



Life Beyond the Blogosphere

Examining Lovepat Bloggers' Acculturation Experiences and Self-Presentation Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This Master's thesis offers an insight on a unique group of individuals who are acculturating. This research will examine how expatriate's in international relationships (living in the EU) acculturate and how they portray their self-presentation strategies. This will be done by examining blog posts written by lovepats (expatriate's in international relationships).

Previous research has looked at expatriates who move abroad for work assignments. This research will examine lovepats and their acculturation experience. Blogs are being used in this research as a modern media tool for social science to understand how lovepats acculturate and how they present themselves. Blogs represent a medium of self-representation and give researchers insight to their acculturation experience through the words of a lovepat blogger.

To examine this phenomenon, a qualitative (thematic) content analysis was conducted on selected blog posts from the blogs of lovepats. This analysis revealed that lovepat bloggers are portraying their acculturation experience by becoming a hybrid of two cultures: their own and the culture of their partner. Many themes were discovered that contributed towards this conclusion, such as comparing cultures, adapting to local life and the role of the local language. Also, blogs are being used as an online diary where lovepats are storytelling, but also being part of an online and sometimes off-line community where acculturation is also presented.

The results of this research offer innovative insight towards exploring individuals in cross-cultural relationships in their acculturation experience and their self-presentation through blogging.

KEYWORDS: *Acculturation, Acculturation Strategies, Blogging, Expatriate, Expatriate Adjustment, Europe, Home, Relationships, Self-Presentation*

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After a few years of caring for myself with the help of my supportive and caring therapist, Mrs. Olivia DeCuba, I returned to the program in 2017 and put all my energy into writing this very Thesis.

This thesis is dedicated to my father: Rafael Gotay: January 10th, 1933- October 18th, 2014.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

In a diverse world where it is easier to travel, communicate online and interact globally, intercultural relationships are easier to maintain. Now, more than ever is it easier to not only travel abroad but to live abroad; whether for education, career or love. Many scholars define intercultural relationships as two people in a relationship with differing cultures (Bustamante, Henriksen & Monakes, 2011). One of the many ways to make an intercultural relationship work is to understand how culture and identity play a role in a relationship (Gellar, 2017).

This research intends to look at expatriate bloggers (in relationships) living in the European Union and how they blog about their acculturation experience. While previous research has looked at expatriates and their acculturation experience, this research will look at expatriates who move abroad for love. One common definition of an expatriate is a person who moves abroad for work assignments, but, there are also different types of expatriates emerging as well (Adams & Van de Vijver, 2015). However, when an expatriate has completed their assignment, they may relocate to complete another assignment or return home.

Although the term has not been used in scientific research, love-patriates (Lovepats) is being used by bloggers as a term to describe someone who moves abroad for love (Atkinson, 2016). These individuals are giving up the comforts of their lifestyle at home to integrate into a new society with their partner. In comparison to other groups, such as expats who move for their career or migrants who are forced to leave their country, this research will focus on lovepats because they are choosing to create a life in their new home country. Lovepats are moving to a country where they have the advantage of knowing a local; their partner. Other immigrant groups such as sojourners and expats do not have the same advantage of living with someone who knows the local laws, customs and culture. This has a long-term perspective of visibility where we can see how lovepats acculturate because of their intention to stay, as opposed to expatriates and sojourners who stay temporarily and will return to their native home.

Previous research has also focused on refugees and their acculturation experience. First of all, refugees are taking part in forced migration where they flee their homeland. Previous research has looked at their acculturation experience and looked at their difficulties in feeling connected to their new home; identifying as a refugee (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). There

are many differences when it comes to a refugee's acculturation experience which includes forced migration, reconstructing identities, and integrating as a refugee. Also, once the situation in their home country stabilizes, they may want to return.

Blogs are a useful way to gain insight into the lives of lovepats living abroad. Researchers have been using blogs for social science as a way to understand social life; where the blog is a medium of online self-representation (Hookway, 2008). In this research, blogs are defined as a website with a series of (frequently) updated posts (in reverse chronological order) with original content where bloggers invite an audience to reply with comments to create a virtual community (Kurtz et. al, 2017). Lovepats can create blogs easily from the comforts of their new home and can update them accordingly. These blogs, which are maintained by the lovepat can provide a glimpse into their lives. They can provide valuable information about how they adjust to their adopted country and how they live.

Particularly, this project will look at how lovepats in relationships where one person is the local in the adopted country where the lovepat is living. The goal is to understand the meaningful patterns in blog posts about how these lovepats acculturate to their adopted country and how these bloggers present themselves.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTION

Given the scope of the aforementioned overview, my research question is:

How do expatriate bloggers (in International relationships) living in the EU portray their acculturation experience and themselves through their blog?

To answer this research question I will use a qualitative content analysis. This will involve analyzing blog posts of expatriate bloggers in international relationships living in the European Union to understand their self-presentation strategies. This will be done specifically by conducting a thematic analysis in order to identify patterns within the data.

1.3 SCIENTIFIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

This research will look at romantic relationships in particular; where previous studies have looked at expatriates as migrant workers where they bring their spouse and/or families. This is a situation where both persons in the relationship are not locals to the location of where the

expatriate assignment takes place. In a literature review by Gupta, Banerjee, & Gaur (2012), they examined the existing literature about the adjustment of expatriate's spouses. Black & Gregersen (1991) found that the acculturation of the spouse of an expat is a vital factor in determining the success of the working spouse's success. However, this research will focus on the situation where one person is a local to the country the lovepat is moving to. While most literature focuses on expatriate adjustment for both partners not being locals, this research will observe the importance of one of the partners being a local.

One reason this research is relevant to society is globalization. We are living in a world of globalization; where the flow of cultural and media products transpires (Crane, 2002). It is also because of this globalization that it is easier to travel, move abroad and enter cross-cultural relationships (Kim, 2008). When it is easier to travel abroad, spend time with locals and to have opportunities to make personal connections, intercultural relationships can result. Understanding how lovepat relationships are maintained can benefit those in this type of relationship.

Our modern society is composed more of individuals who live and work in diverse communities and interact with those from different cultures (Lee, 2010). If there are more intercultural relationships developing, this research can provide understanding about social support for lovepats. This research can provide a basis for understanding how lovepats acculturate through their blog posts. The ease of accessibility of these blogs online is useful for lovepats who are planning to or have moved abroad. These blog posts can be examined to show how lovepats discuss their experience.

For instance, a lovepat's social support system is most likely a network of relatives, friends or co-workers back in their home country (Lee, 2010). A lovepat will be in the process of creating a social support network in their newly adopted country. Blogs are also a place where lovepats can relate to one another (Nardon, Aten & Gulanowski, 2015). These online communities can help lovepats to relate to one another as they undergo the integration process. This becomes a comforting place in this hybrid socio-cultural space where expats can seek advice, make friends or simply blog about their lifestyle.

With advancements in social media, lovepats living abroad can also communicate with their family back home. Lovepats living abroad can blog about their acculturation experience as a form of a diary for their families to read. Studies have also shown that blogs as a part of

social networking (through comments and sharing blog posts) are also part of an expatriate's support system (Nardon, Aten, & Gulnowski, 2015).

Future researchers can possibly adopt and conceptualize the term "lovepats" to their research to understand situations where one person is a local and their partner is not. This can be further understood through research in psychology; to understand how partners in lovepat relationships communicate and express themselves emotionally. Also, it can be studied as a gender study to understand if same-sex lovepats acculturate the same way as heterosexual couples.

Understanding the acculturation strategies of lovepats can also help facilitate integration courses for lovepats to further develop their integration strategies in a country. This can be beneficial for expatriate companies on a private and government level to seek out information on what services lovepats require. For instance, in The Netherlands, the spouse of a Dutch local has to meet certain conditions in order to obtain a relationship visa. The following criterion, among others, is obligatory as stated by the IND (Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst) or the Ministry of Immigration and Naturalization (Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, 2018). First of all; partners must be married or prove to be in a long-term and exclusive relationship. Once the partner has obtained the relationship visa, they have 3 years to integrate, which involves a mandatory exam which is in the local (Dutch) language. If the partner does not integrate, they will be fined and may be at risk of jeopardizing the future status of their relationship visa.

This research can benefit lovepats who find themselves in this kind of situation. Moving to another country for a partner shows a grand obligation the lovepat has to the local government, their partner and to themselves. It also has a cognitive implication that a person must be willing to acculturate in order to facilitate a lovepat relationship, due to rules and regulations mentioned above. If they are in an exclusive and long-term relationship, they do not want to risk ending it because of integration requirements.

What this research intends to do is to understand how those in lovepat relationships acculturate. By looking at their blog posts, for them, it is simply an online diary, but it can also be a personal account of their lovepat journey. This research also intends to help researchers understand that lovepat relationships are worth observing because they are becoming more common. "Despite demographic increases in the number of intercultural

couples around the world, limited research is available to guide counselors and therapists in addressing the role that culture plays in intimate intercultural relationships" (Bustamante, Henriksen & Monakes, p.154, 2011). Intercultural relationships are becoming more common and understanding the dynamics of these types of relationship can help researchers understand another type of group that acculturates. There is a lack of literature about individuals who willingly migrate for love and this research can contribute towards that void.

1.4 OUTLINE

Following this chapter, the theoretical framework will explain the concepts used in the research question (acculturation and self-presentation). First, an overview of expat-adjustment will be explained to demonstrate where acculturation studies began. Then, acculturation and acculturation strategies will be defined. The framework model for understanding acculturation by Berry (2004) will also be explained. The next section will discuss the concept of home in relation to home vs. homeland. Lastly, blogging and self-presentation will be discussed as a method of expressing these acculturation experiences and the role of blogs for lovepat bloggers presenting themselves.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology and research method used to answer the research question and why it is appropriate for this research. The process of how the research was conducted will also be explained, as well as the coding frame and the categories created.

Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the qualitative (thematic) content analysis. It will examine the major themes discovered and how they contribute towards answering the research question. Each theme will be discussed and will contain examples from the content analysis.

Chapter 5 will answer the research question and provide a concise conclusion to the overall research. It will also provide a reflection of the research conducted with a discussion on limitations and ideas for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There are many stances with expat adjustment and acculturation. Previous research defines expats as someone who lives or works in a foreign country over an extended period (Dutt, Harvey & Shaw, 2017). However, living in a foreign country poses several challenges. Lovepats must adjust to local people laws and habits. How do they adjust to this lifestyle? The acculturation theory can help us understand this adjustment process. “Acculturation is the process by which there is a psychological change in one or more cultures when individuals from different cultural groups are in continuous, first-hand, long-term contact” (Berry, 2004, p.27). This definition will be used because this research will analyze how lovepats acculturate and their self-presentation skills through blogging. This is a situation where lovepats are faced with living in a new culture that is different from their own, over an extended period of time.

This research will look at lovepats: someone who moves to another country for romantic reasons. This research will argue that expat adjustment and acculturation work together in which the expat goes through this process of acculturation. To understand this, I will first go into a brief overview of expatriate adjustment and then explain the acculturation model and strategies. Then, I will discuss the concept of home in regards to how an individual defines their homeland vs. home. Lastly, blogging and self-presentation will be discussed in order to understand the dynamic of how lovepats blog to show their acculturation process.

2.1 EXPAT ADJUSTMENT

Nardon, Aten, & Gulanowski (2015) argue that expat adjustment is a form of transition that is complex because of the way it disrupts one life. It involves moving one's life and identity to a foreign country and adjusting to the new space. When a lovepat decides to move abroad, it is a major life-changing experience. Expat adjustment is a process that can entail a multitude of steps that an expatriate (lovepat) must take to integrate.

The concept of Expatriate adjustment dates to the late 1970's; when researchers were examining Peace Corps volunteers and foreign exchange students (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991). At this moment of time, there was limited theoretical research about this phenomenon. By the late 1980's, there was more research on cross-cultural adjustment in the area of expatriates. In a literature review of International Adjustment by Black, Mendenhall

& Oddou (1991), they discuss the conceptualization of International Adjustment or Cross-Cultural Adjustment Process. They found that there were 5 themes that emerged: “1. Pre-departure training, 2. Previous overseas experience, 3. Organizational selection mechanisms, 4. Individual skills, 5. Non-work factors” (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991).

The first theme (pre-departure training) discussed that cross-cultural training will have a positive impact on the cross-cultural experience. These are the accumulation of skills that will help an expatriate succeed in his/her work assignment. These skills which are described in detail in the fourth theme are argued to be essential for a successful cross-cultural experience (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). In regards to expats that will work abroad, cross-cultural training is used to help the individual adjust to the new culture. Adjusting is the ability to be familiar, comfortable and aware of the new behaviors and norms of the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Torbiörn, 1982). Training is usually provided by the multinational corporation which employs the expat and also provides the assignment.

In Black & Mendenhall’s (1990) literature review, they reveal many studies that argue pre-departure training is useful towards the cross-cultural experience. Earley (1987) and Tung (1981) state that pre-departure training is composed of a variety of techniques. These include studying the foreign country through documentaries, cultural assimilators which expose expats to certain situations that may occur abroad, language preparation, awareness training and field experience where the expat is exposed to parts of the culture in their home country (Tung, 1981). For lovepats, preparing for a move abroad can be done in many ways. Reading travel guides may help a lovepat understand the culture and norms of the country they are moving to. Also, since they are in a relationship with their partner abroad, they are likely to have visited the country on one or more occasions. This creates exposure to the culture before the acculturation experience begins. Lovepats can even begin language training in their own country if they feel motivated to with self-study guides or local classes that may teach the language of their partner.

Similarly, the second theme (previous overseas experience), being abroad in the past, especially in the country where the person will move to, will ease the adjustment experience (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991). This research also states that some kind of culture shock will occur. As mentioned above, it is important to understand that the process of expat

adjustment can have its positive and negatives and that being exposed to a new culture may be shocking, even if they are familiar with the culture. Especially for lovepats, they are not only being exposed to a new culture but committing to living in this new culture and adapting to the culture because of their relationship with a local.

The third theme focuses on how qualified an expatriate candidate is for working abroad. Previous research has looked at expatriates who take work assignments abroad; thus being an appropriate candidate would help in completing a successful assignment. In selecting potential overseas workers, the most important skill was technical competence. This is described as the ability to perform a task in Hong Kong as efficiently as one would in New York (Mendenhall, Dunbar & Oddou, 1987). In this same study that examined expatriate qualifications, they also recognize the importance of the adaptability of an expat's family. A spouse or family members that may join the expat on their work assignment may not have the same skills as the expat. The anticipated stress and culture shock may be difficult for an expat to deal with, while they are trying to adapt to the local culture already.

This third theme may be relevant for lovepats; who are relocating permanently. If they are married to their spouse, they may eventually need to look for permanent work. The ability to comprehend interpersonal relationships and acculturate to work norms is important to their success in finding work in the local country. Also, their attitude towards acculturation may influence their acculturation experience. Being the spouse of a local can have its difficulties; when you do not know the local language and you need to accomplish simple tasks such as making doctor's appointments or grocery shopping, it may create stress for the relationship. Lovepats are choosing to live abroad with their partner and must recognize the importance of not only acculturating but maintaining a cross-cultural relationship.

The fourth theme is Individual Skills. In a study by Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991), they state the skills are organized into three dimensions:

“(1) the self-dimension, which encompasses skills that enable the expatriate to maintain mental health, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and effective stress management; (2) the relationship dimension, which constitutes the array of skills necessary for the fostering of relationships with host nationals; and (3) the perception dimension, which entails the cognitive abilities that allow the expatriate to correctly

perceive and evaluate the host environment and its actors.” (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991, p.294).

This theme is explored deeper in Mendenhall & Oddou (1985), where they discuss these dimensions and how they are useful towards expatriate adjustment. The first dimension (self-dimension) discusses three sub-themes: reinforcement substitution, stress reduction and technical competence (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The first skill; reinforcement substitution is participating in activities that will bring happiness to the expat that are similar to activities they did at home but exist in the new culture. This can include hobbies, sports, cuisine and other culture habits. Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) saw that expats who can find parallel activities to their interests are more likely to adjust to the new culture. The expat must be aware that not all of their favorite activities may exist in the new culture. For instance, an American expat may love football, but if he/she lives in Europe, soccer is more popular and well known. For lovepats, this can be essential to the acculturation process. Participating in hobbies that they would normally participate in back in their native country may make them feel like they are home, but also can lead to creating new friendships in the local country.

Stress reduction is important for those experiencing expat adjustment. Moving to a new country and adjusting to local norms, whilst working, participating in the local culture and having a family may be overwhelming. Dealing with stress includes adapting to the new country physically; such as the local climate, housing complex and general ambiance of their new home abroad (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). One recommendation in this literature review from Ratiu (1983) says that expats who created stability zones where they can escape to when they are stressed reported to be better adjusted. These can be safe spaces where an expat can meditate, read, write or participate in religious worship. Having a sanctuary where an expat can disengage with the stressful realities of life allows the expat not only de-stress, but to acculturate gradually. This is done by creating a self-support system to ease the impact of culture shock (Ratiu, 1983).

For lovepats, the psychologically impact of stress whilst moving to a new country can make or break a relationship. Lovepats can rely on their partner for social support, but it may put stress on the relationship itself when a partner may be overwhelmed with helping the lovepat. The partner of a lovepat may be supporting their partner not only mentally, but financially. For instance, in The Netherlands, the relationship visa entails that the local must be able and

willing to financially support their foreign partner and must prove this by having a work contract (Naturalisatiedienst, 2018). Nonetheless, finding activities where the lovepat can relax can also provide a space where they can meet other expats or locals and creating a further network of support.

Lastly, as discussed previously, technical competence is also important as an individual skill. Expats living abroad should possess skills that can translate abroad to another country; such as teaching, business management or financing. For instance, an expat with a law degree in their home country may have difficulties practicing in the local country where they may need to obtain a new degree in order to understand the local laws. Language may be a barrier as well if the local University only teaches in the local language. Also, paired with these hard skills is the confidence to accomplish the overseas assignment; which is an important part of expat adjustment (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). An attitude towards success may help a lovepat in their acculturation process, especially if they are trying to learn the local language. They may encounter difficulties learning a language that is completely foreign to them, but a good attitude and the ability to strive may make the lovepat feel confident to overcome the language barrier.

The second dimension, the Others dimension is the ability expats have to understand that foreigners are different. This consists of two subthemes; developing relationships and the willingness to communicate (with locals). Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) discuss the importance of adjusting to an unfamiliar cultural environment; which reduces the uncertainty and unwillingness to participate in interpersonal and intercultural relationships.

Understanding that the adjustment to a new culture will have its positives and negatives is part of the expatriate adjustment process.

When it comes to creating new relationships, host nationals were similar to mentors who guided expats through the new culture; which included work behavior, understanding cultural norms and introducing them to locals (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). This was deemed positive towards expatriate adjustment as expats could trust their mentor and understand the cultural norms and expectations of the new culture. Creating long-lasting friendships with locals often helped expats in their adjustment period (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). When a lovepat is committed to living abroad with their spouse permanently, creating long-lasting friendships can prove beneficial. It will only deepen their roots in the local country and help them create a network of friends. Lovepats may have their close friends in their home country

but having someone to spend time with when they are not working or with their partner can help the lovepat acculturate. These can be immediate friends they can rely on when something immediate happens; such as a stressful situation or going for drinks after work.

The last sub-theme is the willingness to communicate. Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) discuss a few studies (Abe & Wise- man, 1983; Hammer et al., 1978) that the ability to communicate with locals is important to expat adjustment. The confidence and ability to speak the local language deemed more important than the actual level of the language itself. For an expat, being able to speak up to a certain level where they can communicate easy can give them confidence in their overseas experience. But, a lovepat is living permanently in the local country. It may be possible to feel confident in the first year or two when the lovepat is learning the basics of the language. But, to be able to work and speak fluently demands a higher level of the language and this may be difficult for lovepats. However, if a lovepat is able to grasp the language at a higher level, this may give them even more confidence that they feel like they are truly acculturating.

Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) also break down communication skills into two ways that expats can use foreign language. If they use the local language as a way to get their employees to do what they want, adjustment may not be as successful as an expat who uses the language to create inter-personal relationships and understand a new culture. For lovepat relationships, one that deems learning the language as necessary may not acculturate as well as someone who is willing to learn the language. They might see this as a daunting task that is forced on them; which might lead to acculturative stress. One that is willing to learn the language can perhaps appreciate the new culture better.

The last theme refers to culture novelty; or culture toughness. This states that some cultures are more difficult to adapt to than others. “Torbiörn (1982) found that expatriates expressed high levels of dissatisfaction in their overseas assignment for India/Pakistan, Southeast Asia, the Middle- East, North Africa, East Africa, and Liberia in the areas of job satisfaction levels of stress and pressure, health care, housing standards, entertainment, food, and skill of co-workers” (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985, p.43). The vast difference in cultures could make it more difficult for expats to adjust to. In regards to expat adjustment, the location of where the expat is sent to for his/her assignment is also determinant in how well they well adjust. For instance, if an expat is sent to Latin America from New York, but they are of Hispanic descent, it may be easier for them to acculturate, especially if they may already know the

language. Religion may also make it difficult for one to acculturate if an expat is a devout Christian and sent to work in a Muslim dominated country. Nonetheless, the adjustment period may be more difficult, but not impossible if an expat possesses other skills mentioned above.

Researchers also observed if expat adjustment varied between men and women and Torbiörn (1982) reported no differences in a study of Swedish expats, except when it came to "perceived isolation". This regards to the ability to deal with one's social needs being unmet over a period of time and the psychological impact it has on an individual. The study looked at the wives of expats and reported 50 percent of perceived isolation, while men did not indicate levels as high (Torbiörn, 1982). He states that this is not due to the difference in gender, but the "the role and habits of life in the host country which apply particularly to women" (Torbiörn, 1982, p. 38). This indicates that the role of a man is more universal than one of a woman. For instance, if an American expat is relocated to Saudi Arabia, his wife will not have the same cultural role of a woman back in the United States. In her native country, she is able to drive, while in Saudi Arabia, this is not possible. This could create differences in role expectations for women. Some cultures may indeed be more difficult for women to adapt to than their expat counterpart.

Expatriate adjustment can be similar to what lovepats go through because it is a major life transition for them. It is different, however, because someone who is familiar to them is waiting for their arrival. They may also be familiar with their new adopted country by visiting their spouse on previous trips. Since part of the term lovepat comes from expatriate's, similar themes can arise, such as the ones mentioned above. They may go through this process, but over an extended period since they are in a long-term relationship.

However, since they are staying for longer periods of time, there is a possibility that they will acculturate better. If they have visited their new country before, they may be better acquainted with their surroundings. Pre-departure skills may include taking lessons in the language they are learning, and they may blog about this experience as they prepare to move abroad. Understanding how lovepats will adapt to their new environment will be useful to understand how they acculturate.

2.2 ACCULTURATION & ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES

When an expatriate or local moves to the adopted country and must integrate, this is a process of acculturation. As defined earlier, this is a process of cultural and psychological change between two or more groups (Berry, 2004). The interest in acculturation began with the concern of the effects of European domination on colonies and indigenous people (Berry, 2004). Acculturation was first mentioned in research in 1936 by Redfield.

Acculturation was defined by Redfield (1936) as “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 cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, 1936, p.149). Redfield (1936) begins with the analysis of acculturation. This examines the types of contacts of which acculturation can occur. Acculturation can occur between entire groups, between friendly or opposing groups, of equal size, different cultures and situations where an individual is put into a different culture or when an individual from the different culture is put into the culture where the individual is from.

In regards to where acculturation may occur, it can be that forced or received voluntarily. When inequality exists between two cultural groups, three following situations may occur. First, there may be dominance by one culture, where the dominated group is not aware they are being dominated. Second, there may be political dominance by one group where the dominated culture is aware of the dominance. Lastly, when one cultural group feels superior to the other without political dominance.

The process of acculturation begins with understanding certain traits. For instance, the order in which one begins to understand the new culture; normal social norms such as greeting a person is valuable towards acculturation. The person acculturating must be aware of certain norms that are acceptable and forbidden. The individual must also be aware that bringing their own cultural norms and values may be threatening towards the new culture. This is an exchange of culture traits between individuals.

When looking at the traits, an individual must be aware of the purpose these traits serve. For instance, is the acculturating individual aware that the cultural norms they are bringing are ethical or acceptable? An individual must be aware that the traits and norms they are bringing

into the new country may not be acceptable to the new country. For instance, an American may think it is okay to give a head massage in front of friends in a casual setting, but if this American is in Thailand, this is not acceptable. In Thai culture, touching someone's head is considered disrespectful since it is the most sacred part of the body (Rodgers, 2018).

Redfield (1936) says that integration occurs when the more time a trait has been around the more they will adopt it. Adjustment is when the new traits have taken over and how the traits and norms change over time of the hybrid of cultures. This happens over time, where one culture isn't completely salient because of its exposure to other cultures. When one looks at the culture of The Netherlands, its past as colonizing Indonesia has shown an example of this integration. Over time, many Indonesians relocated to The Netherlands. With them, they brought their culture and social norms. One of the biggest contributions towards Dutch society was their cuisine. In modern day, Dutch cuisine is synonymous with Indonesian food (AESU, 2018). What was at first introduced to their culture as a new trait became integrated into Dutch culture. This is seen in a local Dutch representation of Indonesian food, a rijsttafel which is a variety of Indonesian dishes served and meant to be shared with a large group. As a result, a hybrid of the culture becomes part of the cultural norm.

At the individual level, it is important for the one that is acculturating to be aware of how they perceive the new norms and traits. Also, how an individual presents themselves towards those in the new culture. Are acculturating individuals happy to embrace to new culture or are they resistant? This can also be seen in personality traits; if a person is more accepting and open towards change, then acculturation should be easier to achieve. There is also an observation of the native traits of the person acculturating; and how the new culture observes these traits. Individuals that are going through the acculturation process are constantly being observed in how they deal with the new culture and what they do with their old culture.

Looking closer at what the acculturation process entails, Redfield (1936) also asks if those acculturating are accepting of these differences. These differences include the culture itself, social statuses, beliefs, occupations and gender. These realms may be different than what an individual has accepted on their own and must be aware of the process of understanding how things are different. The same goes for the new culture that is accepting the new individual. Redfield (1936) states that often a new culture will resist against change coming into their culture. They will also go through a process where they must understand that the person

entering their culture is different. Over time, both cultures become understanding that they can both co-exist.

At this individual level, the person that is acculturating will also go through a personal struggle psychologically (Redfield, 1936). They are entering a culture with new traits and have pre-cognitive thoughts and ideas about how one should live, and this can be different in the new culture. Having one's own feelings and beliefs about social norms and behaviors can create conflict for an individual acculturating. This internal conflict can be something lovepats go through when they are struggling to determine where their home is; is it their native land, or their home with their partner? They are creating a new socio-cultural space with their partner and must find ways to agree on ways of living, such as what time to eat dinner, who does the cleaning or how is money being managed. These social behaviors may differ between the lovepats and can create conflict when deciding upon how is the "right" way to live for the couple.

Redfield (1936) concludes his research on acculturation by describing the results of the process. Acceptance is when an individual accepts the new culture and as a result, will shed the old culture. Meanwhile, adaptation is retaining both the original culture and the new culture in a way to create a new functioning culture for the individual, without conflict. Lastly, reaction is rejecting and resisting the new culture and retaining the social norms and values of the old, native culture.

More recently, Berry (2004) came up with a useful model and framework to conceptualize the acculturation practice.

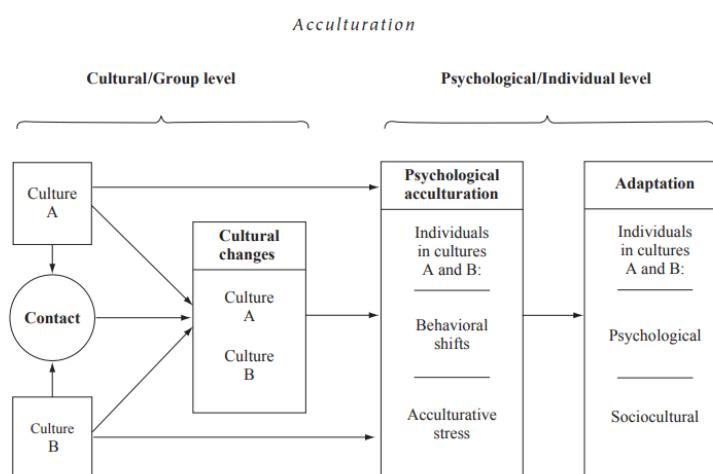


FIGURE 1 A general framework for understanding acculturation.

(Berry, 2004)

In this model, there are 2 cultures (A & B) which can be representative in this research as two individuals in a relationship. When acculturation occurs, there is prominent change in both groups, where an emerging socio-cultural climate exists of both cultures together. This is the occurrence of Culture A and B turning into a hybrid of AB. During this process, there will be psychological changes for both cultures and adaptation. One of the main arguments of this research will be looking at how and why this adaptation occurs. How do these lovepats bloggers present themselves; are they Culture A, turning into Culture B, or Culture AB?

Berry (2004) also mentions that these shifts from culture A and B towards AB are seen in many ways; such as how a person speaks, eats or expresses acculturative stress. Those undergoing acculturative stress often go through a few (three) changes when they have difficulty adapting. Acculturative stress is defined as the physiological and psychological state in response to stress which requires maintenance and coping until one can adapt to a new situation (Berry et al., 1987). These stressors are often related to the process of acculturation and include a particular set of behaviors. This includes problems with mental health, feelings of marginalization, feeling alienated, psychosomatic symptoms and identity confusion (Berry et. al, 1987). These stressors can often reduce the health of an expat, especially if they have difficulties dealing with acculturative stress.

The three changes are culture shedding and culture learning and culture conflict (Berry, 2004). Culture shedding and learning is the process where an individual that is acculturating loses cultural behaviors and replaces them with those of the new culture in order to fit into society. This happens at an individual level, because it is up to the expat to decide which parts of their culture, when, and how they will do this.

Culture conflict is the difficulty experienced while going through this process. When the conflict of learning about the norms of the new culture are overwhelming, this is when acculturative stress occurs. For lovepats, this can be a conflicting situation where difficulties that arise during the acculturation process can be difficult, as they also must maintain a romantic relationship. Someone who may find acculturative stress too difficult may consider leaving the country while a lovepat may find this difficult if they are married or in a committed relationship with their partner.

Berry (1997) found that not everyone acculturates the same way and came up with acculturation strategies to explain this. His model shows how a person behaves towards their own culture and others.

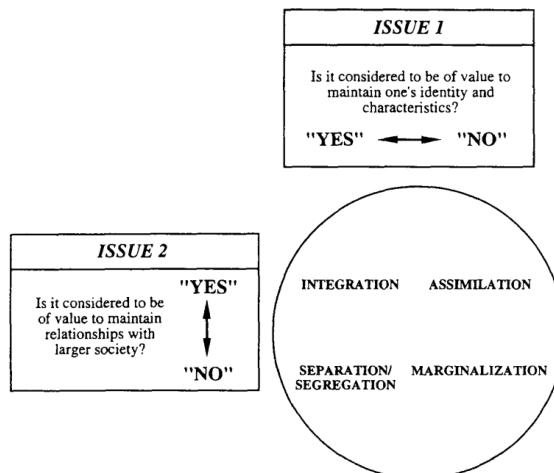


FIG. 1. Acculturation strategies.

(Berry, 1997).

He explains that there are two subjects with acculturation: cultural maintenance and contact and participation. Cultural Maintenance is one keeping his/her own culture, while Contact and Participation is the extent of how involved they get with the other culture (Berry, 1997). The two subjects are measured by a positive or negative response to the following questions: "Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's identity and characteristics?" and "Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with larger society?"

A recent study of acculturation by Ng, Wang, & Chan (2017) provides a definition of the four acculturation strategies as defined by Berry (1997). These subjects are then leading to the following concepts of: Integration, Assimilation, Separation/Segregation and Marginalization.

"The integration strategy involves the interest in both maintaining the original culture and interacting with members in the mainstream society.

The assimilation strategy is adopted when individuals replace their ethnic culture with active participations in the dominant society.

The separation strategy includes the preservation of individuals' original culture and the avoidance of contact with members in the dominant culture.

The marginalization strategy is applied when individuals fail to maintain their original culture and at the same time fail to establish relationships with host nationals" (Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017, p.20; Berry, 1997).

Integrating into society is the willingness and ability to retain one's culture and the local culture. This is in relation to expat adjustment; where they adjust and adapt to the local culture, but for lovepats, this is on a longer term and permanent level. It is up to the lovepat to determine how and how much of their original culture will be preserved vs. how much of the new culture they are absorbing. On the opposite spectrum, assimilation is when a lovepat will abandon their native culture and replace it with the local (dominant) culture. This is a dominant culture because it is the native land of their partner. It is a foreign place with a different language, norms and culture; and the lovepat's culture is subsidiary to this. A lovepat may also choose to completely absorb the new culture if they feel dissatisfied or disassociated with their homeland. Once again, this choice is up to the lovepat who is acculturating.

When a lovepat wants to retain their home culture and avoid the local culture, this is separation. These can be situations where a lovepat may find it difficult to adjust to the local culture or find some cultural changes non-compromising. There may be parts of their homeland culture that a lovepat wants to preserve. Even if they are able to integrate into the local society, there might be situations where there is separation.

Lastly, marginalization represents the struggles lovepats face when they fail to maintain their native culture and the local culture. As opposed to the previous terms, marginalization represents the difficulty in preserving both cultures. This can be the struggle a lovepat faces when trying to integrate, separate or even assimilate. While integrating and assimilating is a polarizing choice, marginalization can also represent feeling in between cultures.

This matrix is useful to analyze blog posts written by lovepats. This model is essential in looking at how lovepats are acculturating to their adopted country. It not only categorizes their experience but helps to understand how they acculturate and how they are presenting this experience through their blog posts.

The concept of acculturation has evolved since Redfield's (1936) initial observations. Many of his findings still remain true; the exchange of cultural traits and norms, the process of how

acculturation occurs and the results of acculturation, with the exception of marginalization; which was not discussed by Redfield but introduced by Berry (2004) where the individual fails to maintain both cultures.

Acculturation may be a more well-known experience because of modern media. Since Redfield's (1936) observations, modern media has advanced with television, cinema and the internet. Individuals are exposed to and aware of other cultures through visual media. They also have the opportunity to research the phenomenon through the internet and to understand how people live. Since they have the opportunity to understand other cultures, acculturation may occur faster because of the advantage of easy access to information. Individuals who want to move abroad can also read blogs as a way to live vicariously through others writing about their own international experiences. At the same time, those who may be living abroad and experiencing acculturation can share their experiences with family and friends as well. For these lovepats, home is never far away, even if they are acculturating in another country.

2.3 HOME

The concept of home is a subjective; especially for a lovepat. As a lovepat, they are leaving their native homeland to live in another country. Thus, is home where they grew up or is home where they are currently located? Berry (2004) mentions previous acculturation studies have examined those who temporarily move abroad and eventually return to their native home, but lovepats are creating a new home abroad. Morley (2002) offers a few definitions of home from scholars that are appropriate for this research.

Morley (2002) begins his discussion on home with the Oxford English Dictionary definition of home as “a place, region or state to which one properly belongs, on which one’s affections center, or where one finds refuge, rest or satisfaction” (Morley, 2002, p.16). This can be complex for lovepats: they were born to their native land but now live in the land of their partner. Lovepats may face a paradox when discussing where their home is. Their acculturation process may indicate where they feel most comfortable, especially if they have integrated successfully into their new country. If a lovepat feels they have integrated and adapted to the new country, this may be a place where they call home.

One can also look at the difference between one’s homeland and home. This is discussed in Heim and Heimat; “Home, in the literal sense Heim, chez moi, is essentially private...[and]

belongs to me and mine and nobody else,” nonetheless, as he goes on to say, “Home in the wider sense, Heimat is essentially public...Heimat is by definition collective. It cannot belong to us as individuals.” (Morley, 2002, p.4). This German phrase exemplifies the difference and sameness of what home and homeland is. Home can be defined as a place where one finds satisfaction and that is personal, but a homeland not only belongs to the people, but it can belong to an individual. Everyone has a birthplace and a location where they grew up and this is personal. This research will argue Heim vs. Heimat that there is a difference between home and homeland, but that a homeland can also be a personal place for a lovepat to nostalgically return to. It is a place where they can return to the familiar, connect to their families and always look back on.

Also, can a lovepat feel at home in a culture that is not their own? Morley's (2002) argument also draws on cultural geography where one needs to think about one's location in the world. This idea that everyone was born somewhere and has a homeland is important. Culture was something understood to be rooted in time and space (Morley, 2002). This meant that where you were born and lived was your home. One's location in the world can feel like home even if it may not be one's home. Individuals who may have a vacation home can call this relaxing place their “home away from home”, even though they may reside in this location for a temporary period of time. For lovepats, their interpretation of how they view and present themselves as a member of their new society in their partner's country can determine whether or not they feel at home. After all, this is their partner's home country and they may be willing to make it part of their own, especially when they are creating their own family.

But where does one get the notion of what a home is? Morley (2002) argues that this notion comes from media. We often watch television and movies and create our own interpretations of what home is. Is it the typical nuclear family with a mother, father and two kids, or could it be something similar to *Modern Family*? Modern media technology also gives individuals the opportunity to connect outside of the home to explore worlds beyond our own. It is also this technology that can always connect us to home when we are abroad. We can easily upload photographs on *Facebook* for our families to see and *Skype* with family members that may live far away and share blogs with loved one's accounting for our lives abroad. For lovepats, these media tools are crucial for connecting with home. It may make the acculturation process easier, when it is easy to reach their family for support. Also, it may provide support during acculturative stress when lovepats are having difficulties. Lovepats also use another

media tool, the online blog to share their experience and share their intimate stories with loved ones back home. This is the focus of this research; how lovepats share their acculturation process through writing online blogs. These blog posts are an easily accessible modern media tool that can be easily maintained by the lovepat and shared instantly with their families abroad.

The idea of home can also be a non-physical space. Morley (2002) introduces an idea by Mary Douglas (Morley, 1992) that argues that a home isn't always a space you can touch, but a space you control. It is where we wake up, take command of the day, and end the day by going to bed. This definition of home is where one lives; the socio-cultural space where lovepats and their partner create a life. In this respect, this is also a home for them.

What makes a lovepat feel like they are at home? Is it the ability to acculturate into the new society, or living the way they would if they were back "home"? Berry (2004) claims that successful integration is multifaceted; it's the ability to psychologically have a good well-being in the new society, but socio-culturally be able to manage a daily life in the new country. If this is successful integration, this could mean that an individual can call this new space their home. If home is a place where one can feel satisfaction and they belong, then an individual can call this place a home.

Morley (2002) also shares a story about an African American student who moves to student housing with members of her race and feels like she is at home. She expresses the comfort of talking to people who are going through the same things she is going through. This can be important to explore with lovepats because they are blogging about their experience and may seek out to others who are also going through the same acculturation process. This could also be an understanding that an individual will always have a homeland and can always connect back to it. For lovepats, even if they are well established in the country of their partner, they will always have roots in their native homeland.

2.4 BLOGGING & SELF PRESENTATION

If we want to understand this process of a lovepat's acculturation experience, we can look at blogs. Blogs have also given researchers an avenue to investigate people's feeling and experiences in their own words (Chenail, 2011). This research will be using the blog posts of lovepat's to uncover the dynamics of the acculturation experience. Blogging is a form of

computer-mediated communication and is defined as “frequently updated websites where content (text, pictures, sound files, etc.) is posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1409). These blogs are published online by lovepats who are producing original content and sharing this content with their friends, family and the online community.

Studies have shown multiple ways that blogs are used as a self-expression tool for users. This virtual space is maintained by the author and they have the choice to present their authentic self or a selective presentation of themselves to the online world (Chen, 2010). One who chooses to present their authentic self may view their blog as an online diary. One that reflects their personal thoughts and that may or may not be shared with others. Choosing one’s own presentation is easy, when one can hide behind a computer. Authors of blogs can create a persona they wouldn’t otherwise have in person, because of the anonymity a blog provides. Also, bloggers can create a “celebrity like” image where become well known amongst other bloggers in the community. For instance, bloggers that may monetize their writing online may have a bigger following because blogging is their profession and a source of income. This research will look at the bloggers role as an author; which Schmidt (2007) states that the blogger designs their personal blog, chooses content to present and has their own writing style. They have the opportunity to present their authentic self as Chen (2010) states, but lovepats may also be prominent in expat blogging communities.

This research anticipates these blog posts will be authentic since they are personal blogs. These lovepats are not bloggers writing for a living; therefore, they do not have an incentive to blog about themselves in a way to gain an audience. Chen (2010) observed that bloggers with a high ranking online have larger audiences and must be aware of their content to keep their readership numbers growing. These lovepats are not interested in growing their readership or attracting an audience; their blogs are personal diaries of their experience.

Through blogging, lovepat bloggers are expressing themselves and understanding themselves. In a study by Pera, Viglia & Furlan (2016), self-storytelling is discussed as a way of self-presentation to help the individual understand themselves. This is based on Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory but set on a personal web platform. Using this framework, this can help understand how lovepat bloggers are expressing themselves through their personal blog posts. Goffman (1959)'s theory about the presentation of self can be used to explain online behaviors by bloggers. His book begins with the idea that an individual can

express himself in two different ways: the expression he gives and that he gives off. This is a form of communication that can be seen in everyday life. He continues to state that an individual will think that others will think highly of him.

Hookway (2008) argues the use of blogs for qualitative research and understanding self-presentation strategies. He draws on Goffman (1959) to say that blogging may be an act of performance within the realm of self-presentation. However, he also argues that self-presentation studies often look at face-to-face interaction and overlook the blogosphere and the ability to be anonymous online. Bloggers may be writing just to write; without worrying that the world will be looking at their blog, especially if they are blogging for their families back home; their audience is simply readers of their online diaries.

Also, Hookway (2008) discusses how trustworthy the self-expressions of bloggers are and wonders if it really matters. He states that even if bloggers do not write or express themselves 100%, their writing will still be representative of their socio-cultural paradigm. Looking at these blog posts may not always be completely representative of how a lovepat truly lives, but at least it is a closer insight to how they present their socio-cultural situation. Online presence through self-presentation to understand one's identity through blogs has been investigated in previous literature (Bronstein, 2013; Schau and Gilly, 2003; Qian and Scott, 2007). This research intends to look deeper at Goffman's (1959) presentation theory to identify how bloggers are presenting themselves. Are they considering themselves expatriates, lovepats or considering themselves adopted members of their new home country?

Blogging is also a way for lovepat's to create online and off-line communities. When lovepat's are blogging about their personal experiences, they may research other bloggers, comment on their posts and create friendships. Virtual communities can increase the chances of face-to-face interactions when they find others that are going through a similar life transition process (Chin & Chignell, 2006). Lovepats who follow other bloggers who may live in their community may choose to meet in real life to extend their virtual acquaintance into an opportunity for a potential friendship. Thus, their social communities will expand and improve their acculturation process. This digital component of blogging can also help lovepats acculturate when they are researching topics that will help them integrate; such as how to file taxes, what are major holidays in the local country or how to cook local dishes.

Overall, blogging is a component for lovepats that is beneficial in helping them understand themselves, to present their acculturation experience and to create online and off-line communities. Blogging as a medium is a tool not only for the lovepat bloggers, but for those in general who may consider moving abroad; as a source for information and inspiration. This research anticipates that these lovepat bloggers will demonstrate their acculturation experience through their blog posts and these posts will be analyzed for their deeper meanings and the personal patterns displayed amongst these bloggers.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This section will discuss the choice of a qualitative content analysis to answer the research question. It will also explain the data collection process and the steps towards the data analysis. Lastly, the coding frame and the main categories will be discussed in depth.

3.1 METHOD AND WHY

I will use a Qualitative Content Analysis to answer the research question: *How do expatriate bloggers (in International relationships) living in the EU portray their acculturation experience and themselves through their blog?* This method is optimal for systematically understanding the meaning of the data (Schreier, 2014). Through this qualitative content analysis, the blog posts will be analyzed in which they will be given meanings and interpretation.

This research is qualitative because it is concerned with interpretation and is exploratory. As opposed to a quantitative content analysis which is focused on numerical data, a qualitative analysis emphasizes meaning and interpretation (Schreier, 2014). The purpose of the qualitative aspect of this research is to bring our own personal understandings of reality into these meanings and interpretations. It intends to explore the elements seen across lovepat blog posts where their social constructs on how they acculturate are being analyzed. This question is a “how” question in the way that this research wants to understand how lovepats portray their acculturation experiences and themselves through a blog.

One of the strongest features of the Qualitative Content Analysis is that it is systematic. Each blog post used for this research will go through a same sequence of steps as detailed later in this chapter. Another benefit of the qualitative content analysis is the ability to reduce a lot of data. Based on the segmentation of the data, the data pool will condense from many blogs to a smaller amount suitable to answer the research question.

A thematic analysis will specifically be used in order to answer the research question. This is the preferred method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). The blog posts will be also be analyzed to find meaningful patterns. It is important to recognize that we bring our own opinions and personalities in our interpretation, but researchers must remain consistent in their analysis

(Schreier, 2014). For instance, can one blog post be categorized differently on a different day because of a researcher's mood? A Qualitative Content Analysis means that the researcher must make sure that each passage is coded reliably. As a result of the thematic analysis, the results will provide a narrative that will reveal the themes that will contribute to answering the research question.

Lastly, a qualitative content analysis was chosen over an in-depth interview for a few reasons. First, the blog format allows for easy collection of personal data. A blog is a naturalistic piece of data written in a diary form (Åsenhed, Alehagen & Baggens, 2014). Furthermore, these blog posts that will be analyzed can find themes and patterns that can be compared to other lovepat bloggers. Also, the aim of the research is to understand how these bloggers present themselves. The diary format of a blog allows the audience to observe the voice of the writer.

3.2 OPERATIONALIZATION

3.2A UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis will be blog posts from lovepat bloggers who meet the following criterion:

Bloggers must be in a relationship with a partner who is living in an EU country. Since the aim of the research is to understand how lovepats adapt to their new country and present themselves, they should be in a relationship with a local. This dataset can include blogs written in the past, even if the relationship has been terminated or the lovepat has since moved back to his/her native country.

The researcher will target adult expat bloggers, ranging from ages 20-45. In the EU alone, users make up for almost 12% of internet users in the world, with a penetration population of 85% (Internet Usage in the European Union, 2017). In a study by the European Commission, young people (16-29) accounted for 15% of those creating websites or blogs in 2014 (Internet use of young Europeans, 2016). This accounts that Europeans are engaged in the internet and make up a decent percentage of users creating blogs. As for bloggers, in over 100 million blog posts analyzed, over 53% of bloggers are in the 21-35-year-old age range (Blogger Demographics by Gender, Age, Geography, 2017). This demographic is vital to this research since they are large consumers of the internet.

These bloggers must have a blog with blog posts that span over a few years. This is to prove they have maintained the blog for a certain period and to make sure the blog has not been abandoned or is a spam blog. Also, the blog posts can span over time since the integration process can take a few years. For instance, in The Netherlands, a residence permit is granted for the partner to live with the Dutch national for five years and must integrate within three years (Naturalisatiedienst, 2018). Therefore, an integration process can take time for the expat to blog about. The researcher will then choose blog posts in a time period of the past 5 years.

The aim of this research is to examine lovepat bloggers living in the European Union. This includes the current member states of 2018 (Including the United Kingdom). This research will look at lovepats in relationships that move to the European Union (EU). The European Union is defined as “economic and political union of 28 European countries” (European Commission, 2018). The EU is an interesting place to observe intercultural relationships since there are a lot of nationalities in this region. With the freedom of movement throughout the European Union, there are possibilities for intercultural relationships. Also, in a Eurostat study, 1 in 12 marriages were a mixed (Where one partner is native born) marriage (Lanzieri, 2012). This can create an international environment where socio-cultural situations can be observed.

Europe is also an interesting place to observe lovepat relationships because of the interests many expats have in living there. More people are moving to Europe for a better quality of life, improved life satisfaction and better job opportunities. The 2018 Happiness report included 3 EU countries in their top 10 list (World Happiness Report, 2018). The recent political climate has also influenced Americans who are against President Donald Trump's policies to move abroad. While many joked about moving abroad, some Americans who are able to are moving Europe (Garone, 2017). Lovepats are also choosing to move abroad, but for their partner. They are living in the European Union which a multi-cultural and international place where it may provide a better quality of life for lovepats who are permanently living there, as opposed to bringing their partner to their home country.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

To begin this data collection, I created a systematic process in order to look for blogs. This included:

- Searching on Google using terms: “expat relationship blogs Europe”
- Joining and looking through Facebook groups such as:
 - Expat Rotterdam Republic
 - Lovepats
 - Love-Pats (Marriage Immigrants)
 - Expat Bloggers-Europe
- Looking through websites:
 - <http://www.expatsblog.com/blogs>
 - <http://www.expat.com/en/directory/europe/>
- Looking through large forums on websites such as:
 - InterNations
 - IamExpat
 - Expatica
 - ExpatForum

Another method used was to snowball sample through blogs. For instance, if I am reading through one blog that fits my unit of analysis (see 3.2A), then I would look at their comments to see if other bloggers have replied and included links to their blogs. Many bloggers also make a list of their favorite blogs or friends that also blog about their expat relationships.

At the beginning of the data collection, blogs were chosen if they met a criterion of search words that are relevant to the research. To start the research, I began with creating a list of sensitizing themes based on the literary framework. These themes are relevant to the acculturation process for expats and were used in order to find relevant blogs.

Sensitizing Concepts for Coding Frame

Adjust/Adjustment
Back Home
Boyfriend/Girlfriend
Culture
Experience(s)
Family
Home
Husband/Wife
Integrate/Integration
Love
Partner
Relationship
Moving Abroad

This created a list of 65 blogs from 8 European countries.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The next step was to condense the data to collect at least 40-60 posts (Over 300 words in length). An overall passive reading was conducted to get an idea of what these bloggers wrote about. Whilst reading these blogs, relevant and interesting blogs were saved. This involved looking at how the two cultural concepts of expat adjustment and acculturation were manifested in the blog posts.

In order to find blog posts, some lovepat bloggers had categories that made it easy to find relevant posts. For instance, one lovepat blogger had a category on her website called “Dutch Life” and had tags such as expat that would show posts related to these themes. Blogs that did not have relevant material were removed from the data set. Also, blog posts had to be read thoroughly to make sure that these bloggers were in a romantic relationship with a local from the country. Bloggers who were not in relationships with locals from the country were also removed from the data set.

To obtain an overall view of how lovepats acculturate, it was important to choose blogs from different parts of the European Union. All of the blogs found were based in Western Europe.

In order to get a good representation of Western Europe, four countries were chosen: The Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Sweden. These countries had a multitude of lovepat bloggers writing about their acculturation experience. This gives a good comparison of countries that are located in Western Europe. It could be that lovepats are moving to these Western European countries because of their strong economies. When looking at The Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden, their GDP's per capita are in the top 15 of OECD countries (OECD, 2018). These countries have strong economies where job opportunities may be stronger for lovepats relocating and for their partner to have a stable job in order to facilitate their partner. Italy may not have as strong of a GDP as the aforementioned countries, but in the 2017 WTO (World Tourism Organization) ranked Italy as the 5th top tourist destination in the world with 50.7 million tourist arrivals (WTO, 2017). With many tourists traveling to Italy and possibly interacting with locals during their stay, this increases the opportunity for cross-cultural relationships.

The next step was to choose lovepat bloggers from each country. A total of 4 lovepat bloggers were chosen per country in order to have a good representation of each country. All bloggers represented in the dataset come from first world, English-speaking countries: United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. The last step was to make sure there would be enough blog posts to analyze per lovepat blogger. To have a good overview of their acculturation experience, five blogs were chosen per lovepat blogger. Posts were chosen based on how they related to the sensitizing concepts. This means that each country would have 20 blog posts from 4 bloggers which resulted in a final data set of 80 blog posts. More blog posts were chosen for this data set in order to have a larger representation of the bloggers' acculturation experience.

In order to complete the analysis, I used *ATLAS.ti* to collect and organize my data efficiently. To do so, my level of segmentation will be sentences or passages that will fit into a category or subcategory (Kim, 2008). I first conducted open coding for the trial coding sample; conceptualizing the material and defining and developing categories which will bring structure to the coding frame (Schreier, 2012). The blog posts were coded according to Berry (1997)'s acculturation strategy; by categorizing them as either "Integration, Marginalization, Separation or Assimilation. These are defined as the main categories for the analysis, including the last main category of Self-Presentation. This last category will include blog posts that show how the lovepat blogger expresses him/herself.

In a content analysis, creating a coding frame can be mixed by both concept and data driven strategies in which the first step is to conceptualize the data and the second step is to create subcategories based on the data; which is data driven (Schriener, 2012). This lead to building the coding frame through this data driven process of sub-categories that emerged from the data.

The trial coding was conducted with 10 articles to test the coding frame and to see if it was sufficient for the final analysis. By coding, it will identify every piece of the data with categories. The initial coding frame was created as the blog posts were read. This will be reductive coding, or indexing; where the data is descriptive and filed away in groups that have the same theme; which can prepare the researcher for a more in-depth analysis (Schreier, 2012). The coding frame used for the trial sample was sufficient and used for the rest of the data set. Coding was conducted until saturation to answer my research question, since full saturation will be difficult for the scope of the research timeline. The coding frame was also evaluated after the data set was analyzed to check for overlap and to make sure categories were not similar or repeated.

Once the coding frame was created and used for the data analysis, the main categories and sub-categories were created (See Appendix). The main categories which are linked to Berry (2004) and Goffman's (1959) theories will be explained in the next section.

3.5 MAIN CATEGORIES

As previously discussed in the Methods section, the Main Categories for the qualitative content analysis are connected to the Acculturation strategies (Berry, 2004) and Goffman's (1959) self-presentation strategies. This framework will be able to provide structure in analyzing the lovepat's blog posts towards answering the research question.

The main categories are: Integration, Assimilation, Separation, Marginalization and Self-Presentation. A miscellaneous category was also created for varied content which will not be discussed in this chapter. These main categories are measured by the acculturation strategies from Berry's (2004) acculturation theory. "Berry suggested that the acculturation process proceeds according to the degree to which the individual simultaneously participates in the cultural life of the new society and maintains his or her original cultural identity" (Sam & Berry, 2006, p.19). These main categories are the first way to analyze the data set and to

understand how lovepat bloggers acculturate and express themselves through their blogs. This was done when creating the coding frame and conducting the trial coding. Sub-categories that were created during the analysis were organized accordingly under these five main categories.

The first main category: Integration is defined as instances where the lovepat maintains their home culture but interacts with the culture of their partner.

The second category: Assimilation is defined as instances where the lovepat replaces their home culture with the culture of their partner.

The third category: Separation is defined as instances where the lovepat retains aspects of their home culture and avoids consuming the culture of their partner.

The forth category: Marginalization is defined as instances where the lovepat has difficulty maintaining the home culture and the culture of their partner.

The fifth category: Self Presentation is defined as instances where the lovepat personally expresses themselves through their blog. These are instances where the blogger directly has a self-realization and makes this known in the blog. This category contains 3 sub-categories to represent if a self-realization was positive, neutral or negative. Also, the sub-categories of Sarcasm, Advice and Talking to the Reader are included in this category to show when lovepat bloggers presented themselves in these formats.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results of the Qualitative Content Analysis will be described in this Chapter. The main themes and sub-themes will be discussed. These themes will explore a narrative that will argue how lovepats in international relationships acculturate and portray their self-presentation strategies. These themes are important in identifying the story the data tells us in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.1 INTEGRATING AND ADAPTING

Many of the blog posts mentioned some way of adapting to their partner's culture. At least one blog post in the dataset from each of the lovepat bloggers were coded for adapting to local culture. Adapting is defined as the long-term outcome of acculturation, where an individual psychologically has positive self-esteem and socio-culturally finds a way to deal with the new society (Berry, 2004). Some of the ways lovepats adapted to their partners culture included the way they celebrated holidays and learned the language. They often felt willing and positive towards adapting to their partners culture, yet often had their difficulties with adapting and learning the new language as well. There was also one unique case of a lovepat blogger rejecting her native culture. The following section will discuss the sub-themes and how lovepats are becoming culture AB, how they deal with learning the local language, their attitude towards integration and rejecting their home culture.

4.1A BECOMING CULTURE AB

When it came to integration, lovepat bloggers compared cultures the most. This is a well-known process as Berry (2004) illustrates through his cultural framework of Culture A and B interacting. Previous research also shows that culture contact changes an individual and this comparison is part of the acculturation process (Schrauf, 2002). Lovepat bloggers compared cultures often by looking at something happening in their partner's country and commenting on how it is different back home. They would also comment about the difference being weird in the lovepat country.

Comparing Cultures is an important step in the acculturation process for lovepat bloggers. In these instances, they are observing their home culture (Culture A) and their partner's culture (Culture B) and comparing them to understand the similarities and differences. This includes

weighing the positive and negative differences to make their integration easier. This is derived from Berry's (2004) model of acculturation where the individual needs to understand both cultural groups in order for change to occur. This is a process where they gather information (about the new culture) and compare it to their own. These can be instances as trivial as shopping in a supermarket. "In Sweden the line doesn't stop moving because the cashier needs to hold your hand. I haven't been in, or ever heard of, a supermarket where the cashiers bag your groceries for you. It's not their job, so don't expect it. Instead there is a longer split conveyer belt to give each customer time and space to pack their bags. In New York most supermarkets bag the groceries for you, (or you will you find a youngster waiting at the end of the conveyer belt packing your bags for you in hopes of a tip)" (Something Swedish, 2012). A simple activity such as grocery shopping may seem trivial, but for lovepats it is part of the acculturation process. It is also part of expatriate adjustment where the lovepat is participating in an activity that is similar to their home culture. Buying groceries is an activity one does in their home culture and for lovepats, they are understanding the differences between how they would do it in their home country vs. in the new country.

There were many instances where lovepat bloggers compared cultures in a way that meant their home culture was normal and the lovepat culture was weird. They acknowledge that integrating into the culture of their partner is normal because they are permanent inhabitants of this country, but they find some aspects of their partner's culture very different than what they are used to. Often, this would lead to an internal conflict as to which culture they should adopt more. There was an internal struggle for some lovepats who didn't know how much of their home culture to retain vs. acculturating towards the new culture.

The lovepat blogger Canadutch tells a story about the difficulty in understanding why Dutch natives to not remove their shoes before they enter a house. "Where is the line? Should the culture of the country I live in takeover in every aspect of my life or is it ok to, at least in part, view my house as a sort of sanctuary. A bit of Canadian soil in the Netherlands, so to speak... where I can live comfortably by my own beliefs and cultures" (Canadutch, 2010). At this point, lovepat blogger Canadutch is comparing cultures on a deeper level beyond removing shoes. She wonders how much of this new culture should she absorb and how much of her "normal" self should she retain. Berry (2004) describes this as part of the psychological changes individuals go in order to adapt to a new culture. This is the process of culture

conflict; where the norms of the Dutch culture are overwhelming for lovepat blogger Canadutch, because her Canadian norms are what she considers normal. This negotiation is part of the acculturation process where she is debating how much of the Dutch culture she should absorb.

Also, lovepat blogger The Swede Life talks about how the USA is “Normal land”; a nickname her daughter gives her mother's native home. She anticipates the normalcy of being around family, seeing old friends and celebrating local holidays like Halloween and Thanksgiving. Lovepat blogger Married to Italy also calls life back home as a time to be “normal” again. This is congruent with Morley's (2002) notion of an experience an African American woman had; that being around the familiar makes one feel like you are home. Lovepats identify that their homeland is “normal” because it is familiar to them. Finding their partner's land “weird” doesn't necessarily mean they are not able to acculturate; it just means they notice the difference between their homeland and their new home.

Lovepat bloggers also are comparing cultural habits and behaviors when it comes to eating. Lovepat blogger Hot Italian Life writes a post about what true Italian food versus what Americans think is authentic. She discusses the freshness of regional food and how Americanized dishes like Caesar Salads and Alfredo sauce are not Italian. She is acknowledging and appreciating what real Italian food is and rejecting her former favorites; since they are not authentic Italian. In this instance, she is choosing the local culture over her home culture; a decision she cognitively makes on her own through the negotiation process of comparing cultures.

In another post, she praises Italian food habits and how they encourage a healthy lifestyle. "So my main observations on why Italians are generally much thinner than Americans are: totally different ways of preparing food, eating fresh foods, eating organic foods, taking time to eat healthier at home, eating at a slower pace, eating and drinking in a logical order, drinking less amounts of everything, eating less sugary unnatural desserts, walking more, and having a balanced life/work schedule leading to a less stressful life" (Hot Italian Life, 2013). She realizes the Italian lifestyle is one she could adapt to and enjoy better than her former culture. Under Redfield's (1936) definition of acculturation, this is acceptance; where she accepts the new cultural norm and sheds the previous one she held. This is especially true for something she does daily; her eating patterns. This is an example of a huge shift in her behavior because of the process of acculturation.

Also, lovepat bloggers would often compare home food to local food. Some bloggers expressed cravings and missing food from home while other bloggers like Hot Italian Life praised how much better local, regional food is. The second male lovepat blogger, An Englishman in Italy writes about how much he misses a Bacon Butty (a regional British dish) and how his visiting family brings him local British goods. This is significant because of the importance food is when acculturating. Part of expat adjustment is the ability to find de-stressors that may help during acculturative stress. For lovepats, this can be eating food that reminds them of home. For An Englishman in Italy, having local British goods makes him feel like there is a little part of Britain in his Italian home.

When two individuals co-habitate together, it is natural for cultures to mix. Berry's (2004) framework for acculturation demonstrates that two individuals from two different cultures (Culture A and B) will go through cultural changes. These individuals will undergo psychological and socio-cultural changes that will thus result in changes to how they are representative of their individual culture. One of the main points of this research is to understand if lovepats are acculturating to retain as culture A, become culture AB, or change completely to culture B. In this sub-category, mixing cultures is an example of integration, or becoming culture AB.

One of the biggest ways lovepats mixed cultures was in the way they celebrated local holidays. Four lovepat bloggers wrote about the uniqueness of mixing holidays for both partners to enjoy. This can be unique to lovepat bloggers because of their willingness to celebrate both holidays of each partner, yet it is also part of acculturation for non-romantic expats. When it comes to the acculturation process, this is an example of integration; where there is no dominant culture, but instead the mutual accommodation for both individuals to live either as two different cultures or a blend of the two (Berry, 2004).

Lovepat blogger My German Life dedicated a post towards the celebration of a local Germany holiday, Karnevalsgottendienst, a carnival like celebration. She enthusiastically mentions that it is her annual post; a tradition she not only celebrates but shares with her readers. She enjoys having fun at the celebration and is proud of how much German she can understand. "I really enjoyed myself this time. We sat in one of the side pews with Susanne and Klaus, who were dressed up as nuns, and I was pleasantly surprised at how much I was able to understand this year" (My German Life, 2016). Not only was she willing to participate in local culture, but she was happy about being able to understand the local

language. At the individual level of acculturation, she is participating in a cultural ritual belonging to her partner's country. Being able to understand the local language and the significance of the holiday is an important step towards integration.

German lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen shares an experience where she has trouble finding ingredients for a Canadian Thanksgiving meal. She improvises and uses local German food to reciprocate dishes from home. Morley (2002) shares an analysis about the importance of Thanksgiving for Americans. It is a ritual for family to gather and a way to identify with one's culture. For lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen, she goes the extra mile to make sure she can celebrate her traditional holiday, even if it is not as authentic as it would be in her native country. She is also sharing her cultural traits with her partner by introducing her native customs and adjusting to them accordingly in her new country.

Swedish lovepat blogger Lost in Stockholm writes a post about how she and her husband have difficulties celebrating Christmas. Despite their cultural differences in when they celebrate, they manage to compromise. "What day do we put the Christmas tree up? December 11th. When can we put up Christmas decorations (like julstjärnor)? December 8th. What day do we celebrate Christmas? December 24th What do we eat? Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, champagne, glögg, lussebullar, and pepparkakor. When is the tree taken down? When *I* say so!" (Lost in Stockholm, 2013). This is a clear example of the negotiation a lovepat couple goes through as they are mixing cultures. Each individual person is used to celebrating Christmas a certain way, but they compromise to make sure both cultures are celebrated. This is an example of integration; where culture A and B meet in the middle.

Lastly, one blogger found a way to mix her "Americanness" with her "Italianness" in order to acculturate better. She learns through observation that speaking Italian is comparable to dancing; not really being direct but going with the flow. Yet, she finds herself being direct and brazen in the way she speaks. Nonetheless, she finds a way to mix both cultures to express her directness, joke about it and yet is understanding of how Italians speak and doing so when she can. She even expresses whilst learning the language how she is creating hybrids of words she learns. "I've lost English words and started inventing hybrid phrases. I just can't think of an English phrase that adequately satisfies me as much as "basta with romping my palles, per favoooore!" (Married to Italy, 2014). This suggests that her integration process is truly becoming a hybrid of both cultures. She embraces the introduction of the new traits

(Italian sayings) into her culture and uses them to explain how she feels. The fact that she is using Italian instead of English (her native language) to be able to describe how she feels also shows the dominance of the new culture and how it is becoming a part of her.

Lovepat bloggers also felt difficulty adapting to local life. These included simple tasks that would be familiar to them in their home country but is difficult in their lovepat country. This is defined as not adapting to the lovepat culture, nor feeling a part of the original home culture. This is strongly connected with the concept of Marginalization, which is defined as "when individuals fail to maintain their original culture and at the same time fail to establish relationships with host nationals" (Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017). Six posts in the dataset were completely dedicated to this topic of feeling in between cultures.

Most lovepats seemed to recognize the fact that the acculturation process would be a struggle. They understand that moving to another country is a big change, but also self-reflect that there will be times that it will be good, while others may be bad. German lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen expressed uncertainty about living in Germany but maintains a neutral stance when she writes in a post titled "Frustrations and Doubts as an Expat". This neutral stance is expressed as balancing the negative with the positive. "While I try not to focus on the negatives of living in a different country, there are certainly times when I feel overwhelmed and unsure of my place in my new surroundings" (Kaffe und Kuchen, 2016). This is part of the negotiation process of acculturation as described by Redfield (1936) where the individual is looking inwards towards themselves to reflect on the acculturation process. Her awareness shows that she is trying her best to maintain her positive attitude, but she cannot help but feel overwhelmed by the new culture.

The blog post itself is written towards expats by explaining her process of integration and reaching out to other readers who may be experiencing the same process. She also reflects in her post that her expat (lovepat) experience is a journey and tells her readers to be kind to themselves as they adjust. She encourages her readers to reach out to one another and to exchange advice to make the transition easier. This is a way that lovepat bloggers participate in an online community in order to discuss their acculturation process through blogging. Reaching out to other bloggers who are going through the same experience is a way lovepats present themselves as a blogger (See 4.3C). They are expressing their personal situation as a personal blogger through self-storytelling. This presentation of self can be a way that lovepat

blogger Kaffe und Kuchen can understand who she is as a lovepat living in a foreign country with her husband.

Another lovepat blogger, 2 Sweden 4 Love talks about her struggle with an identity crisis and observes this in other expats. “As someone who has recently grappled with a full-blown identity crisis, I can speak to the beauty of committing to your situation – especially the bad ones. For it is here that you must grab it by the horns, wrestle it to the ground, learn, embrace, and commit to owning it. Life struggles and challenges suck. And it doesn’t matter what your situation is or where you live – challenges are challenges. I have seen many of my expat friends here in Sweden struggle with cultural, language, societal, psychological, personal, business, and financial issues. All. at. the. same. time. It’s a lot to deal with” (2 Sweden 4 Love, 2015). She is aware of the process and the fact that it is best to embrace it. As Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) mention about expat adjustment, confidence and a healthy attitude makes a big difference towards the acculturation process. Obtaining the hard skills such as the language and understanding cultural norms will still be difficult, but 2 Sweden 4 Love is aware of this and strives towards trying to succeed the best way she can.

Feeling in between cultures was a big finding when it came to marginalization strategies. Lovepat bloggers shared insight about their struggle to define where their home is (See 4.2B). Many felt acculturative stress when it came to realizing that it is difficult to acculturate to the lovepat culture, yet they didn't completely belong to their home culture. Also, lovepat bloggers would mostly call their native land their home, even though they would call their lovepat country home as well. Many of the lovepat bloggers married their partner and thus are creating a permanent socio-cultural space. This socio-cultural space can be called their home; as Morley (2002) discusses as a place that is not only one that can be touch, but one that feels like home. This is also conflicting when lovepats know their home is where they once belonged, but they may not feel like that anymore, nor do they feel connected to their new place. We can look to Morley (2002) again to see that this place where lovepats feel in between culture is indeed the socio-cultural space created between themselves and their partner.

“In the realm of the postmodern, Chambers argues, we no longer have available the choice between the domestic and the exilic, as polar alternatives, but must rather learn to dwell in what Bhabha has described as a “third space”, where the familiar and the foreign are conjoined, where it is less clear where home concludes and the foreign

begins—where we must dwell in home as itself a hybrid space of coeval times and lives" (Morley, 2002, p.211).

German lovepat blogger My German Life realizes it is the small things in life that can be difficult to adapt to. "It's the small things that catch you off guard, and when they do? It's a doozy. Just when you feel you've adapted to your host culture, something little will show you just how much you don't really belong." (My German Life, 2013). These difficulties adapting is part of the acculturation process and part of the struggle of feeling in between cultures (4.6A). This is an instance of marginalization (Berry, 2004) where the individual has difficulty maintaining their cultural identity and also find it difficult to make their place in the new society.

This feeling of uncertainty led some lovepat bloggers to an identity crisis. Lovepat blogger Canadutch writes an article titled "Stuck in the Middle" where she tells a story about how despite after 8 years (at that moment in time) of living in The Netherlands, it still does not feel like home, yet when she is in Canada, she has changed too much to feel like she is truly Canadian. She claims the perfect place would be an island in the Atlantic Ocean (In between her two cultures) with things she misses from back home, things from her new culture, whilst speaking a "Dunglish" language mixed of Dutch and English. This experience is an example of Redfield's (1936) expectation of one who acculturates and the psychological stress that will occur. Lovepat blogger Canadutch is truly confused in her head and struggles with her old culture and the new culture.

Lovepat blogger Turning Dutch expresses a similar sentiment when she expresses there are two personas of herself in a post entitled "Part Me, Part Expat, Part Local: Authenticity and Expat Life". She feels like she is wearing many masks: a British, expat, and Dutch mask among many others. She truly delves into her identity crisis by question if she can truly be herself in a country that is not her native land. "How many masks then does an expat wear? How many versions of ourselves are there? Do expats hide a part of themselves away to blend in with their surroundings? Can we really be truly ourselves and let our personality shine though when we are communicating in a foreign language and wrestling with cultural quirks that feel alien and uncomfortable? Does leaving our friends and family behind mean we leave a little part of who we are elsewhere?" (Turning Dutch, 2018). This paradox is a prime example of how lovepats feel like they belong to two places, their homeland and their new home. "For such people identity is not rooted in one single original homeland, but rather

depends on their ability to inhabit different imaginary geographies simultaneously" (Morley, 2002, p.207). For lovepats, it may be difficult to even feel like they belong to the new country, because they will always have their homeland culture. No matter how much a lovepat integrates and accepts the new society, they are not native to that land.

4.1B THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

Learning the local language was deemed essential by lovepat bloggers as part of the acculturation process. Previous research studies also agree that language fluency and social interaction are a reciprocal relationship; where the expat (lovepat for this research) language ability will enable him/her to participate more in the host community, which also improves the use of language (Clément, Noels & Deneault, 2001).

All lovepat bloggers analyzed mentioned their experience in learning the local language. Swedish lovepat blogger Something Swedish finds learning Swedish to be important to her integration process, even if she can survive with her native English. "It's easy to live and survive in Sweden without knowing the language. But why? I want to stop missing out on conversations, be able to socialize easily, grasp the culture better, and I don't want to be "That ignorant American" (Something Swedish, 2012). This sentiment of being an ignorant American was only mentioned by lovepat blogger Something Swedish. Her blog post is ironically called "Adjustment" where she reflects on what she has adjusted to and what she needs to adjust to. Although she can survive in English, she realizes that learning Swedish will allow her to understand her new country better. Looking back at expat adjustment, this is an example of a positive attitude towards integration. Her willingness to communicate with locals and the confidence she has in knowing the language will help her lovepat adjustment, according to Mendenhall & Oddou (1985).

Most of the lovepats place great emphasis on learning the local language because it is considered important to their acculturation process. Learning the local language makes a lovepat able to communicate with other locals, their partner and their partner's family. Most lovepat bloggers took language lessons once they were living in the lovepat country, except for lovepat blogger Married to Italy. Even though she didn't take language classes, she found her own way to learn the language through reading, speaking and listening to Italians. Other lovepat bloggers also share this sentiment that they should learn the local language. Research

has shown that the more an individual identifies and is competent in the second language, the better they will identify with the community of the country (Noels, Pon, & Clément, 1996).

It's not to say that when the lovepat blogger does decide to learn the language that it is not without challenges. Every lovepat blogger mentioned difficulty learning the language, with the Dutch lovepat bloggers mentioning it the most. It can deter them when they don't understand the language and how the country works and makes acculturation difficult for lovepat bloggers. When a language is completely foreign to someone, it is difficult to understand someone without having a basis of the language. "Yesterday I cried about learning Dutch. In public. On a busy pub terrace. Ummmm. So yeah, that sucked. ...Anyway, I cried because learning Dutch is fucking hard" (Bitterballen Bruid, 2015). Admitting the learning the language is difficult is also part of the acculturation process. Lovepat blogger Bitterballen Bruid is looking internally and going through a personal struggle, that even though she felt confident when she understands conversations with her husband and her friends, she can still break down about making mistakes in Dutch. Other lovepat bloggers also put a great emphasis on learning the language and their difficulties in mastering it.

Conversations with locals gave lovepats a positive experience within their acculturation process. Being able to communicate in the local lovepat language and interacting with locals is beneficial to the acculturation experience, especially in Western societies (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001; Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2008; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). This allows the lovepat blogger to function in society and do "normal" things such as communicating with supermarket workers or speaking with members of their partner's family. "I can actually have a conversation with Maarten's non-English grandparents without breaking into a cold sweat (this was one thing that kept me going in the days I was really struggling)." (Adventures in Integration, 2011). Being able to speak to locals and their partner's family members gave lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration the confidence to continue learning the language.

These were situations where lovepats expressed their troubles in learning or speaking the language. "Seven Dutchies speaking Dutch 24/7 and me having no idea what was going on most of the time! It was horrible, and I cried. (In the bathroom, obviously, so no one knew – not even the Dutchie.)" (Bitterballen Bruid, 2016). Overcoming a language barrier is a huge step towards acculturation and is part of the marginalization process. It is a point where the lovepats are stuck in between two languages, their native language and having to learn a new

language. Language is how one expresses him/herself and learning a new language while acculturating was described as difficult by the lovepat bloggers. Also, it is difficult to compare why some lovepat bloggers had more difficulties learning the language compared to others, since it is unknown whether the native language of the lovepat's partner is their second or third.

One common realization that was positive for lovepats was finally being able to have a grip of the local language. Overcoming the barrier of learning a language was a great self-realization for lovepat bloggers who finally felt like they could acculturate better into the lovepat culture. Lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration, who did not want to learn the local language is able to realize the benefit. "As a consequence of being ill, I've had to put myself out there and speak Dutch. I've had to be proactive in interacting with others. I've had to take a good look at myself and my own attitude. It's really only been in the last week or so that I've actually noticed this shift in my own attitude. I'm happier more than I have been the entire three and a half years living here in the Netherlands" (Adventures in Integration, 2011). This is an interesting situation where lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration admits she did not want to learn the local language (at first) but had to because she had difficulties speaking to her doctor. This is a common situation lovepats may face; when they need to participate in daily life in the new culture but may have difficulties because of the language barrier. Her unwillingness to learn the language could have been why she had a difficult time, according to Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) who state that the ability to communicate with locals is important to expat adjustment. Lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration admits that she is happier now that she knows the language, compared to the 3.5 years she has lived in The Netherlands. This is an indication that a grip of the language is beneficial towards lovepat adjustment.

For a few lovepat bloggers, their negative self-realizations revolved around the difficulty of learning the language. Being criticized on mistakes they made while speaking the language made lovepats feel like they weren't acculturating the way they should be. "Then the Friend corrects me. Again, something ridiculously tiny. And I lose my shit. I just stopped talking and had a little cry, while they awkwardly carried on talking. Once I'd regained my composure... I went to the toilet to fix my face. They're blokes so they thought they were being 'helpful'" (Bitterballen Bruid, 2016). Even though her partner and his friends are trying to help the lovepat blogger with her Dutch, she feels negative about it. Italian lovepat blogger Hot Italian

Life expresses a similar sentiment about how conversations in Italian make her feel down and how she felt like a baby because of how slow she had to speak.

Looking closer at one of the male lovepat bloggers, there are instances where he used sarcasm to express their difficulties learning the local language. German lovepat blogger An American in Germany writes a post about how he fell in love with his German wife and how they overcame language barriers. However, he uses sarcasm to express his difficulty, yet triumph over the language learning process. "Now, as basic as some of these simple phrases are, I still feel victorious and want to chest bump someone when I complete what is, in essence, a sentence that most preschoolers have mastered long ago. I know this because if one happens to be present during one of my gleeful outbursts, they taunt and talk down to me like I have a mild mental handicap. Children just don't understand that every adult can't speak their language" (An American in Germany, 2013). He draws attention to himself by making fun of himself and the fact that even though he is proud to learn a sentence, that German children probably speak better than him. He also makes fun of the very language he is trying to learn by stating that one shouldn't be afraid when Germans yell at you because that is how the language is supposed to sound.

4.1C THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTEGRATION

Lovepat bloggers were positive about the lifestyle and the opportunity to live abroad. They accomplished this by adapting to the culture and understanding that this is part of the adjustment process. It is one thing to adjust to a new culture but being positive about it is a step towards integration. Berry (1997) states that integration has a relationship with positive adaptation and this is because individuals will have present qualities such as positive attitudes, involvement in two cultural communities and being an adaptable person. The high number of fragments in the analysis indicates that lovepats are generally positive towards the culture of their partner. "I live in the Netherlands, it's up to me to adapt to their way of life in regards to the language and life here in general" (Canadutch). The willingness to adapt to the lovepat culture is positive towards integrating and the preferred way for individuals to acculturate (Bowski, 2008).

One German blogger takes an intensive German integration course which may allow him permanent residency. "The overall goal, of course, is to learn the German language and integrate into German society" (OMG My wife is German, 2014). Even though he married

his wife in his local country (United States), he is committed to integrating into German society. This positive attitude is similar to expatriate adjustment; where the willingness to integrate into society will be beneficial to the transition into adapting to the new culture.

Lovepats felt generally positive about the quality of life in the lovepat country. Considering that this research is examining how lovepat bloggers living in the EU portray their acculturation process, this is noteworthy. “I love so many things about my life in Germany. The opportunity to speak a language that’s not my own and improve those skills. Taking advantage of public transportation and not having to drive to work every day” (My German Life, 2013). Other aspects about the positive quality of life included healthcare, education and raising children. This was often expressed by the American bloggers who also describe their frustrations with home politics.

Lovepats also described and appreciated the healthier lifestyle in their lovepat country. Three bloggers (Canadutch, The Swede Life, and Hot Italian Life) expressed their fondness of the fact that their new home advocated a healthy lifestyle. This included riding bikes for wellness and saving on gas emissions, children playing outside rather than staying indoors and the availability of organic food. These lovepat bloggers feel positive about their new home and manage to appreciate a different culture. This is the final step of the acculturation process which is acceptance, according to Redfield (1936). The new country may be foreign to them, but they are accepting this place as their new home and appreciate the new culture.

All of the lovepat bloggers had at least one thing to complain about. The overall complaints related to how different their partner's culture is. The Dutch lovepat bloggers complained about how difficult it is to integrate, the weather and how expensive life can be. Canadutch writes a post explaining about her life in The Netherlands and dedicates a section of the post about what she doesn't like about the country. “DAT KAN NIET (Translation: That is not possible) – I swear if I hear these words one more time I'm going to punch someone” (Canadutch, n.d.). Meanwhile, Swedish lovepat blogger Lost in Stockholm dedicates an entire post entitled “10 things I Hate about Sweden”. The complaints range from fitted bedsheets that don't fit to Swedish beers.

Other lovepat bloggers expressed negative sentiments that were minor, such as complaints about how pencils don't have erasers or how Italy doesn't have garlic bread. The fact that many of the lovepat bloggers negative self-realizations are less frequent as compared to their

positive and neutral self-realizations, it can be said that lovepat bloggers are generally representing positive and neutral thoughts about their acculturation experience. It could be that these lovepat bloggers may be hiding the truly difficult hardships, whether for personal reasons or not to upset their family/audience.

4.1D REJECTING HOME CULTURE

Only in a few instances did lovepat bloggers feel the need to absolutely reject their home culture in favor for the lovepat culture, for political reasons. Two British bloggers (Bitterballen Bruid and Turning Dutch) living in The Netherlands expressed sentiments towards rejecting British culture, especially after Brexit. Bitterballen Bruid explains how the British are very materialistic and spend a lot of money, while the Dutch don't care and don't really use credit cards. She finds this very sensible and a good way to live.

Meanwhile, lovepat blogger Turning Dutch is more direct about her disdain towards British culture. "Brexit is an embarrassing shambles. What it will eventually mean for Brits like me living in the EU is about as clear today as it was a year ago. I do know the British government is not showing much interest in the rights of the likes of me. I also know my love for Britain has not returned at any time during the past year. And I also know that I have no more desire to return to Britain now than I did in the direct aftermath of the Brexit result" (Turning Dutch, 2017). This is an instance of assimilation; where she replaces her ethnic culture with the new culture (Berry, 2004). Studies have shown that assimilation has occurred with immigrants moving to America; because of their attraction to American culture through the media (Gans, 1997). In this case, she is culture shedding due to political tensions and embraces her new live in The Netherlands.

Meanwhile, lovepat blogger Hot Italian Life writes a post entitled "Reverse Culture Shock" where she feels bothered by her former American culture. She explains how Americans are obsessed with food, have too many options, and are ignorant towards immigrants. She is bothered by a man wearing a jacket that tells immigrants to learn English. She takes this to heart since she is now living in Italy and struggles to learn Italian. As an immigrant in another country, she is ashamed by the American attitude she encounters in her home state of Texas towards immigrants. Her experience with reverse culture shock is another example of assimilation. She feels disdain towards her American culture because of this experience and

puts herself in the place of someone coming to her home country, in the same way she is an immigrant living in Italy. She can imagine the difficulties for someone trying to learn English, since she is struggling to learn Italian.

Lovepat bloggers hardly rejected their culture and thus the Assimilation category was the least frequent. This is a surprising finding since studies have usually shown a pattern in acculturation.

“Acculturation strategies have been shown to have substantial relationships with positive adaptation: integration is usually the most successful; marginalization is the least; and assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate. This pattern has been found in virtually every study, and is present for all types of acculturating groups (Berry, 1990a; Berry & Sam, 1996). Why this should be so, however, is not clear.” (Berry, 1997, p.24).

These findings were somewhat congruent with prior research with Integration being the most successful strategy for acculturation but differed when it came to the least successful strategy, which was assimilation in this research. Nonetheless, lovepats could be the unique factor in this equation, since they display this transition into a hybrid culture AB culture rather than completely retaining their own culture or absorbing their partner’s culture.

4.2 CULTURE SHOCK AND HOMESICKNESS

A common definition in research of culture shock is "the feeling of impotence on the part of the strange who cannot deal competently with his (her) environment owing to unfamiliarity with cognitive aspects of the culture and inability to perform necessary role-playing skills" (Taft, 1977, p.142). Culture shock is also described as acculturative stress by Berry (1997). Most lovepat bloggers seemed aware of the acculturation process and the fact that they would experience culture shock.

Lovepat bloggers Adventures in Integration and 2 Sweden 4 Love write posts where they not only describe their experience with culture shock, but actually admit to researching the

phenomenon and trying to understand it. They mention the Oberg (1960) U-curve model which describe the four stages one in a new country will encounter to reach adjustment: honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment (Hack-Polay, 2012). Both bloggers are aware of the phases and recognize their experiences as culture shock. Both lovepat bloggers felt culture shock about making friends and adjusting to the local daily life.

More specifically, lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration felt particularly bothered by the fact that her transition period is taking so long and how difficult the process has been. “I have been wondering to myself if perhaps, finally, I’m transitioning through the stages of culture shock. It is generally understood that culture shock passes within a few months (certainly within a year), but I talk to people here in the Netherlands who are clearly still struggling, often after a few years. I certainly have been! … Why has the transition into adjustment finally come about after so long? I really think that it has to do with all of the health dramas I’ve had this year.” (Adventures in Integration, 2011). She is also aware of the process of culture shock and familiarizes with it in order to understand what she is going through. Her shock at how long the adjustment period takes and realizing how others go through the same process indicates that acculturation process differs between individuals. Redfield (1936) discusses how an individual’s perception towards the new culture will influence the acculturation process. Previously, a post mentioned lovepat Adventures in Integration and her initial unwillingness to learn Dutch. The realization that she is adjusting better because of her attitude change is an indication of Redfield’s point.

Lovepat bloggers were generally surprised to be experiencing culture shock. “Oh hell no! Not me. But yes, it did happen to me and it was dark and ugly and intense. I never expected to experience culture shock in Sweden. After all, I had visited the country three times and because of the relationship with my guy, I considered myself fairly well educated about the culture, work environment, the society and current events. I mean really, how much different can Sweden be from the US?” (2 Sweden 4 Love, 2013). This can be explained by expat adjustment where pre-departure experience is anticipated to help an expat (lovepat) acculturate. Nonetheless, even though she had visited Sweden and gotten acquainted to the culture and lifestyle, she still experienced culture shock. This would indicate that even if a lovepat exposes themselves to the new culture, it is nothing like actually living there and immersing into the culture itself. Lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 Love did not expect to experience culture shock, but it still happened, despite her best efforts to work on her pre-

departure skills. In this situation, her exposure to the culture may have lessened the degree of culture shock, but it did not eliminate the chance of it happening.

Other lovepat bloggers expressed culture shock about how much they missed their families back home, speaking English “normally” and learning the local language. This suggests that culture shock is also an important part of the acculturation process. Berry (2004) also suggests that culture shock and acculturative stress is part of the process and eventually there will be some form of accommodation.

When it came to homesickness, every blogger, with the exception of the three male lovepat bloggers (An American in Germany, OMG My wife is German, and An Englishman in Italy) expressed homesickness. Research has shown that gender plays a role in homesickness and acculturation; that women are at more risk for homesickness because of their traditional, family-oriented role, while men are seen to acculturate better since their societal role is to be strong and independent (Van Tilburg & Vingerhoets, 1996). Nonetheless, these men are also bloggers who are sharing their experience. It could be that they are not expressing these sentiments online and keep their feelings of homesickness to themselves.

The biggest sentiment expressed was simply missing family and friends back home. Some lovepat bloggers did not want to explain in full detail how much they miss their family, because it was as simple as that. Since these blog posts are being written online where anyone can read them, lovepats may be keeping these private sentiments to themselves. Despite the fact that they are aware of their audience, they still have private moments that may not be used as online content. Compared to expats (non-romantic) who move abroad for work in multiple countries, experience culture shock as well, but often bring their families with them. Studies show that family adjustment is a part of the acculturation process and that some expats confided in their spouse for support and sought out programs for children of expats that have difficulty adjusting (Naeem, Nadeem, & Khan, 2015). Lovepats share the common bond with other non-romantic migrants that they all experience culture shock.

Since the lovepat bloggers in this research come from countries that are at least a plane ride away, they acknowledge the fact that they must compromise and understand that home will not always be there for them. “We just do what we can, we live day to day, and we take all our vacation days at one time to fly halfway across the world to visit family, fight through jet lag and then say tearful goodbyes a few weeks later” (My German Life, 2013). Yet, they also

have the advantage that are able to visit their home, unlike refugee migrants who flee their country and may leave families behind.

Moments of homesickness were also described as missing the simple things back home. Lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 Love talks about how she misses her actual materialistic items from home. To her, it is symbolic and represents a big part of her life and upbringing. These lovepats making a cross-cultural move to another country will be impacted by the fact that they may or may not be able to bring everything they want to their new home. Fellow Swedish lovepat blogger The Swede Life writes a post about how she misses fresh turkey sandwiches so much that she and her husband go to a turkey farm to try to replicate the sandwich.

4.2B WHERE IS HOME?

The biggest question for lovepat bloggers was: where is home? Feeling in between cultures meant not knowing where home was for many of the lovepat bloggers. This sentiment was expressed by many of the lovepat bloggers, but two dedicated posts towards this feeling of uncertainty.

German lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen explains this very topic in a post titled "Where's Home?". After returning from a visit to her native homeland of Canada, she struggles to decide whether Germany or Canada is her home. "These anecdotes might not seem like stop-you-in-your-tracks interactions, but truthfully, these questions are a bit loaded, aren't they? Questions on where you live, where your earthly possessions should be returned to if they get misplaced, where you consider home... The answer to the first two questions would be Germany. It's the place where I hang my hat, receive my mail, return my plastic bottles and search for cilantro. But home? Is Germany my home yet? I guess I'm not sure" (Kaffe und Kuchen, 2014). This situation comes to life when a salesperson in a store asks her if she lives in the area and when she says she lives in Germany, the salesperson assumes she will move back to her real "home". Nonetheless, the experience makes her question where her real home is. Yet, at the airport going back to Germany, she must enter the passport check line for "Other Countries" since she does not hold a German passport. She ends the post stating that she really isn't sure where her home is.

This struggle of “Where is home?” is the heart of Morley’s (2002) discussion of the same question. Though he differentiates between the concepts of home and homeland, lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen still struggles to define her actual home. Even though she was born and raised in Canada, her visit there after living in Germany is making her realize her difficulty in feeling in between cultures. This is also part of the acculturation process where a lovepat is negotiating between cultures; whether or not they have fully integrated, they will always have their homeland culture and their new culture.

Sweden lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 Love explains similar sentiments when she realizes she continues to tell people that she is going home for a visit, despite living in Sweden for two years. “Despite the amount of despair conversations such as these cause my fiancé, I just can’t – yet – seem to come to terms with exactly where my home is. Where is it that I feel most comfortable – and especially now that I’ve lived in Sweden for over two years – would my US home still feel like home? Am I a woman without a home? A woman with two homes?” (2 Sweden 4 Love, 2014). She also ends the post not sure of where her home is. Home has many definitions as defined by Morley (2002). It can be that their home is where they began and where they grew up, but it can also be the socio-cultural space they create with their partner. Looking closer at Morley’s (2002) discussion, he draws on Ghassan Hage (1993) with the argument that the concept of home provides individuals with different feelings of security and unity. The experience of national identity is at the local level, or for these lovepat bloggers, where they are living in Europe.

To add to that perspective, we are living in a modern world where individuals speak multiple languages, travel abroad frequently and are exposed to many cultures.

“People who belong to more than one world, speak more than one language (literally and metaphorically) inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home; who have learned to negotiate and translate between cultures and who, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, have learned to live with, and indeed to speak from, difference. They speak from the “in-between” of different cultures, always unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of another, and thus finding ways of being the same as and at the same time different from, the others amongst whom they live” (Morley, 2002, p.207; Hall, 1995, p.206).

Lovepats fit into this group of persons as they are acculturating. They are becoming global citizens through their acculturation experience. This can also go for individuals who may be expats who travel for work or sojourners who study abroad, but for lovepats, this situation creates a bigger conflict in regards to where their home is. An expat and a sojourner will return to their homeland, but a lovepat has their homeland and their home with their partner.

4.2C RETAINING THE SENSE OF SELF

In these instances where the lovepats did not want to adapt to culture, they often expressed the desire to retain their personality and sense of self.

Lovepat blogger Bitterballen Bruid did not want to adapt to the culture was her refusal to eat hagelslag, a Dutch confectionery used for breakfast. She explains that it is extremely weird to eat sprinkles (the American term for hagelslag) for breakfast and still does not eat it. Nonetheless, this is merely a part of her individual self she wants to retain, since in previous sections, she is described as integrating and adapting to the local culture.

On a larger extreme, lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration only learned Dutch because she had to. Because it was required for her by the local government, she integrated, despite not wanting to learn the local language. "I had absolutely no intention of learning Dutch. Aside from being able to order a beer and catch the bus, I didn't care. ... Why waste the energy right? Plus, Maarten was perfectly happy that I didn't speak Dutch. Let's face it, his English is almost as good as mine (Adventures in Integration, 2011). This lovepat blogger is in contrast to the others who were willing to learn the local language. Even though she eventually appreciated learning the language and excelled at it, her resistance towards it is her way of retaining her sense of self by speaking English in the beginning. She also relies on the fact that her partner's English is sufficient enough for them to speak together. In regards to this research, the lovepat bloggers all come from native English countries. This means that they are most speaking English when they began and continued their relationship with their partner. This allows the lovepat to retain a sense of self; the advantage to continue speaking their homeland language without difficulty.

Lovepat bloggers also felt adamant about preserving parts of their home culture. Often this was done by celebrating holidays such as Thanksgiving (American and Canadian). They are bringing their traditions to their new culture as Redfield (1936) describes as part of the

negotiation process of acculturation. Lovepat bloggers look back at their home family and culture and are nostalgic about how life was back home, even though they are acculturating to a new country. Even though they are mixing cultures by celebrating holidays together, it is important for them to retain their native culture. Lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 love describes her acknowledgement of Swedish culture and how it has integrated into her identity.

However, she realizes that there are parts of her personality and culture that she will never change. Berry (2004) states that acculturating individuals want to create their own personal views based on the new culture, rather than following what the new culture deems as right or wrong.

This is in contradiction to their commitment towards integration. However, this is a larger case of integration itself as Berry (2004) defines in his acculturation concept that a society that allows individuals to integrate accepts that there will be cultural diversity. Part of the integration process is the right to live as a culturally different person. Living in another country and coming from a different culture means that there will be parts of that individual that will be different. Retaining the sense of self is the way lovepat bloggers preserve their home culture, even if they are integrating towards the new society.

4.3 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The uniqueness of lovepat's and their acculturation process is the fact that they are not doing this on their own. Since they are moving for a romantic partner, they have the social support of their spouse. This relationship and their relationships with expats and other bloggers and their audience are themes under the category of Social Relationships.

4.3A LOVEPAT RELATIONSHIPS

Lovepat bloggers did not seem to mention their partner often. They were mentioned as part of another story rather than the main focus of their blog post. This was surprising because considering it is a personal blog and their partner is the reason they moved, one would think the lovepat partner would be mentioned more. Personal details were not often disclosed about their relationship or the fact that they moved abroad for their partner. Even though an online blog can be seen as a personal diary where personal content is written, it is still public on the web. Studies have shown that blog owners are aware that they have an audience reading and commenting on their blogs (Stefanone & Jang, 2007). Lovepat bloggers may be keeping their

personal relationship separate from blogging about their acculturation experience, even if their partner is the reason why they acculturated.

The only exception is Italian lovepat blogger Surviving in Italy who writes an entire post about her husband and the difficulties of having different cultures. “Being married is hard enough, being opposites is complicated (though balancing) but being from very different cultures adds even that much more complexity” (Surviving in Italy, 2017). She reflects that her and her partner have a lot of arguments but attend couples therapy to work on communication and that it has been extremely helpful.

Nonetheless, lovepat bloggers seemed enthusiastic about living with their partner abroad. The entire reason for this acculturation experience is because they are moving abroad to be with their partner. Lovepat partners sometimes provided support for the bloggers who were homesick and had trouble acculturating to their new lovepat culture. In a blog post about celebrating Independence Day (an American holiday not celebrated in Germany), the husband of lovepat blogger My German Life surprises her by making an American themed breakfast. Previous research that examined working expats who bring their spouse over shows that family, especially the spouse can help during stressful times (Kramer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). On the contrary, this research shows that the local spouse is providing support for their lovepat partner.

Meanwhile, the male German lovepat blogger OMG My wife is German writes a sarcastic toned post about how German-American relationships work. As one of the three male bloggers analyzed in this research, he expresses his sentiments in a sarcastic way about how his intercultural relationship works. “When it comes to German-American coupling, the subject of balance will quickly make itself apparent. That is to say, in my experience, Germans and Americans balance each other out with surprising effectiveness. (After a couple of pissing matches about why there is no air conditioning in this country, god dammit)” (OMG My wife is German, 2016). The second male blogger analyzed, An Englishman in Italy also uses sarcasm to talk about his relationship with his Italian wife, who he calls Mrs. Sensible in his blog.

Both male bloggers use extreme sarcasm to make light of their situation abroad and their life with their wives. Research has shown that men are viewed as more sarcastic than women and use sarcasm to express power and self-image (Rockwell & Theriot, 2001; Drucker, Fein,

Bergerbest, & Giora, 2014). Their use of sarcasm may make it difficult to understand how they really feel; and is a self-presentation style used in their blog posts.

Lovepat bloggers also expressed grief over making friends within the lovepat society. Lovepat blogger Adventures in Integration expressed her concern with making friends with other mothers in the daycare her child attends. Even though she has contact with these native women and she speaks the language, she struggles to make friends with other mothers. This is an example of acculturative stress; where the individual experiences a problem resulting from an intercultural exchange that cannot be adjusted to quickly (Berry, 2004). These are situations that really test an individual acculturating, but even more so for a lovepat since they have made a commitment to permanently inhabit the new country. Someone who may have trouble acculturating and doesn't enjoy the new country may decide to leave, while an expat in a committed relationship may not see this as an option, especially when a child is involved.

Lovepat blogger Turning Dutch writes an entire post about the topic and her difficulties. "Making friends with the locals proved hard. Without a good command of Dutch I wasn't really destined for any Dutch speaking groups and so I felt a little in limbo..." (Turning Dutch, 2014). Also, lovepat blogger Hot Italian Life writes an entire post entitled "My Nightmare learning Italian". One of her struggles was feeling left out in a group of natives, since her partner had to translate for her all of the time.

4.3B THE EXPAT COMMUNITY

Prior research has focused heavily on the acculturation process of expats. However, these are individuals who relocate to a country for a temporary period. What makes lovepats unique is the fact that they are expat's relocating to a country, but for a longer, designated period, and possibly permanently. 14 out of the 16 bloggers analyzed in the data set clearly stated and disclosed the fact that they were living in their partner's country permanently. The 2 other bloggers (The Swede Life) had lived in the lovepat's country for a long period of time but relocated temporarily with her partner to her native country, while the lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 Love has since moved back to her native country.

Expat adjustment is similar to acculturation by lovepats because it still involves a major life transition. The difference is that they have social support from their partner and their

partner's family. One component of expat adjustment was seen in many of the blog posts. Some of the lovepat bloggers took lessons in the language of their soon-to-be country to get a head start on the acculturation process; an example of pre-departure skills from expat adjustment.

Yet, many of the lovepat's deemed it important to create their own social circles that were separate from their partner. "Yes, you probably have your partner and your partner's family and friends to help you settle in... but you also need to find YOUR people" (Bitterballen Bruid, 2016). The same lovepat blogger even found social support through other expat/lovepat bloggers. "To meet people, I joined a blogger group where I met the wonderful Sophie of Feast with Sophie, Senja of Little House in Utrecht and Alison of A Flamingo in Utrecht" (Bitterballen Bruid, 2016). This often made lovepats feel like they were creating their own live that is separate from their partner, and this made them feel positive about their acculturation experience.

Even though it is important for lovepats to interact with members of their partner's society, having their own support system is also important for integration. Being a part of the expat community gave lovepat bloggers a sense of confidence and support as they acculturated. As mentioned previously, expat adjustment has been researched in terms of expats and migrants, but lovepats are unique for their acculturation process because they are living permanently and not returning to their homeland. In regards to expat-adjustment, it suggested that expats participate in activities that give them joy as it did back in their home land. The way lovepat blogger Bitterballen Bruid is meeting with other lovepat bloggers is a way of managing individual self. She is making sure that she is being part of the new culture by finding parallel activities to those she would do at home.

On the other hand, lovepat blogger Turning Dutch shares a negative experience in regards to participating in the expat community. "Many moons ago, when I was a much younger and naiver expat, I met a group of people that chilled me to the bone. The experience scarred me for life and made me wary of expat groups. For a while I struggled with the feeling that whilst I am an expat I'm not the same as some other expats. At the time I worked with a lot of expats, but they were expats who had no intention of putting down roots in the Netherlands, making friends with the locals or even learning to speak Dutch. After a few years in the Netherlands, they would be off again to another far-flung destination. They were a different breed of expat, so certainly not in the same boat as me" (Turning Dutch, 2014). She realizes

her uniqueness as a lovepat. As mentioned previously, expats and sojourners who live abroad will ultimately leave the country they are temporarily residing in. Lovepat blogger Turning Dutch has struggled with meeting other expats who are not going through the same acculturation experience as her. This can suggest that expat adjustment has its difficulties when a person cannot find their place in the new culture.

It could be that lovepat bloggers also find balance by blogging about their acculturation experience. Many of the bloggers are female and use their blog to write about their experience and even seek support. For instance, lovepat blogger Bitterballen Bruid who meets up with fellow bloggers in The Netherlands as a way to share stories and insight about the expat lifestyle. Also, the fact that lovepat blogger Turning Dutch blogged about her sour experience making friends in The Netherlands could be a way to rant and deal with the experience. She even ends her post inviting her readers to share their positive and negative experiences with meeting expats.

4.3C THE ROLE AS A BLOGGER

As a blogger, lovepats are creating their own content, but as a personal blogger, the material is personal to their own lives. When talking to readers, lovepat bloggers often spoke directly to their audience as if they were in front of them. At the end of most of the lovepat blogger's posts, they often posed a question to the audience. For instance, if the topic was about culture shock, the lovepat blogger would ask readers to comment in the blog. Some lovepat bloggers even felt connected to their readers; often feeling guilty if they did not post as frequently as anticipated. "If you're wondering where I've been these last two months, the answer is: LIVING LIFE! As terrible as I feel about not updating the blog, it feels great to be too busy to post!" (Something Swedish, 2013).

Talking to readers demonstrates how lovepat bloggers are aware that their blog is not only their online diary, but a stage. They are presenting their experiences, but also aware that people are reading their blogs. This may give them the opportunity to present themselves in two ways: the expression they give and that they give off (Goffman, 1959). However, the majority of the post is written in a diary format where they are telling stories about their lives. This can be an indication that they are trying to be authentic to their readers by providing insightful stories and experiences and trying to connect with others.

Lovepats shared their personal stories and would offer advice on how to adjust to a new country, the best methods to learn a language and other topics related to acculturation.

Offering advice indicates that the lovepat bloggers are aware that they are in possession of some kind of knowledge. Many bloggers address the audience by stating they have been in their shoes and offer their stories and advice as a way for others to learn from. This indicates that lovepat bloggers have a desire for community; to share their acculturation experience and to also learn from others.

Lovepat blogger Kaffe und Kuchen gives advice when she writes a post about German etiquette and manners. She states that living in Germany for almost 3 years has given her some expertise as to customs she has observed as an outsider. The insightful guide is written with extreme detail with topics such as greetings, office etiquette and what to do on someone's birthday. She is aware that she has an audience and embraces her role as a blogger. This is a crossroads where she is presenting her authentic experience yet presenting herself as an expert blogger; which Hookway (2008) argued.

Lovepat blogger 2 Sweden 4 Love offers a similar sentiment when she offers advice to others in her situation. "So whether you are an expat living in Sweden trying to find your way, an expat living somewhere else, or an American reading this post just because you are my friend ... I say to you, smile..." (2 Sweden 4 Love, 2014). Through blogging, lovepat bloggers are interacting in online and offline communities. As mentioned in a previous chapter, this gives lovepats the opportunity to not only offer advice about their experience, but to get experience on their own.

Most theoretical research has determined that individuals strive to convey the most positive presentation of self that is possible (Goffman, 1959; Arkin, 1981). However, lovepats are sharing their experience in a genuine way; trying to present themselves, show their true situation at hand and being relatable to their audience. As mentioned previously Hookway (2008) anticipated that bloggers present themselves in a way that is like an online diary; one that is almost anonymous because they are writing on a blog and not face-to-face. For lovepats, they are writing about their acculturation experience as it is, for the benefit of their friends, family and themselves. They are not concerned with trying to portray the most positive presentation of themselves because they are writing about their experiences as relatable persons. They may participate in the community of bloggers, but they are not trying to dominate the industry.

They also use their blog as a place to show their family how they are living abroad. The benefit of an online blog is the ability to update it easily, post photographs or videos and write what is on your mind. This can also be preserved like an online diary where lovepat families can check in with their loved one. However, lovepat bloggers also wrote a lot about homesickness. Studies have looked at sojourner's complaints about homesickness and found that even if an individual has a network in their new country, they will still experience homesickness (Hannigan, 2007). This can be compared to lovepat bloggers who may have a network through their spouse, however, the difference is that sojourners will return home and the lovepat blogger may not. Thus, the feeling of homesickness may be greater for the lovepat blogger.

CHAPTER 5: ANSWER & CONCLUSION

This chapter of the thesis will summarize the findings from the qualitative content analysis and the results from the previous chapter. This chapter will also provide an answer to the research question. After that, limitations and suggestions for further research will be discussed.

5.1 ANSWER TO RESEARCH QUESTION

The main Research Question of this research was: *How do expatriate bloggers (in International relationships) living in the EU portray their acculturation experience and themselves through their blog?*” Expatriate bloggers in International relationships, or lovepats as defined in this research are portraying their acculturation experience in many ways. They do this by discussing many themes mentioned in the summary above. Nonetheless, lovepat bloggers are portraying their acculturation experience by becoming a hybrid of two cultures: their own and their lovepat partner.

The first major themes looked at the acculturation strategies of the lovepat bloggers. The most common of the main categories related to acculturation were Comparing Cultures, Adapting to Local Culture and Lovepat Family and Culture. Through Berry’s (2004) acculturation framework, the question was to observe how these lovepats bloggers present their acculturation strategy; are they Culture A, turning into Culture B, or Culture AB? The results show that they are turning into a hybrid of Culture AB, by the high frequency of Integration posts. The second largest category, Separation entails that lovepat bloggers are trying to retain some part of their home culture as well. This is a conflicting finding where they are integrating but retaining their sense of self.

To answer how lovepat bloggers are portraying themselves, they are aware of their acculturation experience and using different self-presentation strategies to show this. Most lovepat bloggers are aware of their role as a blogger and showcasing their lives, while others use their blog as an online diary to share their personal lives. Lovepat bloggers are using their blog space as an online diary they are willing to share and participate in the blogging community as a member, not as someone trying to dominate the industry. Some lovepat bloggers use sarcasm as a way to make light of a situation while others lean towards the blogging community for advice and support. Hookway (2008) argues that blogs offer social

science a great insight into the personal lives of a blogger, even though they may be performing.

To truly answer the research question, it is important to understand the blog posts through the patterns and themes that emerge. This is why a thematic qualitative content analysis was used, to report the experiences and the reality of these lovepat bloggers (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5.2 CONCLUSION

This research looked at how expatriates in international relationships acculturate and portray themselves through blogging. These expatriates are a unique example because they can be classified as lovepats; individuals who move abroad for a partner or spouse for love. This entails that they will be making a permanent move and learning how to function in a country that is not their own. This is opposed to expatriates who move abroad for temporary work and migrants who are forced to leave their country.

When looking at theory, expat adjustment was deemed to be part of the acculturation process, since they are an expatriate. Yet, many lovepats experienced culture shock and homesickness even though they may have familiarized themselves with their new home previously. Living in another country permanently is different than staying for a work assignment or studying abroad. Meanwhile, acculturation strategies showed that lovepats are turning into a hybrid culture of AB where they mix their own culture with the culture of their partner. Berry's (2004) acculturation strategies were strong in identifying how lovepats integrated and had difficulties in their integration process.

Lovepats also had difficulties determining where their home was. Previous research exemplifies many definitions of home, but the most appropriate was the difference between home and homeland (Morley, 2002). Lovepats have roots in their homeland but can also call their newly created socio-cultural space with their partner their home.

In order to observe this phenomenon, blog posts of lovepats were analyzed to understand how they presented themselves. Lovepats used their blog as a personal diary to write about their acculturation experience. This was done in an authentic way where lovepats

wrote for their friends and family, but also for an audience. Lovepats were aware of their audience and often wrote in a way to inspire and give advice to others in their situation.

When looking at their blog posts, many themes emerged which created a story as to how they acculturated. Lovepats were integrating and adapting by learning the language and having a positive attitude towards integration. Yet, they created their own lives by comparing cultures, mixing cultures and connecting with the expat community.

Nonetheless, they went through culture shock and homesickness as a part of the process and thus felt in between cultures, had difficulties adapting and struggled with the concept of home.

This suggests that lovepat adjustment reflects the creation of a hybrid culture. Since they are in major contact with one different culture, similar to expat adjustment, the difference is that lovepats will fully immerse into this culture. Expats may have other assignments in other countries and will only be exposed to this new culture for a temporary period of time, while lovepats are committed to adjusting to the new culture and creating a hybrid AB culture.

5.3 REFLECTION

When conducting a Thematic Qualitative Content Analysis, it is important to understand the role of the researcher. We have thoughts and knowledge about the topic and yet we are also inclined to find aspects in our findings that we don't anticipate. Through exploring the themes of acculturation, I anticipated some kind of hybrid of culture AB. We are living in a globalized society where it is easier connect. Social media and computer-mediated technology such as Skype makes it easier to maintain cross-cultural relationships. Studying abroad and taking gap years are becoming popular trends for youth, while older generations consider working or retiring abroad.

It was surprising to even find three male lovepat bloggers, considering that through the search for blogs, there was a dominance of females in the blogging industry. It was also surprising that these three males had such a specific self-presentation strategy through sarcasm; it would be interesting to know if they behaved in person. The contrast of male to female bloggers is difficult to compare, since this research contained mostly female bloggers; given the opportunity to find more male bloggers would make further research interesting.

There was also a concern about the fact that all of the lovepat bloggers come from first world countries and lived in Western Europe. This could possibly imply that those who are affluent can be a lovepat who moves their entire life for another person. It can also say that there could be lovepats who acculturate from second or third world countries but choose not to blog about the experience. Also, the same can be said about Central and Eastern Europe; where blogs may not be written in English and not suitable for this research project.

5.3A LIMITATIONS

It is always important to note that all scientific research has its limitations. First of all, this thesis research is only a small representation of many lovepat relationships occurring around the world. It may also be that there are more of these relationships exist, but individuals choose not to blog about this. Also, bloggers may be writing about their acculturation experience, but keep the fact that they moved for love as a personal detail. Lovepat bloggers seem to be a new, emerging genre of bloggers and researching them is still in its infancy. It must also be noted that the view of the lovepat relationship itself can be bias. Although this is a study about lovepat bloggers, their relationship and how they present it is only based on how they represent it. There is no discussion from their lovepat partner, nor many comments from them directly and their role in a lovepat bloggers acculturation process.

There is also a limitation about the authenticity of their blog posts. Researchers are trusting what these lovepat bloggers are saying is true and not false statements or overexaggerated. This was made difficult with the many sarcastic posts written by some lovepat bloggers. Nonetheless, as researchers, we must be aware that lovepat bloggers will blog about what they want to blog about and realize an audience is reading about their lives. Although the self-presentation may be based on real life accounts like an online diary, there might always be information or stories left out on purpose that could have changed the results of this research.

Another limitation is that this research is not totally representative of the EU. Upon searching for blogs for this research, it was difficult to find lovepat bloggers living in Central Europe and Eastern Europe. It was important to find a variety of countries for this research to see differences in the data, yet the lovepat countries represented are all in Western Europe. Also,

lovepat bloggers are living in developed countries, which may provide a different acculturation experience than one living in a lesser developed country.

5.3B SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are a few possibilities for further research on the topic of lovepats and their acculturation process. The first possibility is looking at lovepat bloggers in other countries that go beyond Europe. Further research could look at individuals outside of the first world, either by conducting interviews or ethnographic fieldwork to understand and compare their acculturation strategies. This may also include researching lovepat bloggers who are not from an English-speaking country. It would be interesting to see how their acculturation process differs, especially when they need to find a common language to speak. Also, looking at countries outside of Europe, and even smaller, rural areas may be interesting where there is more of an urgency to acculturate since English may not be spoken as much.

Researchers can also use a different method to understand how lovepats acculturate. Interviews can be compared to these results to understand how lovepats see their acculturation situation. It may also be interesting to interview the partner of a lovepat to understand their view and role in the acculturation process. An interview can also offer more insight by asking questions that go beyond the blog, such as understanding why they chose to blog and what they choose not to blog about.

Lastly, further research can also look at two foreigners moving abroad to another country. During the data selection, there were many blogs consisting of married couples moving to another country permanently, for work or pleasure. Having a pre-existing relationship before moving abroad could provide for interesting comparative research to see if a strong relationship is necessary or helpful for acculturation.

Despite the drawbacks and limitations of this research, this unique topic provides innovative research on how lovepats acculturate. Analyzing blog posts are a modern medium that is easily accessible and provide in-depth stories for researchers. Studying lovepats is also interesting for researchers because they are in their own category; they are not migrants, sojourners or expats, but individuals who move abroad for love.

CHAPTER 6: REFERENCES

6.1 IN-TEXT REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: CODING FRAME

Main Category	Sub-Category	Definition: Text where/with	Frequency
Integration: Involves the interest in both maintaining the original culture and interacting with members in the mainstream society.	Adapting to local culture	Lovepat demonstrates active participation in local culture.	190
	Comparing Cultures	Lovepat compares home culture with local culture	315
	Expat Life	Description of the expat lifestyle	107
	Local Family & Culture	Demonstrates description of local family and/or culture	169
	Local Food	Mention of food from local culture	61
	Local Language	Mention of learning, speaking or writing in local language	130
	Lovepat Relationship	Text that mentions the relationship with lovepat partner	63
	Mixing Cultures	Mention of blending culture of lovepat and partner	49
	Positive about Local culture	Positive mentions about local culture	72
Assimilation: Individuals replace their ethnic culture with active participations in the dominant society	Rejecting home culture	Expression of rejecting home culture in favor of local culture	28
Separation:	Culture Shock	Expression of culture shock	60

Preservation of individuals' original culture and the avoidance of contact with members in the dominant culture	Home Family & Culture	Lovepat describes home family & culture	121
	Homesick	Mention of missing home	65
	Negative about Lovepat culture	Negative mention about lovepat culture	128
	Not Adapting to Culture	Lovepat actively demonstrates not adopting to lovepat culture	23
Marginalization: Individuals fail to maintain their original culture and at the same time fail to establish relationships with host nationals	Difficulty Adapting	Situations where lovepat struggles to adapt to lovepat culture	153
	Feeling in between cultures	Demonstrates difficulty to relate to lovepat or original culture/feeling in between both cultures.	98
Self-Presentation: How lovepat bloggers express themselves through their blog	Advice	Lovepat offers advice about living in Lovepat country	97
	Sarcasm	Lovepat expresses sarcasm	409
	Self-Realization NEG	Lovepat makes personal a negative self-realization	77
	Self-Realization NEU	Lovepat makes a personal neutral self-realization	128
	Self-Realization POS	Lovepat makes a personal positive self-realization	143
	Talking to Readers	Lovepat directly speaks to readers of blog	84
MISC: Miscellaneous category and organization sub-category for	Quotes to use for paper	Segments to use for thesis	32
	Information	Lovepat provides outside information for stories	242

researcher.			
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APPENDIX B: BLOG POSTS

Blog	Blogger Origin	Sex of Blogger	Location	Blog Post	Link
Bitterballe n Bruid https://bitterballenbruid.com	UK	F	Netherlands	Learning Dutch is F*cking Hard	https://bitterballenbruid.com/2015/05/25/learning-dutch-is-fcking-hard/
				Dutch Related Stuff that Happened in April 2015	https://bitterballenbruid.com/2015/05/07/dutch-related-stuff-that-happened-in-april-2015/
				Being a New Expat in NL and Learning Dutch	https://bitterballenbruid.com/2016/03/24/being-a-new-expat-in-nl-and-learning-dutch/
				13 Things I Have Learned in 2 years of Living in The Netherlands	https://bitterballenbruid.com/2016/04/14/13-things-i-have-learned-in-2-years-of-living-in-the-netherlands/
				7 Ways Living in The Netherlands Has Changed Me	https://bitterballenbruid.com/2018/03/19/7-ways-living-in-the-netherlands-has-changed-me/

					<u>changed-me/</u>
Canadutch http://www.canadutch.nl	Canada	F	Netherlands	Expat Life: Creating Your Own Traditions	http://www.canadutch.nl/wordpress/archives/2853
				The Netherlands	http://www.canadutch.nl/wordpress/about/netherlands
				Off With Their Shoes!	http://www.canadutch.nl/wordpress/archives/3769
				Stuck in the Middle	http://www.canadutch.nl/wordpress/archives/723
				The Worst is Over	http://www.canadutch.nl/wordpress/archives/134
Turning Dutch https://turningdutch.wordpress.com	UK	F	Netherlands	Part Me, Part Expat, Part Local: Authenticity and Expat Life	https://turningdutch.wordpress.com/2018/02/05/part-me-part-expat-part-local-authenticity-and-expat-life/
				One Year of Dutchification	https://turningdutch.wordpress.com/2017/09/07/one-year-of-dutchification/
				5 ways you can make Expat Life Easier for	https://turningdutch.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/5-ways-you-can-make-expat-life-easier-for/

				Yourself	<u>ways-you-can-make-expat-life-easier-for-yourself/</u>
				What Picture do we Paint of Ourselves Living Life in a Second Language?	<u>https://turningdutch.wordpress.com/2014/04/11/what-picture-do-we-paint-of-ourselves-living-life-in-a-second-language/</u>
				Expat Life: The Dark Side of Making Friends	<u>https://turningdutch.wordpress.com/2014/03/10/expat-life-the-dark-side-of-making-friends/</u>
Adventures in Integration <u>http://inburgeringadventure.blogspot.nl/</u>	Australia	F	Netherlands	Why is it so hard to make friends with other mamas	<u>http://inburgeringadventure.blogspot.nl/2013/07/why-is-it-so-hard-to-make-friends-with.html</u>
				Is That Light I see at the End of the Tunnel?	<u>http://inburgeringadventure.blogspot.nl/2011/10/is-that-light-i-see-at-end-of-tunnel.html</u>
				The Final Frontier	<u>http://inburgeringadventure.blogspot.nl/2012/09/the-</u>

					final-frontier.html
				Coping with Grandparents on the other side of the world	http://inburgering-adventure.blogspot.nl/2012/09/grandparents.html
				Learning the Lingo	http://inburgering-adventure.blogspot.nl/2011/09/learning-lingo.html
OMG My Wife is German https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com	USA	M	Germany	Culture Shock: And Still MORE Things That Suck About Living in Germany...	https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com/2016/05/02/culture-shock-and-still-more-things-that-suck-about-living-in-germany/
				InterNations: An American Expat Answers Questions About Living in Germany	https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com/2014/10/20/internations-an-american-expat-answers-questions-about-living-in-germany/
				American Expat Gleefully Passes German Integration Course	https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com/2014/07/07/american-expat-gleefully-passes-german-integration-

					course/
				Criminal Compatibility: Why German-American Couples Make the Best Match	https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com/2016/03/14/i-married-a-german-woman-and-apparently-found-my-very-own-partner-in-crime/
				Wedding Tips for Marrying a German: 5 Things to Know Before 'Die Hochzeit'	https://ohgodmywifeisgerman.com/2013/05/13/marrying-a-german-5-things-to-know-before-die-hochzeit/
Kaffee und Kuchen http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co	Canada	F	Germany	A Canadian Thanksgiving in Germany	http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co/home/a-canadian-thanksgiving-in-germany
				Where's Home?	http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co/home/wheres-home
				Frustrations and Doubts as an Expat	http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co/home/frustrations-and-doubts-as-an-expat
				All for a Driver's License...	http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co/home/all-for-a-drivers-license

					me/all-for-a-drivers-license
				German Manners and Etiquette	http://www.kaffeeundkuchen.co/home/german-manners-and-etiquette
An American in Germany http://anamericaninGermany.com -	USA	M	Germany	All Work and No Play Makes Jack... An American	http://anamericaninGermany.com/all-work-and-no-play-makes-jack-an-american/
				The Move- Part 1: The Apartment	http://anamericaninGermany.com/the-move-part-1-the-apartment/
				I Don't Know Deutsch, but I Know I Love You	http://anamericaninGermany.com/i-dont-know-deutsch-but-i-know-i-love-you/
				You Drive Me Crazy	http://anamericaninGermany.com/you-drive-me-crazy/
				To Eat or Not To Eat- Part 1: McDonald's	http://anamericaninGermany.com/to-eat-or-not-to-eat-part-1/
My German Life https://sarahstaebler.wordpress.com/2013/08/27/how-talking-to-a-stranger-on-a-train-restored-my-faith-in-humanity/	USA	F	Germany	How Talking to a Stranger on a Train Restored My Faith in Humanity	https://sarahstaebler.wordpress.com/2013/08/27/how-talking-to-a-stranger-on-a-train-restored-my-faith-in-humanity/

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				One More Week	https://sarahstaehler.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/one-more-week-2/
				Coming to a Close	https://sarahstaehler.wordpress.com/2015/07/29/coming-to-a-close/
				Happy Fourth!	https://sarahstaehler.wordpress.com/2012/07/04/happy-fourth/
				Karnevalsgottendienst 2016	https://sarahstaehler.wordpress.com/2016/03/13/karnevalsgottesdienst-2016/
Something Swedish http://theswedishlife.blogspot.nl/	USA	F	Sweden	Adjustment: “Justering”	https://somethingswedish.wordpress.com/2012/01/17/adjustment-justering/
				When the Cat’s Away, the Mice will Play – “När Katten är Borta Dansar Råttorna på Bordet”	https://somethingswedish.wordpress.com/2012/01/24/when-the-cats-away-the-mice-will-play-nar-katten-ar-borta-dansar-rattorna-pa-bordet/

				Shopping in Swedish Supermarkets	https://somethingswedish.wordpress.com/2012/06/04/shopping-in-swedish-supermarkets/
				Being American in Sweden	https://somethingswedish.wordpress.com/2013/09/04/being-an-american-in-sweden/
				Lessons Learned	https://somethingswedish.wordpress.com/2013/12/06/lessons-learned/
2 Sweden 4 Love http://2sweden4love.com	USA	F	Sweden	How living abroad can break your heart	http://2sweden4love.com/2016/07/26/how-living-abroad-can-break-your-heart/
				Culture Shock Sweden	http://2sweden4love.com/2013/03/12/culture-shock-sweden/
				Committing to your Situation	http://2sweden4love.com/2015/04/21/committing-to-your-situation/
				This Place we call	http://2sweden4love.com

				Home	ve.com/2014/11/05/this-place-we-call-home/
				Two Years in Sweden	http://2sweden4love.com/2014/07/12/two-years-in-sweden/
The Swede Life http://theswedishlife.blogspot.nl	USA	F	Sweden	Take me to Normal Land	http://theswedelife.blogspot.nl/2010/10/take-me-to-normal-land.html
				My Provincial Swedish (so called) Life	http://theswedelife.blogspot.nl/2010/09/my-provincial-swedish-so-called-life.html
				So how is my Swedish? How am I adjusting to living abroad?	http://theswedelife.blogspot.nl/2010/05/how-am-i-adjusting-to-living-abroad-so.html
				Kalkon, Take me Away!	http://theswedelife.blogspot.nl/2009/08/kalkon-take-me-away-okay-you-have-to-be.html
				It was a long dark winter	http://theswedelife.blogspot.nl/2012/03/it-was-long-dark-winter.html

Lost in Stockholm http://lostinstockholm.com	USA	F	Sweden	7 Things I Don't Really Hate About Sweden Anymore	http://lostinstockholm.com/2013/03/01/7-things-i-dont-really-hate-about-sweden-anymore/
				The War on Christmas: the 24th versus 25th	http://lostinstockholm.com/2013/01/03/the-war-on-christmas-24th-versus-25th/
				10 things I hate about Sweden	http://lostinstockholm.com/2009/08/15/10-things-i-hate-about-sweden/
				Dating in Sweden...We Americans need a guide	http://lostinstockholm.com/2007/10/10/dating-in-swedenwe-americans-need-a-guide/
				Bargaining at Hötorgets Market	http://lostinstockholm.com/2012/06/30/bargaining-at-hotorgets-market/
Englishman in Italy https://englishmaninitaly.org	UK	M	Italy	It is Monday morning and I really need a bacon butty	https://englishmaninitaly.org/2013/04/22/it-is-monday-morning-and-i-really-need-a-bacon-buty/

y.org/				Part 2: How to swap a UK driving licence to an Italian one in 340 difficult steps	https://englishmainitaly.org/2013/03/26/part-2-how-to-swap-a-uk-driving-licence-to-an-italian-one-in-340-difficult-steps/
				Who am I? Expat, Immigrant or Zingero	https://englishmainitaly.org/2013/03/25/who-am-i-expat-immigrant-or-zingero/
				Just another average day in Italy	https://englishmainitaly.org/2017/10/11/just-another-average-day-in-italy/
				Pecora Nera's Italian travel tips.	https://englishmainitaly.org/2017/05/30/pecora-neras-italian-travel-tips/
Married to Italy https://marriedtoitaly.com	USA	F	Italy	Pointing the finger at me: My 5 biggest mistakes as an immigrant expat in Italy.	https://marriedtoitaly.com/2013/10/25/american-expat-immigrant-italy-mistakes/
				Becoming Bold and Italic... collectively.	https://marriedtoitaly.com/2014/04/29/becoming-bold-and-italic/

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				An American speaking Italian is like a dancer having two left feet.	https://marriedtoitaly.com/2014/07/04/american-conversing-in-italian/
				6 years in Italy, and I'm still dumbfounded on a daily basis	https://marriedtoitaly.com/2014/07/15/6-years-italy-anniversary/
				The fear of the fake: What "authenticity" means to a foreigner in a strange land.	https://marriedtoitaly.com/2015/03/17/authenticity-in-immigrant-life/
Surviving in Italy https://survivingitaly.com	USA	F	Italy	Being an American Expat in Italy Means Always Missing "Home": Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock	https://survivingitaly.com/2014/04/02/being-an-american-expat-in-italy-means-always-missing-home-culture-shock-and-reverse-culture-shock/
				24 Ways that Italy Changed My Life for the Better and Weird	https://survivingitaly.com/2014/05/21/25-ways-that-italy-changed-my-life-for-the-better-and-weird/

				The Difference between Stereotypes and Cultural Characteristics	https://survivinginitaly.com/2014/08/21/the-difference-between-stereotypes-and-cultural-characteristics/
				Sharing a Bed (Without Sharing a Culture)	https://survivinginitaly.com/2017/12/27/sharing-a-bed-without-sharing-a-culture/
				How to Fight Expat Depression: Just Remember You're Not Alone	https://survivinginitaly.com/2014/11/07/how-to-fight-expat-depression-just-remember-youre-not-alone/
Hot Italian Life https://hottitalianlife.com/	USA	F	Italy	My nightmare learning Italian	https://hottitalianlife.com/2013/06/23/my-nightmare-learning-italian/
				Reverse Culture Shock	https://hottitalianlife.com/2013/09/13/going-back-to-america-only-in-the-usa/
				Why are Italians so thin when they eat PASTA every day: Italy thin, America fat.	https://hottitalianlife.com/2013/01/15/why-are-italians-so-thin-when-they-eat-pasta-every-day/

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				What food is truly Italian anyway? A list of misconstrued Americanized ideas	<u>https://hottitalianlife.com/2013/04/28/what-food-is-truly-italian-anyway-a-list-of-misconstrued-americanized-ideas/</u>
				Funny little things about Italy: culture shocking	<u>https://hottitalianlife.com/2013/02/24/funny-little-things-about-italy-culture-shocking/</u>