture of the current and ex-immigrants. In other words, the new changes seem to benefit the individual on a personal level, since all the *personal changes* reported in the first theme were positive, while complicating the social lives of immigrants, as presented in the second theme. Thus, it is understood that current and ex-immigrants' experience abroad, is such a major life event, that has become part of their identity, if not their whole identity. Specifically, having lost feelings of inclusion to their host or original culture, migrants have a very limited sense of association with those cultural groups as

well, leaving them in search for an element to associate with; their experience of cultural negotiation.

By now, the development in current and ex-immigrants' lives might be considered negative, since it creates issues, regarding the association of those individuals with cultural groups. However, the thoughts of the participants regarding the latest developments in their lives, were prevalent in the dataset. Overall, change was considered natural, unconscious and positive by the interviewees, but it was also perceived as complicated. All the participants, including current immigrants and returned Dutch individuals, talked about the changes in their lives positively and reported that they liked who they had become (or they claimed so to appear consistent of their choice to move abroad and go through this difficult process), while people from their social network at home found these changes threatening, an issue discussed above. At this point, I argue that this seems to be the complication, although not clearly stated, since, I believe, the participants who had returned home felt that their new self was rejected from their social network at home. The latter can be associated with the critical intercultural communications' approach to culture, where identity formation carries a sense of duality since it is "always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between . . . two resultant poles—man/woman, etc," (Laclau as cited in Hall, 1996, p. 5). Thus, the participants embraced the change that occurred in all fields of their lives, however, doing so might be concomitant to feeling their original identity, the one they had prior moving abroad, being rejected, when embracing their new one. For this reason, I propose, participants expressed identification with their experience; it is the main life event that characterizes their lack of belonging to any culture, which is an element flexible enough to be related to any culture, depending on the context of the identification taking place.

Last but not least, the mindset of the participants before deciding to move to another country was important and prevalent in the data. Examining the participants' prior mindset, offers deeper understanding regarding the reasons such a development in their lives is considered positive and is embraced, even if it generates issues regarding belonging to cultural groups. Some of the interviewees had a diverse background, as mentioned in the method section above, which could be considered as an indicator of their prior openness, but also their

pre-existent identity struggle. That was evident in the testimonies of the relevant participants, such as Klaus, a half Greek and half German individual who was born and raised in Greece, who talked about growing in a transnational family: "[…] depending on where you move socially, you know 'Okay, this is a go this is a no go,' so, you always knew that, yes, you had to be flexible and adaptable." Similarly, Aria, a half Greek and half Austrian woman, expressed that: "I think if I would not be raised... in between two different cultures, maybe, there is a great possibility that I wouldn't have experienced all of those changes," illustrating the realization of the role of prior openness in the decision to move abroad. Revisiting the "corresponsive principle" (p.583) of Roberts et al. (2003), the life events that contribute into personality development, tend to reinforce the traits of the personality that lead the individual to that experience. Applied to the case of this study, individuals characterized by openness would choose an experience, such as moving abroad, which would reinforce the traits that lead them into that decision, which is openness. It is observed, thus, that the willingness to take such a big step and make this kind of change, is a crucial trait necessary to realize such a wish, which lead, as discussed already, into an increase of *openness* and *agreeableness*, according to the data. It is evident, that the participants were seeking for this change or they were already struggling with their identity and belongingness and thus, this change is considered positive and it is embraced, as seen above, because it was sought prior to their experience. Understanding, thus, the prior openness of current and ex-immigrants, it is clear, not only why they voluntarily moved abroad, but how this is reflected through their cultural identification with movies too. The traits of openness and flexibility are the elements that define the participants of this study, allowing them to adjust their behavior and culture according to their needs of any given moment.

Overall, the theme *identification as a reflector* illustrated the way the findings about identification reflect the new notion or the new personal *culture* of the participants, which is a result of their *change* by their experience abroad. This final theme, offers an insight into what the findings signify, in light of the research question. Current and ex-immigrants' identities are flexible and vary, depending upon several factors. This is the way the participants' movie choices, with which they either identify or would like to do so, reflect the multifaceted

character of their own identities. Current and ex-immigrants, when watching a movie, they culturally identify with their experience, an element which is fluid and flexible to be adjusted and expressed in different ways, depending on the context their identification takes place.

5   Discussion & Conclusion

In this chapter, first, the research question will be answered in light of the results reported above and, second, possible alternatives for this study will be suggested, together with topics of further research that emerged from this study.

5.1   Discussion

This section will offer a brief overview of the findings to provide further understanding about their significance, which will eventually lead to the response to the sub-questions and main research question.

Individuals who voluntarily migrate to another country, have experienced cultural negotiation prior their decision, such as children of a transnational family, or they are people that are more open to such an experience. Moving to a foreign country, is a decision that is accompanied with many changes on different levels. Naturally, the social network of the migrating individuals is lost while they are abroad, however, it is still essential for the well-being of these individuals. Residentially mobile individuals might not be as interested in belonging within groups or communities, yet they need support from their social environment. Social support is necessary due to the stress that migrants experience when moving to a new country, since they are situated within a society, a culture, which they are unfamiliar with. Thus, in an effort to build relationships with such diverse individuals, immigrants become more open and tolerant. Migrants boost their self-esteem and feel fearless and independent once they achieve happiness throughout the relationships they have established abroad. Apart from this process, the acquisition of a social network, acculturation is another procedure that takes place in the migrants' minds when residing in a culturally different environment.

Since immigrnats are in continuous contact with the host culture, alongside with other multiple cultures too, they go through the process of acculturation. Migrants adjust into different lifestyles than the ones they knew their entire lives, develop different habits and, generally, act differently, since behavior depends upon the context. The integration of these different norms and even beliefs, is the process of acculturation, which happens naturally when one is in contact with another, from a different background. As a result, change is the cause of the cultural negotiation ongoing in migrants' minds (*change as an agent*) while

culture is the result of this drastic change (*culture as an outcome*). Thus, as immigrants develop traits of openness and agreeableness because of their experience abroad, their notion of culture follows the same path as well. It is because of their personality change that their culture and the way they approach this term, has become more open and flexible as well. This entire shift caused by their experience abroad, is evident by the struggles migrants face when returning home. These individuals have difficulties of fitting back in, either they're visiting or resettling home, due to the way their personality and culture changed. Not only they feel restricted having to follow certain social norms, but they are implicitly rejected by their social network established prior their decision to leave. Thus, these individuals appear to thrive in environments where they do not have to be restricted by norms, namely, in places where they are foreigners, since there they are accepted for being different.

Taking into consideration the changes that occur in migrants lives and their culture, it is natural that their (cultural) identification evolves as well. These individuals have found ways to identify with people coming from diverse backgrounds, which might, eventually, differentiate them from people back at home. The flexibility of culture resulting by their experience, is reflected upon their identification with people and movies (*identification as a reflector*). Migrants can identify with, almost, everyone, however they have difficulties identifying with individuals from home. The latter point is associated with the rejection of the 'new self' of the migrants by friends and family at home, as mentioned already before. Thus, not identifying with their original or host culture, leaves these individuals 'floating', with no feelings of belongingness to any group. Hence, migrants identify with diversity, with challenge, with their experience abroad, since that is the core of their identity; acculturation. This argument is clearly reflected upon the movie selection of the participants, since the diversity or alternative perspective depicted in the movies, characterizes the lives of the individuals.

Thus, at this point, it is possible to answer the sub-research questions of this study, in order to answer the main research question posed in the introduction.

> **RQ:** *"How do immigrants and ex-immigrants of the millennial*
>
> *generation living in the Netherlands, reflect upon cultural*

negotiation when discussing cultural identification and their

movie consumption?"

SQ1: *"How has living abroad altered the notion of culture?"*

SQ2: "*What is the role of movies in cultural identification?"*

To answer the **RQ1**, the need for social support while abroad, changed the personality of the immigrants. This development, alongside with the process of acculturation, has lead the migrants to realize the flexibility and diversity of culture depending on the context, resulting into a different perception of the notion of culture. Thus, in order to achieve happiness while abroad, migrants ought to change their perception of culture, in order to be able to adjust it when necessary, depending on the context of their interaction. This alteration of the notion of culture is evident in their struggles at home, feeling out of place and not as relevant as before. To answer **RQ2**, the role of movies in cultural identification is, first, to reflect one's culture. Immigrants' cultural identification is so flexible that it does not belong to a certain group, which is the reason for which they prefer movies that continue to challenge them, since their identity, now, is their multicultural experience. Thus, identification with movies offers a glimpse for better understanding the complexity of those people's cultural identities, resulted by their experiences. However, another aspect to the role of movies in cultural identification should be underlined. There is a high possibility that migrants select to identify with this type of movies not only because of their flexible identity and culture, but also because of the lack of feelings of belonging. Specifically, since these individuals struggle to belong to their original, host or any other culture, at this moment, they strive to identify with complexity and openness in order to maintain happiness. In other words, identifying with not identifying, operates as an alleviator of the inner conflict and struggle caused by not belonging anywhere, anymore.

5.2   Conclusion

Reaching towards the end of this paper, different possible approaches to this research will be suggested, while topics for further research will be pointed out.

To begin with, since this research concerns immigrants living in the Netherlands and Dutch individuals that have returned to their home country, it would have been insightful to

acquire a larger data set. That would provide ground for a stronger comparative lens between the two groups, in relation with the results. Moreover, it would be resourceful to not only focus on immigrants in the Netherlands and returned Dutch migrants, but to both categories from anywhere in the world. That would allow the acquisition of more diverse data and not mainly related to the western societies. Although two of the participants are not western, one is from South Africa and another from Curacao, it is essential to pinpoint their western background, since they are British and Dutch descendants, respectively. Thus, this research could have a larger data set to make the comparison between immigrants and ex-migrants feasible and a more diverse, in terms of background, sample.

Although, this study could become larger and more diverse, it did raise some subjects that could be further researched. One of the most important elements that should be further explored is the role of the movies in cultural identification, beyond the one as reflector of the cultural negotiation the participants went through. The speculation mentioned above, that immigrants choose to identify with complexity merely because they cannot identify with any other culture, should be further studied. That is quite essential, given the rising number of international and exchange students, either they stay abroad or return home after their studies. Cultural identification with movies, if further researched, could be used to benefit migrants, in terms of adjustment or readjustment to the new environment or back home. Moreover, such a study should include individuals with different backgrounds, and not mainly western participants, to constitute a research within the critical intercultural communication approach. The latter, would operate as a bridge between the global west and east, north and south, which is urgent in the era of cultural globalization the world is currently undergoing.

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Appendix A – Overview of participants

Nickname	Gender	Birth year	Nationality	Occupation	Background	Migration history
Caleb	Male	1985	Dutch	MSc student	Born & raised in the Netherlands, by a Dutch father & a gipsy mother	Lived for 7 years in Paris, Thailand, Hong-Kong, China, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Borneo, Korea & Singapore
Kikee	Female	1990	Greek / Greek-Cypriot	MA student	Born & raised in Greece within a transnational family	Lived for 4 years in the Netherlands
Ezra	Male	1990	Dutch	Employed, BA degree	Born & raised in the Netherlands	Lived for 5 years in the USA and Turkey
Lil	Female	1990	South African	MSc student / Employed	Born & raised in S. Africa by British parents	Lived for 4 years in the UK and the Netherlands
Klaus	Male	1992	Greek / German	MA student	Born & raised in Greece within a transnational family	Lived for 5 years in Germany and the Netherlands
Emily	Female	1992	Albanian	MSc student / Employed	Born & raised in Albania	Lived for 3.5 years in the Netherlands
Aria	Female	1992	Greek / Austrian	MA student	Born & raised in Greece within a transnational family	Lived for 3 years in Germany, Austria, Netherlands
Nina	Female	1993	Dutch	Unemployed, BA degree	Born & raised in the Netherlands	Lived for 4 years in Turkey and the UK
Hanna	Female	1994	Dutch	BA student / Employed	Born in Singapore, raised in Curacao by Dutch migrant parents	Lived for 5 years in the Netherlands
Jenna	Female	1994	Greek	MSc student / Employed	Born & raised in Greece	Lived for 5 years in Turkey and the Netherlands

Table 1 Research participants' overview
Note: *All participants reside in the NL*

Appendix B – Interview design

This is the beginning of the interview with _____ (Interviewee Nickname)

Do you confirm that you consent to the recording? So, let's begin.

Introduction

- Where are you from?
- For how long have (you lived/ been living) away from your home country?
   - In which country (-ies) have you lived?
- For what reason did you go abroad?

   If Dutch

   - Why did you come back?
   - How do you feel being back home?
   - Was it easy to be away from home?
   - Is it easy to be back home?

   If other

   - How do you feel being away from home?
   - Is it easy to be away from home?

Movies

- Do you watch movies?
   - What are the reasons why you usually want to/decide to/feel like watch[ing] movies?
   - (Is there another reason?)
- How do you pick the movies you watch?
- Tell me a movie you really like or your favorite movie.

   Part 1 (What do they like)

   - What do you like about this movie particularly? (values, elements like music, era, environment, etc)
   - Why do you specifically like _____ (that element)?
   - How do you relate _____ (element) to yourself?
   - Could you say it's part of your identity? /Could you say you identify with it?

- How do you experience this?
- Do you think that other people might share the same feelings or experience as you, about (this element) (not) being part of your identity?
  (**If hard to answer**: What about people in the [insert NOT their country])
  - What kind of people would they be?
  - What kind of people would they <u>not</u> be?
- Does _____ (this element) make you feel part of a broader group?
  - Do you still feel part of this group even if _____ (this element) is not there?
  - Do you sometimes experience that you are part of this group, while some other times you feel you are not?
    - **If yes**: Typically, this would be seen as something contradictory. How would explain that you feel that way?
- Does _____ (this specific element) make you feel that you belong in more than one *(social)* groups?

Part 2 (What do they not like)
- Are there any elements you don't identify with in this movie? (Here if they say not for the movie we have been talking about, I will ask them to propose another example.)
  - Why can you not identify with it/them?
  - Do you feel different from people that might identify with this element?
  - Let's say there is someone who can identify with this element. Do you think that at some point it would be possible to belong to the same group as this person?
    - If **yes**, under what circumstances would that be?
    - If **no**, why not?

Culture

- How do you feel living abroad has changed you?
  - **(**Do you feel the same as before or different?**)**
  - What has changed?
  - Why?
  - How do you experience it?

- How does this affect your relationship with other people?
  - Do you feel similar to different types of people than before?
  - Which ones and why?

  If Dutch

- Does being home feel the same as it did before you left?
  - Why yes/no?
  - What has changed?

  If Other

- Do you feel the same person as you did in the past, when you go home?
  - Why yes/no?
  - What has changed?

- How would you relate these feelings and changes to your cultural identity?
- What would you say defines you now, after this experience, as a person?
- What would you say is your culture? (**If no answer**: What is your cultural identity?)
- Did the notion you have about culture change by your experience abroad?
  - What has changed?
  - Why do you think this has occurred?
- Are you planning to move/stay abroad again/longer?
  - Why is that?
  - Do you think in this case the notion of culture in your mind might be reshaped again?
- How do you feel about this shift in your mind about what culture is?
  - Has that altered the way you communicate with others?
  - Has that altered the way you relate to others/ groups?

Outro
- Reaching towards the end of the interview I would like to ask you:
  - How do you relate (the movie) to your cultural identity?

    OR

  - How do you think your cultural identity (or part of it) is (not) reflected in this movie?
- Is there anything you would like to share with me but you did not have the opportunity to do so?

Appendix C – Coding scheme

PERSONALITY CHANGES
becoming more flexible
becoming more understanding
becoming self-dependent
becoming more confident
becoming fearless
becoming more open
becoming less materialistic
becoming more interesting
gaining more variety in her life
having more options
gaining self-esteem
becoming an extrovert
becoming a grown up
becoming more free
becoming more understanding
becoming more relaxed
becoming more active than passive
becoming more curious
becoming more aware
becoming more aware of behavior
becoming more critical t. national culture
becoming more tolerant
becoming more international
being aware of others' feelings
becoming stronger

THOUGHTS ABOUT CHANGE
change is unconscious
change is positive

change is natural
change is threatening to people at home
being more open is complicated

NOTION OF CULTURE PRIOR LEAVING

diverse background, fluid culture approach

lack of thoughts about culture before leaving

lack of thoughts about culture before leaving
used to perceive culture as static
lack of diverse cultural education

lack of thoughts about culture before leaving
used to perceive culture as fixed
diverse background made them think about culture
used to perceive culture as static,
used to perceive culture as static

ISSUES AT HOME
changes at home are complex
meaning of home changes
changes at home are irrelevant to you
hard to adopt home due to identity change
home you are expected to act in a certain way
not conforming with norms at home
forgetting norms of socialization of home
difference between her and other nationals
at home you're limited to your social context
cannot relate with people at home
culture at home is more static
can't relate with people at home
people at home cannot understand you
social context changed at home
unfamiliarity with context at home is uncomfortable
home is changing when you're gone
returning home feels limiting
home is different because of social context change
changing social context after returning
change is threatening to people at home
moving back home you need to rebuild your life
at home social context influences your choices

IDENTIFICATION WITH MOVIES
movie reflects identity
movie reflects values
identifying with movie is exciting
identification is always positive
movie reflects ideal identity

cultural identity reflected in movie

NATIONAL CULTURE
national culture as a point of reference

national culture relevant with language and attitude

national culture is given

national culture is inherrited

national identity perceived as given
language is central to national identity

SOCIAL CONTEXT
moving abroad you don't have a social context

you leave your context (hard)
lack of social context abroad
lack of social context (it's hard)
leaving home you lose social context
social context make easier to establish yourself

FACTORS OF RELEVANCE WITH OTHERS
accepting difference you can relate with anyone
similar experiences make you relevant
mindset (identity) influences relevance
everyday life makes you relevant
experience makes you relevant
openness not enough to relate with anyone
beliefs make you relevant
values make you relevant
relating to being different
openness essential to relate to more people
common past is the glue with older friends
context (doing the same things) influences relevance
familiarity with other's context influences relevance
ideologies determine relevance

FLEXIBILITY OF CULTURE
culture expressed differently per place
culture depends on context
culture adapts depending on context
abroad, national culture is stronger
culture is not generalizable
culture depends on weather
cultural behavior is a decision
culture is the communication style
culture is formed by people (who are they)
cultural behavior is a choice
diversity within another culture (culture is fluid)
culture is very flexible (changes)
culture always changes
there are different people within a culture (cultural identities)
cultural identity hard to define
cultural identity needs definiton
taking elements you like from each culture

culture is an option

MINDSET BEFORE LEAVING

having a diverse background influences current choices
prior identity struggle
openness required to leave

openness and willingness are necessary to move abroad

FLEXIBILITY OF IDENTITY
there are different cultural identities
cultural identity depends on culture
lisfestyle changes depending where you are
national identity more apparent abroad
identity depends on context
mixed identity more apparent at home
identity & identification depend on context
identity & identification depend on context
identity can be different in same place
having multiple identities
indentity depends on context
behavior changes depending on context
behavior depends on context
choosing appropriate behavior depending on context
identity adjusts depedning on where you are
identity & identification depend on context
perspective influences belonging
context influences belonging
cultural identity hard to define
cultural identity needs definiton
cultural identity inifuenced by social context

DESCRIPTORS OF ONESELF
defined by traits
defined by cultural values
defined by experiences
not defined by culture
defined by elements of experiences

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE
culture is language
culture is norms
culture is habits

culture is values

culture is social context

culture is a mix of different elements

culture is an option
culture is traditions
culture is the communication style

culture is formed by people (who are they)
culture is more than nationality

CHANGES IN RELATING
seeking deeper connections
connections on a deeper level than before
different dynamics in relationships
relating with more people now

FACTORS OF CHANGE
experiences make you more open
experience gives you more knowledge
becoming more critical of own culture
experience makes you more understanding
abroad you experience diversity
experience changes you
mother language is forgotten
abroad you are yourself
openness: more opportunities to learn& grow
you have to prove yourself
abroad your habits and norms change
adjusting in the lifestyle of every place
being abroad you reflect on identity
being abroad you understand your identity
abroad, you're open you listen to other people (to
you see the diversity within another culture
living abroad is a cultural experience
experience alters the way culture is perceived
living in a diff. culture gives better understanding

REASONS TO WATCH MOVIES
entertainment
information
social activity
self-development
getaway
variety & diversity
enriching
understanding the unfamiliar

insight to the unfamiliar
shows another perspective
access different perspectives
different perspectives

shows another dimension

NOTION OF CULTURE AFTER LEAVING

culture is a mix of different elements
culture includes elements of other cultures
culture is uncoscious

not stuck at one culture
personal culture not static
personal cultural identity is a mix of different cultures
choosing elements from each culture
cultural traditions as fun
personal culture not static
culture now perceived as fluid