Pinning Down Identity in Social Media: Food Cultural Transfer on Pinterest

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Summary

This research has been conducted within the realm of where today's digital media society and the timeless concept of cultural identity overlap. The aim of this thesis is to explore the nature of online cultural identity management. By focusing on the social media platform, Pinterest, this study considers the food-pinning behavior of a group of Americans living in Finland and connects their online actions with their cultural identity.

Through an examination of Pinterest as a social space, and even a *third place*, the relative theoretical literature provides and interesting background for a contemporary discussion on the matter. Literature on food as a cultural marker is also brought into consideration. Using the methods of introspection and an adapted version of virtual ethnography, a study was conducted, and ultimately, the analysis of data obtained from the Pinterest boards of ten individuals shows that the vast majority of food-related information in this setting is US-sourced. A questionnaire provides further insight into the individuals' Pinterest usage.

I argue that pinning is an act of online identity management, whether it is a conscious act or a situational effect, and that using Pinterest maintains and even strengthens these individuals' cultural identity as Americans. This study adds to current discussions pertaining to transnationalism, globalization, and online cultural identity, as well as opens channels for further research on this dynamic topic, which is needed to understand ourselves as cultural beings in the digital age.

Key words: social media, Pinterest, expats, transnationalism, food culture, cultural transfer, online identity, virtual ethnography

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1. Introduction

1.1. "This sparked my Pinterest!"

In the second decade of this century, many of us find ourselves constantly adapting our social being to the ever-evolving digital information society. For those of us who have been swept away by the wave of social media, finding our place online and maintaining our virtual identities has become a habitual practice, whether it be sharing a photo, updating a status, tweeting from an event, or pinning an interest. The notion that online identity is separate from "real" identity has dwindled, as it is now more common to view virtual identity, or identities, as part of a multifaceted self. As the amount of time we spend looking at our smartphones fails to decrease, we are forced to come to terms with the fact that part of our lives are lived online, in what was once affectionately referred to as cyber space.

As users of social media, digital applications, etc., we have a great deal of control over how we may be perceived by others. Truth and facts are not required when building an online identity, which can mean creativity, aspirations, and imagination can dictate one's online presence. This can be seen in digital multiplayer gaming, for example, in which we are given agency to create identities that may or may not represent our physical "real life" selves. When it comes to social media, however, identities are commonly thought to more closely reflect non-digital life, although this is, of course, never guaranteed. There are various social media outlets that allow us to advertise ourselves − career-wise, relationship-wise, and otherwise − with the hopes of future gain, whether it be professionally, socially, or monetarily. It is not uncommon for one individual to use a variety of social media platforms, each perhaps for a different purpose. This practice allows for the possibility of constructing more than one identity for one individual, or as another way to see it, one multifaceted identity for one person. In a world of selfies, memes, and food porn, our (seemingly) increasingly narcissistic society has raised the importance of online identity to a level that often demands attention and, at least for some, requires constant maintenance.

When it comes to identity, online or not, culture plays a significant role in how identity is constructed and interpreted by others. Our culture may affect, for example, what kind of profile pictures we might deem acceptable and favorable. Our

culture may dictate which language or languages we use in social media. If we think about Facebook, as one example, certainly cultural events, like holidays, can have effects on the kinds of things that people post. Furthermore, social media can facilitate exposure to other cultures, by connecting people all over the world, and allowing for unprecedented insight into the daily lives of people in various geographic and cultural locations. Social media can even be seen as a kind of cultural archive, logging events and interactions over time. This type of digital curation of culture as well as the evolution of cultural identities is a research area that is just beginning to be explored, as observable data is created year after year.

As an active user of various social media outlets myself, and as one who is deeply interested in how culture is reflected in identity, I have chosen to explore the concept of online cultural identity management through this study. To be able to zoom in on this topic through a particular online scene, I have decided to examine, from a cultural perspective, the social media website, Pinterest, a digital curation site of images that link to websites. In 2012, when this study began, I sensed that Pinterest was "up and coming," perhaps not yet having reached its peak. At the end of this study, reflecting on the last four years, I, as a social media user, and more specifically, a "pinner," have the feeling that the peak was indeed reached somewhere in the meantime, as far as being "new," "hip," and "in." Some reports disagree,[1] but we will return to this discussion later.

I aim to show how Pinterest is being used by Americans living in Finland by observing what kind of food related material they choose to include on their boards. Here, I examine two overlapping main concepts: the role of food in cultural identity and the management of online cultural identity in social media. I am using food as a focal point to more deeply explore the identity issue. In order to better understand the connection of these concepts the following research question was posed: **How do Americans living in Finland use the social media website, Pinterest, when it comes to the category of food?**

In this thesis, I reflect on my own journey in life as an American in Finland as well as a participator in social media from its infancy. I aim to relate my experiences and my findings in this study to the academic conversation on online identity.

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[1] http://qz.com/581191/why-2016-is-poised-to-be-the-year-that-it-all-comes-together-for-pinterest/ (accessed 3.3.2016).

Two primary sources were used in this research. Firstly, I observed and analyzed the food related Pinterest boards of a group of Americans living in Finland to find out from where, geographically, the pins were originating.[2] Secondly, I distributed a questionnaire to this same group with the purpose of drawing connections between the pins and the cultural identity of the participants. The answers to the questionnaire provide crucial material that gives insight into the participants' identities, both on- and offline, as well as motivations for using this particular media.

1.2. Thoughts on McCulture

When I first travelled to Finland in 2002, I must admit that I was relieved when I finally got the chance to eat at a McDonald's. It was not because I think McDonald's has superior food to other places in Finland, but, I did find comfort in the familiarity of the Golden Arches. Is this wrong? Did it take away from an otherwise "authentic" Finnish experience? Does the presence of McDonald's in Finland make the country less of a unique place? On the contrary, it is by eating at McDonald's in Finland that I have discovered some key cultural elements that distinguish Finland from my home country, the United States.

The Finnish love of rye bread is evident at McDonald's, as one can choose to have a burger on rye if one wishes. It has only been in recent years that breakfast items have been able to be found on the menu at McDonald's restaurants in Finland (Egg McMuffins are now available). However, the noticeably less options and availability of breakfast foods highlight the cultural difference of Americans eating out for breakfast more routinely than Finns. Another noticeable difference between the chain restaurant in the two countries is that the workers at McDonald's in Finland are not mainly school drop-outs, retirees in need of extra income, or low-classed minorities as they often tend to be in the US. Instead, in a Finnish McDonald's one will often find multilingual, educated young workers who seem to have ambition and drive. These observations demonstrate a fundamental difference in societal structures between the two countries: more dramatic social divides exist in the US. Furthermore, the Finnish invention of and belief in xylitol is evident in that Happy Meals often come with xylitol chewing gum.

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[2] See my definition of *pin origin* in Section 1.7.

It is by visiting McDonald's in Finland that I have easily been able to make these observations about Finnish culture, because this is an environment that is otherwise so familiar to me. I find these revealed differences very interesting − they show some elements of Finnish culture that are strong enough to push through such an established cultural brand as McDonald's. They exemplify what William Marling, in his book, *How "American" is Globalization*, calls the "persistence of the local," which deals with how local culture actually determines what can and cannot be altered within the culture due to globalization.[3]

Therefore, when contemplating non-US city spaces, such as a shopping center, main street, business district, or downtown area, a McDonald's (or any such brand) may not always be out of place. After all, it is a global brand and every city space is a part of a global society. In my opinion, the importance should be on how cultural brands such as McDonald's fit into that city space. The "persistence of the local" must be allowed, observed, and appreciated, while at the same time "forces from various metropolises … become indigenized."[4]

1.3. "I'm Spartacus!"

The heading of this section is taken from the 1960 Stanley Kubrick film, *Spartacus*.[5] In the film, these iconic words are declared by a multitude of individuals in an attempt to show solidarity within their group (of rebel slaves) and avoid turning in the real Spartacus for punishment. When the group of slaves, including the real Spartacus, who had led the men into rebellion, are given the choice of either exposing the rebellious instigator to the Roman officials or being put to death, the men defy authority and stand up in turn, shouting, "I'm Spartacus!"[6] This classic film and this epic scene (perhaps somewhat surprisingly) help illustrate my starting point for a discussion on identity, and more specifically, identity within a social space. In this section I will introduce and lay a foundation for the theories that will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 2.

There are many identifying labels any one individual can bear. For instance, I am, in no particular order, a daughter, a mother, an American, a resident of Finland, an entrepreneur, a student, a Christian, a choir member, a woman, and the

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[3] Marling 2006, viii.
[4] Appadurai 1990, 1.
[5] http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/414107/Spartacus/ (accessed 6.4.2016).
[6] Kubrick (film).

list goes on and on. As is common with most people, the labels I include in my identity have changed, and will continue to change, over time. Interestingly, how I see my identity is always in relationship to other people or other groups of people. John Donne's immortal words, "No man is an island,"[7] hold true even today. As independent, individualized, or self-sufficient one may be, no human being can escape being bound to the human race, and therefore being connected to other people. At the very least, every individual is someone's child, which has a lasting effect on the one who has given birth. In Western culture, even as we often strive for individualized everything, the loneliest of loners must interact with other people at some point.

If we take a look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid,[8] often referenced in psychology studies, we can see that connectivity, or "belongingness" as it is here referred to, is not only an inevitability, it is a human need.
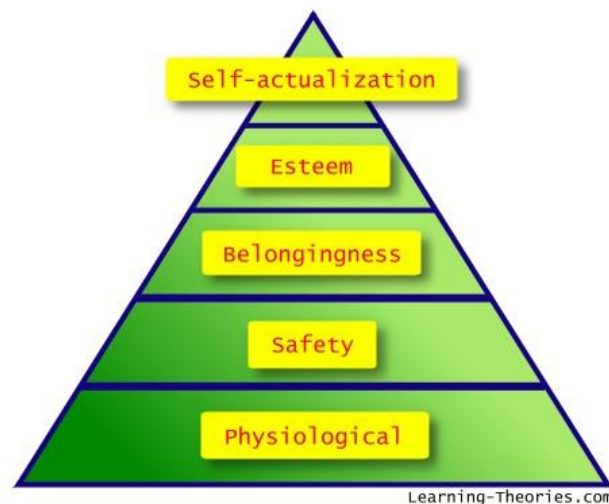
Image 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid.

Emotional connections are essential to human existence and, once life and safety have been secured, are a primal need. Furthermore, it is upon the foundation of social structure, that self-worth, self-appreciation, and ultimately self-actualization are realized. When thinking about the development of the digital society, it only makes

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[7] Donne 1624, 31
http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/DONNE/DEVOTIONS/Download.pdf (accessed 21.3.2016).
[8] http://www.learning-theories.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs.html (accessed 21.3.2016).

sense that people would establish and organize communities and social connections of all kinds on the internet, to mirror physical human connections. Considering this need to belong and be social, and since in the mid-2010s many of us do indeed live a significant portion of our lives online, the enormity of what has become social media is not surprising.

The line, "I'm Spartacus," represents, among other things, solidarity, an expression of this basic need for belonging and inclusion, taking pride in group identity, and individuals acting as a group. Each man who stood up and shouted the phrase was, by doing so, defining who he was to himself and to others by publicly associating himself with a group. The notion of doing this is also visible in many social media settings, as well. An example from 2010 occurred on the social media network, Twitter, when a then 27-year-old man jokingly tweeted a bomb threat at a British airport, out of worry that he would miss his flight:

> *Crap! Robin Hood airport is closed. You've got a week and a bit to get your shit together otherwise I'm blowing the airport sky high!!*

For this tweet, the man, Paul Chambers, was arrested and fined thousands of pounds as punishment. The Twitter community, not at all happy with this (in their view) overly-serious treatment of what was meant to be a joke, banned together under the hashtag, #IAmSpartacus,[9] to protest the court's decision. At that time, the hashtag became the most trending one, globally.[10]

This anecdote to some extent exemplifies the magnitude of what social media has become as well as how intrinsically connected now both human nature and identity are to digital media. The concept of expressing identity within a social space is a cornerstone of the foundation of this thesis, and I expound on this concept in Chapter 2, but for now, I would like to introduce another cornerstone of this study: food.

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[9] This is another version of the phrase, although I prefer to stick to the version with the contraction ("I'm Spartacus!"), as that is what it sounds to me like they are actually saying in the film.
[10] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/nov/12/iamspartacus-campaign-twitter-airport (accessed 21.3.2016).

1.4. Food, glorious food!

Brillat-Savarin's well-known quote about food, translated as, "you are what you eat,"[11] quaintly expresses how understanding a person's food habits directly contributes to the perception of the make-up of that person, both physically and symbolically. If we go back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid, food equals life and must be secured before a person can even begin to address higher-leveled needs. However, if we think about the progression of levels of needs, food can play a significant role at the higher end of the pyramid as well. For example, in societies all over the world people physically come together to eat. Moreover, the art and skill of cooking can be developed into a career or hobby. Food has always been an important part of culture; what people eat can define them in a multitude of ways. Gastronomical habits symbolize culture as well as define cultural boundaries.[12] What and how we think about food is directly related to our understanding of our own culture and how we perceive the culture of others.[13]

We are what we eat and food is life. Because the existence of food determines one's very survival, food has a unique, sanctified place in culture. Food is used in religion, in celebration, in mourning; in just about any culturally significant event, food has its place. Massimo Montanari, as he lovingly writes about the role of food in history in various cultures, points out towards the end of his book, *Let the Meatballs Rest*, how closely food is connected to a person's cultural identity. He explains how, although people use food as markers of their native culture to separate themselves from others, the inconstant nature of food traditions expose the ever-changing and ever-adapting nature of mankind. Montanari gives the example of so-called "Mediterranean food." Certain dishes that originated from that area, such as fermented fish, have completely vanished from that part of the world in terms of historical, cultural food. Likewise, much of what is typically thought of as "Mediterranean," like tomatoes, beans, and eggplant came to the area from other parts of the world.[14]

A person's food choices are determined by a variety of factors. One such factor is geographic location. These days, large grocery store chains may create the

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[11] Brillat-Savarin 1826, 3.
[12] Gabaccia 1998, 8.
[13] Narayan 1995, 64.
[14] Montanari 2012, 157-158.

illusion that food options, at least in modern Western countries, seem to be quite standardized. In Finland, for instance, one has access to items such as bananas, oranges, and even sweet potatoes all year long, so it can be easy to forget about seasonal and local products. However, the *proximity* to resources plays a large role in determining diet.[15] Even in circumstances where one can choose from a selection of a multitude of foods from all over the world, prices still reflect the items' ease of access. Although the significance of proximity has weakened with the rise of globalization and supermarkets as well as an increase over the second half of the last century in women returning to work and seeking quick, ready-made foods to replace cooking from scratch,[16] recent food trends have made eating seasonally and locally more popular in the past few years. Tied into this idea of proximity are environmental factors. Climate and land usage (whether the land is urban, farmland, etc.) directly affect the natural resources of that environment. If one lives in the right circumstances, he or she can farm their own food, based on what the climate will allow. If one lives in an area which sells local produce, he or she has the option to support and benefit from the environment by buying and eating food which has not been shipped long distances.

Being from South Carolina and now living in Finland, I have had to adjust my expectations regarding significant differences in what kinds of foods are readily available from local resources. Since Finland is a much colder climate, one cannot expect to find a lot of locally grown fruits and vegetables. As I was used having access to fresh peaches at a relatively low cost, for example in the summer months in South Carolina, in Finland, I do not buy peaches, as they are imported and are ripened during transit and do not offer the same goodness, and they are more expensive. As a result, I am not passing down a tradition of making and eating peach cobbler on summer evenings with vanilla ice cream to my children, as my mother did with me, and her mother did with her. I have adapted my eating practices and traditions to where I live, geographically speaking, just as Montanari observed about food culture in general.[10]

When a person lives abroad, food is among the most common answers to the question, "what do you miss about home?" Personally, I have often sought out American foods, brought them back with me to Finland after visiting the US, and

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[15] Shortridge and Shortridge 1998, 2.
[16] http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21443166 (accessed 7.4.2016).

learned a number of substitutions for ingredients I cannot find in Finland but need to satisfy my taste for home. There are American stores, physical and online, in Finland, just as there are American sections or aisles in some of the larger grocery stores. However, I have noticed that the majority of what is offered in these stores or sections of stores is a far cry from the foods that I miss and desire the most. Further investigation would be needed to fully understand the motives and goals of these stores in featuring the products that they do, and finding out whether specialized inventory is chosen based on what is perceived to be US American or as an attempt to cater to the Finnish palate.

Pilcher gives concrete examples of roles of food throughout history shaped by geographical, political, and cultural situations, and also how food has also been an instigator in shaping the course of history. For example, the spread of sugar and spices affected the world in dramatic ways.[17] Although Muslims brought sugar cane to the Mediterranean area around the year 1000,[18] most Europeans did not develop a taste for sweet things until it became a desired quality of such newly introduced items as coffee, tea, and chocolate, which became more readily available due to the slave trade and plantation building that developed after Columbus' voyage of 1492. Although a full account of the story is not necessary for this paper, it is noteworthy and in our interest to recognize that the crystalized grains and powders we now keep on our kitchen shelves and counters may seem mundane and commonplace. However, these food items have great power; they once drove nations to war and even today are able to not only dictate trends on social media, but drive entire markets and economies. The foods we "cannot live without" are part of the very foundation of our societies. It becomes slightly less hard for us post-modern folk to imagine that these same ingredients wreaked havoc by causing disease and dictating commerce when we acknowledge that both Diabetes and the junk food industry are still alive and well today.[13]

In an article on food and its relationship with identity, Fischler amusingly points to a study done involving rats, who are apparently very capable of learning about food. In this case, the rats demonstrated aversion learning, quickly recognizing that they should avoid food that would upset their stomachs. The rats also

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[17] Pilcher 2006, 31-33.
[18] https://dianabuja.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/eighth-century-trade-in-the-mediterranean-the-spread-of-sugar/ (accessed 21.3.20016).

approached new foods systematically and with caution. Their behavior can, on a very basic level, teach us a little about how we as humans incorporate food into our diets. Fischler goes on to talk about food incorporation on a more symbolic level. For example, when an individual incorporates a particular food into her diet, she is simultaneously incorporated into a certain culinary group made up of people who practice eating that food. Further, Fischler asserts that when individuals eat, they do so within a culture with a specific world view, giving the act of eating the power to classify people into different groups – as a taxonomy system.[19] Although it may be more common to think that a group of people dictates what foods are eaten within that group, it is also justifiable to think that it is the food choices themselves that categorize people into certain groups.

The current online food scene, much of which is illustrated on Pinterest, shows this double taxonomy system at work. When a pinner chooses to pin a food related item on one of her boards, incorporating that food idea into her life, as it were, she is at the same time joining ranks with other people connected to that food idea – and on Pinterest, there are always people connected to food ideas. As she is included in a specific group or online cultural society, she is automatically, whether she wants to or not, associated with others in that group, as she shares at least part of a particular world view. Here we come back to the idea of identity building on social media, which is the theme at the heart of this thesis. By pinning food related pins, pinners are indeed building their cultural identity. This act both defines one's self-perception as well as the image that others hold of an individual, little by little, with every pin. Therefore, food and its relationship to cultural identity is the other cornerstone of this study, used as a vehicle to explore online cultural identity management.

1.5. Americans living in Finland

In order to examine the connection between food and cultural identity in today's digital society through a formulated study, I needed to go to where the action was happening. Furthermore, I needed people whose behaviors, or practices, I could observe. When considering how to highlight food related cultural indicators, I concluded that observing a group of people outside of their native cultural environment could be a place to start. *American* and *living in Finland* became the

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[19] Fischler 1988, 279.

inclusion criteria for the participant observation group. This came about for two main reasons. Firstly, the phrase *American in living in Finland* describes me, and I have a deep interest in coming to terms with what that means for me and my identity. Secondly, I found the restrictions that the phrase lends suitable for limiting a plausible group of people to study. By choosing to observe a group of Americans living in Finland in an online environment, in this case, Pinterest, I could investigate the significance of food and the role it plays in their online cultural identity.

As a bit of a side note, but worth bringing up at this point, a question of terminology arose when it came time to write about the individuals involved. Previous research has shown that terms like *expat* or *immigrant* can carry with them certain connotations.[20] *Expat* could indicate that the person is abroad for a limited period of time and has made the choice to be abroad. *Immigrant* may carry the connotation of desperation and necessity. Most Americans living in the US today see themselves as immigrants or descendants of immigrants. However, when it comes to Americans who live abroad, the term *immigrant* does not usually come up when describing one's living situation.

In hopes of resolving this issue, I contacted the participants of this study by email and Facebook about midway through the course of the study to ask specifically how they would describe themselves. I asked this question in multiple choice form, with the optional answers being "expat," "immigrant," "American living in Finland" or "other." The responses varied depending on the person's situation and perceived meanings of the terms.   I resolved to label the participants "Americans living in Finland," as I felt it was the most general and unbiased option. By including this brief clarification early on in the thesis, I can use the related terms more confidently.

When a person moves abroad, it is, at least in my experience and based on my observations, common to seek out comfort through familiarity. While exploring the new and exotic, people outside of their native culture often still look to the safe and familiar to reaffirm their identity in a foreign land. Especially, but not necessarily, if someone who is living abroad feels that her native culture is favorable over her current culture, she may feel driven to share her native culture with those in her new place of residence. Leinonen, in her Ph.D. dissertation, points out how

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[20] Green 2014, 2.

Americans living abroad are oftentimes not expected to become any other nationality, neither legally nor culturally. Americans living in other countries commonly hold an "elite" status, as they normally move to other countries for non-desperate reasons and are often financially and educationally well-off.[21] For this study, this is an important point – Americans living in Finland may not desire to become Finnish at all. Rather, they may actively work to keep their identity American, whatever that means for them.

Physically relocating oneself from one cultural atmosphere to another, as in moving to a different country, brings with it a host of challenges and experiences. In the present information society, an expat has opportunities to remain connected to her home culture that were simply impossible before the widespread use of the internet. Not only can a person living abroad stay connected with their friends and family back home, they can keep up to date with news, entertainment, and trends. The choice to use Americans living in Finland in this study has certain implications that other expat or immigrant groups might not necessarily have. This is due to the fact that the internet is, to a large extent, US-centric,[22] although the Americanness of the worldwide web has declined from around 50% of all websites being American in the 1990s to around 32% in 2002.[23]

As an American living in Finland and a user of Pinterest myself, I must point out that the subject of this study is closely related to my own personal experiences. Therefore, it stands to reason that I have a certain awareness of the subject. Although my own experiences to not explicitly factor into the results of this study, they surely shape my understanding and interpretation of the content of this thesis, and therefore I am using introspection as a tool to guide my navigation of the research at hand.

In the second section of this chapter, I introduce the social media platform, Pinterest, in detail. In Chapter 2, I delve into the theoretical backdrop in front of which this study is set. Chapter 3 focuses on my methods of data collection. Chapter 4 includes the findings of my analysis. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss these results and present my drawn conclusions.

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[21] Leinonen 2011, 132.
[22] Wellman et al. 2003, 12.
[23] Van Elteren 2011, 159.

1.6. Pinterest

Pinterest is an image-based social media tool that appeared on the web in 2010. At the time of its launch, it was a beta site, closed to the general public.[24] Members could invite new members, and there was a waiting list for non-members to get an invitation. The way I experienced the beginning of Pinterest was that, at the beginning, it felt like an exclusive "club" to which many homemakers, "foodies," and "in-the-know" women desired to belong. In August, 2011, *Time* magazine included Pinterest on its list of the "50 Websites that Make the Internet Great."[25] The site became open to the general public in August of 2012.[26] Pinterest quickly became a trendy tool where simply being a part of it could contribute toward a user's online identity. Offering a Pinterest button or link on one's blog or website gave a certain amount of credibility among at least a segment of the online population, especially among *mommy bloggers*.

Pinterest virtualizes the idea of a physical cork pin board, a place where one collects notes, pictures, or some kind of reference to something to refer to later. Although actual pin boards are certainly still used, they hold a connotation of a thing of the past, and Pinterest harnesses this nostalgia in its interface. Users of Pinterest are referred to as *pinners*. Pinners create boards about a subject of their interest and are able to pin images to these boards that link to sites on the internet.

Because images are the most prominent feature of the boards, Pinterest can be seen as an online photo-sharing community. Unlike Instagram and Flickr, however, most of the content on Pinterest is user-curated rather than user-created. That is to say that pinners bookmark web links and organize ideas much more than they display original content. One study has shown that an overwhelming 95% of images pinned are from other places on the web.[27] This aspect of the media is similar to traditional bookmarking on personal computers, as far as organizing links. However, the visual focus of Pinterest, along with its socialness, allows users to organize in a more tailored and interactive way than does bookmarking.

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[24] Hall and Zarro 2012, 1.

[25] http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2087815_2088159_2088155,00.html (accessed 27.1.14).

[26] http://blog.pinterest.com/post/29389668300/open-registration (accessed 25.2.2014).

[27] Mittal et al. 2013, 2.

Organization is one attractive feature of Pinterest. However, the social environment of the media operates according to certain protocol. Interaction between users happens in features such as *following* other pinners, *liking* pins, commenting on pins, and sharing, or *repinning* pins. Following is the action used when a user wants to be informed of another pinner's activity. This action is not automatically reciprocated, as with *friending* on Facebook. Pinners choose who they will follow but not who will follow them, similar to following on Twitter. Likewise, when a user is followed, her Pinterest activity becomes part of the follower's feed. The follower sees the pinned links in the pin feed on her homepage and gets notices of the followed pinner's activity, for example, when she creates a new board. A user can choose to follow all the boards of another pinner or just certain boards of interest. The numbers of a user's followers and followees are displayed on her Pinterest homepage.

Pinterest's display features infinite scrolling which keeps users on the site and contributes to its addictiveness. As users browse through the visual content, new pins are constantly displayed as the user scrolls down the page.[28] Also, a relatively new feature of the site suggests pins that the user might be interested in, which are similar in some way to items the user has already pinned. The feed appearing in the scrolling comes in reverse chronological order, according to the date a pin was added. To add to the socialness of the media, in August, 2014, Pinterest incorporated a messaging system that allows users to share and discuss pins in chat form. The messaging tool works between two users as well as groups.[29] This function allows users to collaborate more easily in idea sharing, and adds another dimension to identity maintenance when communication is instant.

Birthed in the depths of Silicon Valley in an era of technological start-ups, Pinterest grew based on a core of original users inviting new users to join.[30] User demographics, as seen in Image 2,[31] show that the website is still predominantly used by Americans.

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[28] http://designmodo.com/infinite-scrolling/ (accessed 4.12.2013).
[29] http://socialtimes.com/pinterest-messaging_b201588 (accessed 4.12.2013).
[30] As an example, I was able to join Pinterest in its beta stage early on through a friend's relative located in Silicon Valley.
[31] http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/pinterest.com (accessed 7.2.2014).

Country	Percent of Visitors	Rank in Country
United States	46.6%	12
India	9.7%	14
United Kingdom	3.7%	21
Canada	3.0%	15
Spain	2.7%	19
France	2.2%	43
Mexico	2.0%	19
Germany	1.9%	63
Australia	1.7%	21
Pakistan	1.6%	15

Image 2: Pinterest User Demographics.

However, even since the commencement of this study, the percentage of users outside of the US has grown. Due to growing visibility and concrete efforts made by Pinterest to increase user bases outside of the US, research shows that non-US users made up nearly half of first time users in the second quarter of 2013. This was a significant increase from the previous year's second quarter, when non-US users made up only a third of first time users.[32]

In addition to nationality, there are several other areas of demographics I wish to address at this time. In the following paragraphs I will discuss language, gender, and age in order to describe Pinterest as a media as well as lay a foundation for data collection and interpretation. These topics are crucial when discussing identity, as they formulate how a person views herself, how others view her, and in many cases dictate her behavior, both on- and offline.

Language is factor that often dictates internet usage. For example, as a native English speaker, I usually stick to websites in English, because those are the ones I understand and can benefit from the most. Language plays an important role in this study, since we are dealing with English speakers who have moved to Finland, a non-English environment. It is natural that someone living in a foreign country would be influenced by the new food they are exposed to. Currently, there are plenty of food websites in Finnish. However, many Finnish recipes in English are found on websites or blogs written in English speaking countries, to a large extent by Finnish expats or English speakers with Finnish heritage. It is my observation that English

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[32] http://semiocast.com/en/publications/2013_07_10_Pinterest_has_70_million_users (accessed 25.2.14).

speakers in Finland tend to stick to English-language websites on the internet, and I assert that it is because of ease, familiarity, and the wider amount of available content.

Gilbert et al. did an extensive statistical overview of Pinterest, based on a sample of nearly one million users, and their findings help explain language usage on Pinterest. Since there was no public means for these researchers to obtain a true random sample, they devised a strategy using an internet crawler that obtained as random of a sample as they could, but as they admit, their selection process possibly favored more active users. Their resulting sample included pinners from predominantly the US and Great Britain, around 53% and 29.4%, respectively. Their selection process was based on pins, and then the pinners of those pins were studied. The fact that over 80% of the pinners in the group the researchers analyzed were from the US and Great Britain seems to indicate that pins of users from these countries are more popular than pins of users from other countries. One reason for this could be the fact that pinners from the US and Great Britain predominantly pin English-language material that can be understood by non-native English speakers in other countries as well. Although I was unable to find exact statistics on language use on Pinterest, based on this evidence we do know, we can make the assumption that English is the predominant language on the media. Pinterest was created by American English speakers, and in its beginning stages, new members could be linked back to this core group of first users. It stands to reason that most of the initial material present on Pinterest was in American English.[33] Additionally, if we look to Twitter, which has an overlapping user base with Pinterest, we notice that English is the most common *tweeting* language, accounting for around one-third of all tweets in 2012.[34] The fact that the most widely used language use on the whole of the internet is English[35] only adds to the assumption that English is likewise the most commonly used language on Pinterest. This point about language is a crucial one in this study when we are talking about Americans, usually native English speakers, who are living in a country where Finnish is the dominant language.[36] When we are studying

[33] Gilbert et al. 2013, 3.
[34] http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-world-according-to-twitter-in-maps-57536523/?no-ist (accessed 4.3.14).
[35] http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm (accessed 20.8.2014).
[36] Interestingly, just before the printing of this thesis, I noticed that Pinterest featured a sign-in page in Finnish, if one visited the page in Finland. This both made it harder for me to assess the slogan and represented the de-anglification of the internet as digital media becomes more localized.

how Americans living in Finland are using Pinterest, we want to try to evaluate the role language plays in determining pinning behavior.

Since I started researching for this thesis, I have seen a huge growth in the commercial aspect of Pinterest. Ultimately, and unsurprisingly, it seems that turning a profit is at the root of this social media, as is the case for most others. Somewhat ironically, the site of that is known for Do-It-Yourself projects that can save a pinner a large amount of money is counting on its links to commercial markets for its success.

As of October 2015, Pinterest had accumulated 100 million users monthly.[37] The site has recently been estimated to be worth \$11 billion. The article that quotes this estimation explains why Pinterest is not as passé as it might feel to me as this study draws to a close. Simply gaining users has not been the ultimate goal of Pinterest. Rather, the long-term aim has been to gain masses of users and then connect those users with retailers through the site. As Pinterest is a tool that involves users projecting a desired identity – what they want to be or have in the future − it does seem like a *perfect fit* for a competitive market. This same article, written at the end of 2015, already refers to the Pinterest stereotype, "women who used the digital scrapbook to 'pin' photos and collect ideas for their weddings, dream vacations, and home-decorating projects," as a thing of the past – only the beginning for Pinterest. Apparently, retailers are flocking to the site to achieve visibility to pinners. However, considering how quickly changes can take place in digital media, Pinterest seems to have purposefully taken its time in getting to this point, avoiding adding or changing features until the time was just right, a trait that echoes the perfectionist theme that runs throughout the site and carries out into its image.[38]

When we talk about the *purpose* of Pinterest being to share images and connect ideas, it might be easy to forget that is first and foremost a company, and the goal of any company is to make a profit. The founders of Pinterest were seemingly very patient in building up to the point that the company actually became profitable, playing their cards cautiously and deliberately every step of the way. Early on, the company had dabbled in advertising, but ditched the idea, as it was found to lessen pinners' user-experiences. Pinterest has developed very advanced "discovery

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[37] http://www.omnicoreagency.com/pinterest-statistics/ (accessed 4.2.15).
[38] http://qz.com/581191/why-2016-is-poised-to-be-the-year-that-it-all-comes-together-for-pinterest/ (accessed 21.3.2016).

technology," which makes the user-experience delightful, but also firmly connects the user to potential purchases. After eight months of beta testing, a revised form of advertising was introduced at the end of 2014, in the form of "promoted pins." This means that businesses can now buy ads in the form of pins. Furthermore, in June 2015, buyable pins became an option with the introduction of a "buy" button feature. With this button, users can purchase products that they come across while using the website. This meticulous, calculated long-term plan seems have paid off for the company, which is reported to have made around $25 million in 2014, and the forecast only seems to look even better for the years ahead.[39]

When it comes to gender, Pinterest has been dominated by women from the get go. Because of the topics that have become popular on the website, in 2012 Pinterest was called "the Mormon housewife's image bookmarking service of choice".[40] This stereotype is also supported by a case study on social media demographics by the website, *Online MBA*, which resulted in a trendy phrase, "men are from Google+, women are from Pinterest." The *Online MBA* study, based on US users, claims that in 2012, 82% of Pinterest users were women.[41] Other research shows the percentage of female users in the US as being even higher.[42] Globally, more women than men are using Pinterest, but the difference is not as great as it is in the US. In India, for example, there is a higher percentage of male users.[43] Gender demographics are relative to this study in that all of the participants included in my research are women, and this is reflected in the discussion on identity in Section 2.2.

Although age is not an obvious factor in this study, I want to briefly point out that, at least according to one study, 25 to 34 year olds make up 30% of pinners, while 35 to 44 year olds have the second highest representation at 25%. Eighteen to 24 year olds make up 17%, 45 to 54 year olds account for 10%, and 1% is held by 55 to 64 year olds.[44] I bring age up at this point only to note that it may potentially be another factor that influences pinning habits.

[39] http://qz.com/581191/why-2016-is-poised-to-be-the-year-that-it-all-comes-together-for-pinterest/ (accessed 21.3.2016).
[40] http://gawker.com/5889468/pinterests-for-men-is-a-terrible-idea (accessed 4.3.14).
[41] http://mashable.com/2012/03/09/social-media-demographics/ (accessed 4.3.14).
[42] http://www.thewire.com/entertainment/2012/03/internet-where-bros-learn-share/49851/ (accessed 4.3.14).
[43] Mittal et al. 2013, 10.
[44] http://brandongaille.com/pinterest-user-age-demographics/ (accessed 30.6.2015).

Pinterest has been defined as a social curating website,[45] and, along with other social media, it can be considered both a product and facilitator of the growth of the participatory culture in today's information society.[46] In addition to serving as a social media platform, the site provides the space for bookmarking and organizing interests from all over the web. Unlike private bookmarking on one's personal computer, pinning on Pinterest is public and is subject to the perception and activity of other pinners.

Throughout its few years of existence, Pinterest's internal purpose, that is, what the website claims to be its main raison d'être, seems to have fluctuated between labeling itself as a social tool and an organizing tool. It has indeed always been both, but the branding and marketing have shifted over time. By observing an archived history of the site's front page, one can notice a change in slogans and catch phrases. This page is what non-members of Pinterest or members who were not signed in would see if they visited the website. The earliest saved front page, from February 2, 2010, promotes creating "beautiful galleries" of interesting things from the web. In April of that same year, the first mention of sharing appears. In August of 2010, the website displays a claim that it is a "social catalog". In 2011, users were encouraged to "catalog" the things they love. By the end of the year, "organize" seems to have replaced "catalog" and the word "share", which had vanished in the first part of the year, appears again. "Organize and share the things you love." was the slogan for the year 2012. In February of 2013, the slogan dropped "organize and share" and instead used words like "plan projects" and "start collections", and that year ended with "Save all of the stuff you love". In February of 2014, a specific example of what Pinterest could help accomplish was advertised in large font, "She used Pinterest to roll her first pasta." [47] "Share" is not a part of the slogan at the time of this study, which is, "Discover ideas for all your projects and interests, hand-picked by people like you." Pinterest is built on the connections between users. The newly added messaging feature only adds fluidity to the socialness that is in the foundation of the media. The later slogans, however, seem to lean more towards emphasizing curation.

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[45] Hall and Zarro 2012, 2.
[46] Jenkins et al. 2009, 8.
[47] https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://pinterest.com (3.3.2014).

The term *digital curation* started appearing in academic writings in the early 2000's due to an increase in focus on the importance of information technology in research fields outside of computer science, such as life science and the humanities. While the term still widely refers to digitally archiving physical artifacts in, for examples, museums or libraries, social media tools have allowed for anyone with an internet connection to be a curator. In an article about digital curation from 2007, Yakel names four significant reports that stimulated attention being paid to collecting and storing information digitally. [48] The creators of Pinterest apparently recognized this importance and designed the resulting website in a way that organizes and archives in a neat and clean manner. Pinners are able to sieve their interests from the masses of digital material on the web and collect links to those interests on boards.

The term *social curation* accurately describes Pinterest, since the phrase encompasses both of the previously discussed ambitions and allows for ambiguity of the website's internal purpose. Like Pinterest's developers, Pinterest users can also see the website as having different purposes. Pinners may have different levels of social engagement on the media or have differing degrees of awareness of other pinners in the community. One important aspect of this study centers on motivation for pinning. Research has shown that content created, or in this case pinned, in a social media environment is closely related to self-identity. Oded et al. recognize four main motivations for user participation in photo-sharing social media: enjoyment, commitment to the community, self-development, and reputation building. Although the authors of the aforementioned study classify self-development as an extrinsic motivation, asserting that participation in an online photo-sharing community could develop skills pertaining to photography that could be shared with others, I would argue that, regarding Pinterest, since the images are usually not the artistic work of the pinner, for this study, self-development could be considered to be an intrinsic motivation as well as an extrinsic one. Pinners can use the media to further their personal enjoyment of a particular topic as well as gaining certain knowledge or awareness of a topic that could then be interpreted into skills.

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[48] Yakel 2007, 335.

1.7. Pins and Their Origins

As mentioned previously, in the context of Pinterest, a pin is an image that references a thing or an idea on the web. In this study, I use the term *pin origin* to refer to the geographical location of the person or entity responsible for the linked image that has been pinned to a board. It is important to note that pin origin does not necessarily refer to the actual image origin. Sometimes a pin links to a blog where the blogger herself has uploaded the image. However, oftentimes, a pin links to a website that may have one or more links back to the original image. Being aware of my meaning of pin origin is crucial to understanding the processes and results of this study. Additionally, this manner of classification disregards the actual content of each pin and board. For this study, my primary concern was the origin of each pin.

Pins are collected on boards, organized by topic. Boards are represented in an individual's Pinterest space by a cover image, a particular image of a pin from that board. Each board has a title that provides the topic of its collection of pins.   The following images show what some of Pinterest's interface looks like:
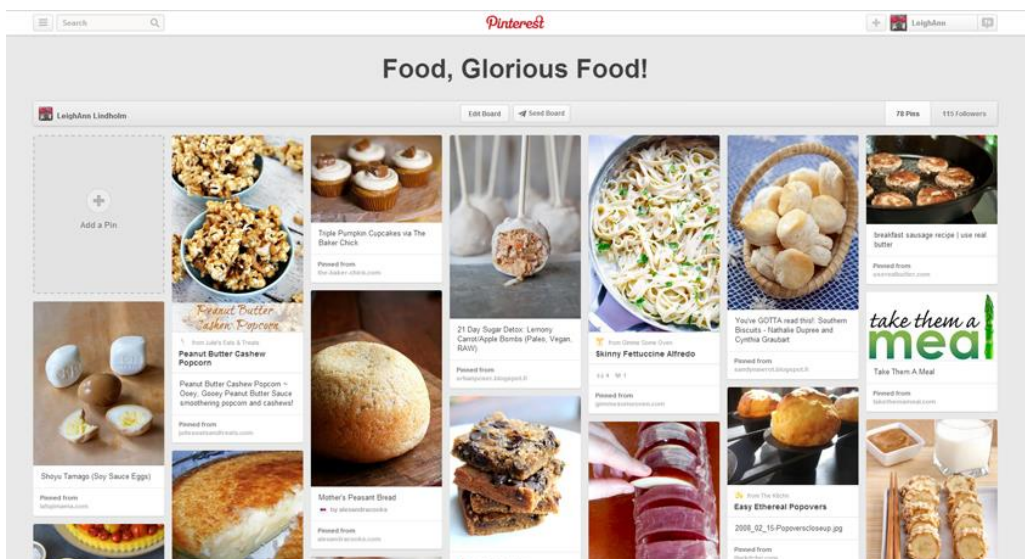
Image 3: A Pinterest Board.
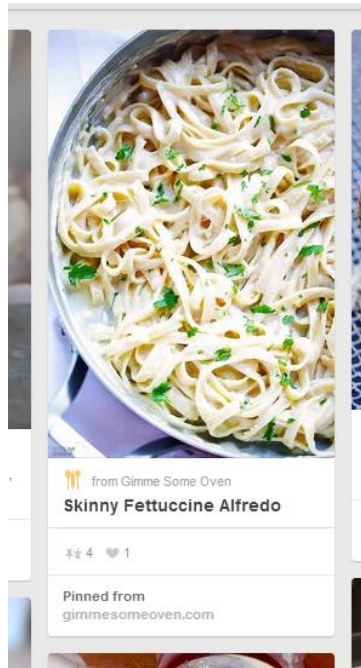
Image 4: A Pin on a Board.

As shown above, a pin seen from a board carries with it some metadata,[49] which is mostly generated by Pinterest users,[50] and usually includes a short description or some other commentary about what is featured in the image and symbols showing how many times the pin has been repinned and liked by others. The pin also displays the URL from which the image has been pinned. This display of the URL is what links the image to its pin origin.

From the point shown in Image 5 is left-clicked on, the user is directed to the following screen:

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[49] Mittal et al. 2013, 3.
[50] Hall and Zarro 2012, 2.
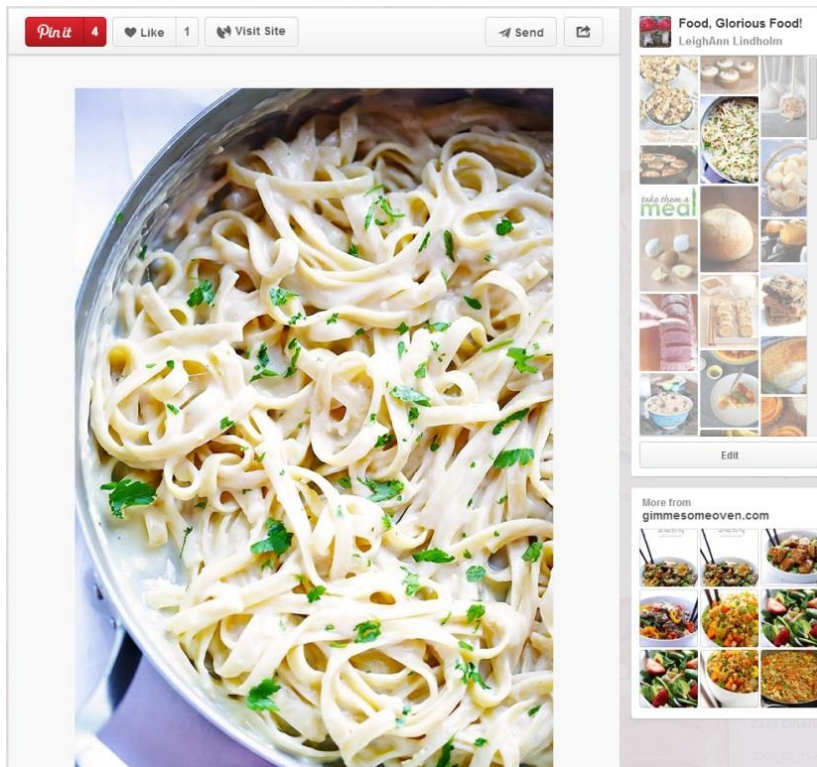
Image 5: A Pin, Clicked on (a).

and if you scroll down:
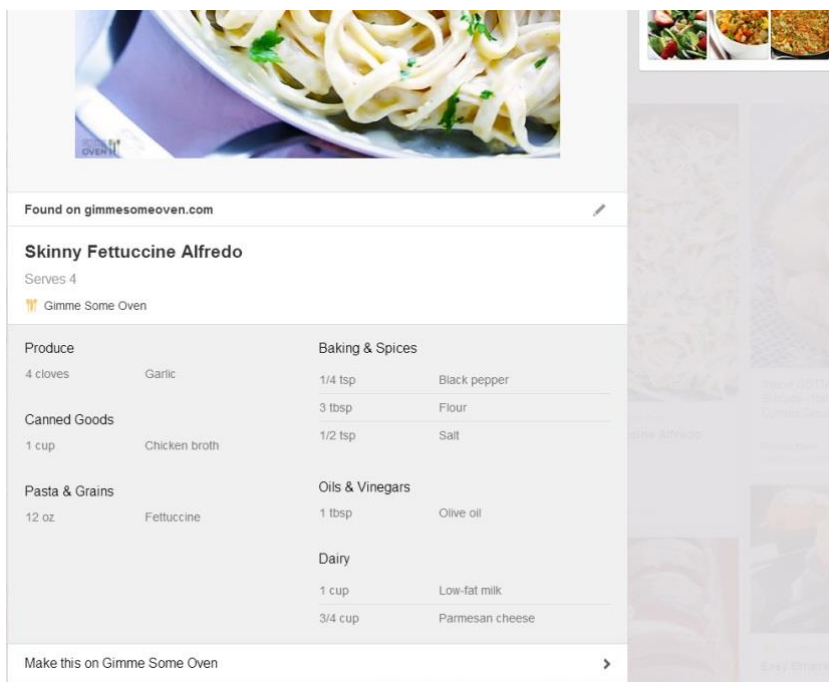
Image 6: A Pin, Clicked on (b)

Here, additional metadata is given including how long ago the image was pinned. I see it as unfortunate that the precise date of pinning is not saved. Rather, the site keeps track of when a pinner added something to her board in reverse chronological order, labeling the pin as pinned "2 days ago" or "8 weeks ago", for example. Anything pinned over twelve months before the time of viewing is simply dated, "1 year ago" or "2 years ago".

In September of 2012, the group board feature was added to Pinterest, adding to the social factor of the website. Pinners can jointly contribute to a board with one or more other users. This additional feature gives the media an increased socialness, allowing users to "collect" and "organize" together.

Pins are generally arranged chronologically on boards according the date when the pin was added, placing the most recently added material in the top left corner of the board. When examining each relevant board, I started with the latest pin pinned and "read" the boards from left to right, top to bottom. I chose to include in this study all pins on food related boards that were added from the time the pinner created the board and added the first pin to October 31, 2013.[51] The cutoff date was selected somewhat arbitrarily. However, I felt it was necessary to have a certain point at which I stopped including material in order to limit the amount of data to a feasible amount to analyze within my timeframe. I do not see differing amounts of pins on each board as any way troublesome to the findings here. Since I am only after the source of each pin in my data analysis, the dates or amounts of pins on each board are insignificant to the results of this study, they simply provide a framework for the data.

Infinite scrolling allows for and encourages users to continue to browse Pinterest by scrolling down a webpage, as more and more pins are automatically added. Because of the visual nature of the media, pins are predominantly images, and text becomes a secondary feature.[52]

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[51] As pins do not show exact dates pinned, but rather the amount of time passed in days, weeks, or years since the image was added to a board, this cutoff date may not be exact in every case. When I analyzed each board, I counted backwards from the date of analysis to October 31, 2013 to calculate the amount of time that had passed, and I did not include any pins that referenced an amount of time that would indicate the image was pinned after October 31.
[52] Ottoni et al. 2013, 458-459.

2. Review of Literature and Studies

2.1. Social spaces and third places

The theoretical framework for this thesis comprises theories of social spaces, identity, and food culture. We first take a look at how the idea of third spaces, or places, can be understood in terms of the internet. The term *third space*, an idea accredited to Homi K. Bhabha, was used by the likes of Edward W. Soja to explain the combination of *the real* and *the imagined*. *Third space* can be seen as the space where two spaces overlap. In this overlapping exists a chance for identity to be constructed or altered.[53]

Decades before social media or the internet, Henri Lefebvre wrote about social space as a humanly produced space, a purposeful act of labor, that includes an actual space as well as the imagined reality of that space.[54]

> *In comparison with home and work associations, which tend to cloister people among their own kind, the inclusive third place brings the individual into close, personal, and animated contact with fellow human beings who also happen to teach school, distribute pharmaceutical products, paint houses, sell office equipment, or write for the local newspaper. The habitué of the typical third place thus enjoys a richness of human contact that is denied the timid, the bigoted, the pretentious, and others who choose to insulate themselves from human variety.*[55]

Building on ideas inspired by Lefebvre and Soja, in 1995, at the dawn of the Internet Age, Putnam introduced his "bowling alone" concept, which described a decline in the "social capital" of the US. He was rightly acknowledging lower numbers in participation in such organizations as Boy Scouts, church congregations, and even bowling leagues. He blamed the phenomenon on a variety of things like television, and later, the internet. Although scholars have criticized Putnam's assumptions and conclusions for mistaking change in civic activity for a decrease in

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[53] Rutherford 1998, 211.
[54] Lefebvre 1991, 17.
[55] Oldenburg 1999, 45.

civic activity, it cannot be denied the second half of the 1990s saw a shift from community to individualism.[56]

Oldenburg further expounds on the decline of traditional, physical third places in the US. These third places, which offer spaces for individuals to socialize and develop less formal social communities outside of work environments and home life, were notably less by the end of the 1990's than they had once been.[57] Oldenburg actually blames modern digital media for the decline of traditional clubs, groups, and informal socializing in the US. He writes that this is a trend that carries with it negative effects on individuals and communities:

> *The essential group experience is being replaced by the*
> *exaggerated self-consciousness of individuals. American lifestyles,*
> *for all the material acquisition and the seeking after comforts and*
> *pleasures, are plagued by boredom, loneliness, alienation.*[58]

This claim can be backed up by a national survey conducted in 2003 by The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which analyzed the time usage during an average day. The results suggested that, when it came to leisure time, which averaged around five hours per day, Americans spent around 50% of theirs watching television. This value is interestingly compared with the average amount of time socializing, which accounted for only about 45 minutes per day.[59] However, Steinkuehler & Williams suggest that multiplayer online games are society's response to both individualization and digital culture, providing a new type of third place.[60] One study even reported an average amount of time spent playing multiplayer online games per week averages at around 20 hours.[61]

> *The home entertainment industry thrives in the dearth of the informal public*
> *life among the American middle class… Demand for all manner of*

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[56] Steinkuehler and Williams 2006, 1-2.
[57] Oldenburg 1999, 13.
[58] Oldenburg 1999, 13.
[59] Longley 2004.
[60] Steinkuehler and Williams 2006, 2.
[61] Yee 2006, 18.

electronic gadgetry to substitute vicarious watching and listening for more direct involvement is high.[62]

As a starting point for a discussion about online third spaces, let us first briefly visit this world of online gaming and the communities that result from this phenomenon. Massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) are graphical videogames played using internet access, which allow players to participate in a game setting by interacting with other players online. Although at first glance, it may seem like the main interactions in MMOs are between a player and the game technology and interface. However, what supports the view of MMOs actually being a new type of third place is the necessary interaction with other players, albeit virtual interaction. Therefore, like social media, MMOs are providing a replacement for the traditional third places, by allowing for and even encouraging the development of social capital.[63]

Understanding Pinterest as a social space allows for an exploration of how identity is maintained within that space. Lefebvre gives us permission to "read" or "decode" spaces not on the third-dimensional plane.[64] For the purposes this study, the two pre-existing spaces are offline and online. Social media emerges as a space where users, attached to their offline identities, represent themselves, truthfully or otherwise, online in a created environment. Where offline and online overlap, users must purposefully construct identities within the perimeters of this third space.

Golledge, building on Tolman's idea of a *cognitive map*[65], introduced the concept of *spacial representation* in *Wayfinding Behavior*. This reference to a conceptual understanding of a physical space can just as easily be applied to the conceptual understanding of a virtual space.[66] In regards to Pinterest, all of the routes, connections, links, and nodes Golledge employed can be understood as the various features of the platform. When a pinner clicks on an image of interest, she is instantly routed to a destination on the web. How she perceives the journey and the social space in which she is traveling is her *spacial representation* of Pinterest. How she positions herself in this space affects her identity. Therefore, it stands to reason that there is an underlying, perhaps subconscious, identity building that takes place

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[62] Oldenburg 1999, 12.
[63] Steinkuehler and Williams 2006, 2-3.
[64] Lefebvre 1991, 17.
[65] Tolman 1948.
[66] Golledge 1999, preface.

as a pinner constructs a board. She is pinning for herself, but is also aware that others can see what she pins.

Pinterest has a certain image itself. It is the image of creativity, style, cleverness, and above all, obtaining perfection. The key word is "obtaining," striving towards, aiming for something in the future. Compared to two of the other most popular social media networks, Facebook and Twitter, Pinterest is almost solely focused on the future. While Facebook is filled with images of kids in the 70s and 80s as well as wedding pictures from years ago, posted in celebration every year of anniversaries, and Twitter is made up of the here and now, as users tweet live about events and happenings around the globe, Pinterest is absolutely ambition focused – representing not what users are, necessarily, but what they aspire to be.[67]

The genre of online roleplaying games, RPGs, is a valuable area of study when considering online identity. An online RPG player creates one or more avatar to act on the player's behalf in the game universe. When beginning an online RPG, the player can spend a significant amount of time choosing what a character will look like, the race of the character, and the character's background as well as special abilities. Each decision in the character creation to some degree is a reflection of and becomes part of the player's whole identity.

James Paul Gee, a well-noted scholar who has written about both video games as well as identity, sets a framework for the current discussion on online identity by establishing "four ways to view identity."[68] Gee outlines four aspects of identity that make up the whole of one's self: *nature-identity*, *institution-identity*, *discourse-identity*, and *affinity-identity*. *Nature-identity* is the identity that one happens into, for example, being a son or daughter, a brother or a sister. This natural circumstance is nothing that can be earned or accomplished, but can still have an impact on identity as a whole. For this study, gender, the fact that all participants are women, will be examined as part *nature-identity*.

The second aspect of identity that Gee describes is *institution-identity*. This term refers to a person's position, occupation, or a label that an authority or institutionalized society assigns. A person's citizenship can be considered to be part of *institution-identity*. In the present study, we will examine how *institution-identity*,

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[67] http://qz.com/581191/why-2016-is-poised-to-be-the-year-that-it-all-comes-together-for-pinterest/ (accessed 21.2.2016).
[68] Gee 2000, 3.

in this case US citizenship, affects the whole identity, including that which can be observed online.

Thirdly, Gee discusses *discourse-identity*. This aspect involves traits about an individual as they would be described by someone else. Here, an individual has a greater influence on their own identity. When discussing online identity, *discourse-identity* is where an individual could actively participate in manipulating or shaping their identity. In social media, this could be done by choosing a certain type of profile picture on Facebook or even the frequency on which a person posts status updates. On Pinterest, discourse-identity plays a less obvious role. The profile picture is small, and not nearly as visible as on Facebook or Twitter. Still, a pinner is able to choose a picture to represent them on the platform, as well as a name, a username, which is included in the web address of the Pinterest page, a description, location, and links.

Finally, the fourth aspect of identity that Gee names is the *affinity perspective*. This is a way of identifying identity based on the interests of an individual. A Facebook user *shares* and *likes* things of interest and that she would want to identify herself with. Similarly, Twitter allows *favoriting* and *retweeting* in addition to simply *tweeting*. On Pinterest, categories of images linked to other websites can visually represent the *affinities* of an individual pinner.[69]

Digital roleplaying games have become widely popular during my lifetime. As in non-digital RPGs, the player assumes the role of a character and controls many of the characters decisions and actions in the game. I view the formation of identity of a character in an online RPG is an act of online identity expression. I bring to light now an example from an offline RPG. I have chosen this example in spite of the game not being played online because the player, a well-known gamer and critic, because it consists of a "let's play," a video documentary of the screen and voice of a player. As is the case in many online RPGs, the player has the option of picking a premade character or creating one from the variety of options that the game allows.

Pinterest, like other forms of social media, has been created to provide a virtual space that allows for people to form and maintain connections with others, namely beyond the scope of everyday life. The majority of users browse Pinterest for inspiration on what their life could be. With popular titles of boards, such as

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[69] Gee 2000, 103-105.

"Some Day" or "Dream House," and the pins of actual photographs filling up these boards, it is easy to see how *the real* and *the imagined* come together on Pinterest.

Online identity management is a notion that we are still learning to understand, but is one that is widely accepted to be worth understanding by many fields of study and practice. Motivations for behavior in social media, for example, can be telling of individuals and society. Oded et al. discuss motivations for pinning in a statistical overview of Pinterest. In their analysis, they name *tenure*, *self-development*, *reputation building*, and *commitment* as being motivational factors that can lead to participation. The first three mentioned factors were found to be associated with regular activity other than actually sharing photos (liking, commenting, tagging other users), while *commitment* was found to be positively associated with the amount of photos shared.[70]

Gilbert et al., in their statistical analysis of Pinterest, found that activity on the website, that is liking, repinning, and commenting on pins, can be linked to certain factors. Firstly, not surprisingly, a pin is more likely to be repined if the pinner has a lot of followers or if the pin has already been liked and commented on. Returning briefly to Spartacus, once the first rebel slave stood up and shouted "I'm Spartacus!" it was easier for the next one to do so. By the time the last one made the gesture, there was little to no threat in doing so. So is it in social media; posting original content, whether it be photos, opinions, music, art, etc., can feel risky. However, Pinterest is filled with images and ideas that have been circulated and shared to varying degrees. If a pin has many likes or positive comments, a pinner coming across it for the first time will probably be more likely to trust its reliability or give it greater value. Likewise, pinners with many followers are considered to be more connected in the network. They, therefore, have a firmer position within the social structure than those with few or no followers.

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[70] Oded et al. 2009, 7.

2.2 Online Cultural Identity

To understand how identity can be communicated online, in this section leave social media for a moment as we take a look at two cases studies, the first of which is an overview of the websites of eight coastal cities in the Baltic Sea region: Rostock,[71] Gdansk,[72] Liepaja,[73] Tallinn,[74] Vaasa,[75] Oulu,[76] Sundsvall,[77] and Malmö.[78] I carried out this case study in 2013 as a part of my Master's studies, and I find the analysis both interesting and relative to the wider understanding sought after in this thesis. The case study of Baltic city websites approaches identity by focusing on the images that the people responsible for creating the websites for each city chose to include, and how those images, either purposefully or not, represent that city's history, heritage, and thus cultural identity. It is informative to compare and contrast the histories and heritages that are presented. Even more revealing perhaps, is comparing and contrasting how the histories and heritages are presented. One must keep in mind that the material on the website was chosen by a minority of the population and it is the image that that minority wants to present to the outside world.

The first thing that I noticed about the websites was the varying degrees of identification with the Baltic Sea region in the form of images of the sea and sea life itself. Out of the cities mentioned above, the visual association with water was greatest with the Rostock website (Image 7)[79] and the least, as in none at all on the homepage, on Malmö's site (Image 8).[80]

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[71] http://www.rostock.de/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[72] http://www.gdansk.pl/en/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[73] http://www.liepaja.lv/page/22 (accessed 10.1.2013).
[74] http://www.visittallinn.ee/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[75] http://www.visitvaasa.fi/en/Pages/home.aspx (accessed 10.1.2013).
[76] http://www.visitoulu.fi/en/home (accessed 10.1.2013).
[77] http://visitsundsvall.se/en/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[78] http://malmo.se/English.html (accessed 10.1.2013).
[79] http://www.rostock.de/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[80] http://malmo.se/English.html (accessed 10.1.2013).

Image 7: The Rostock Homepage.
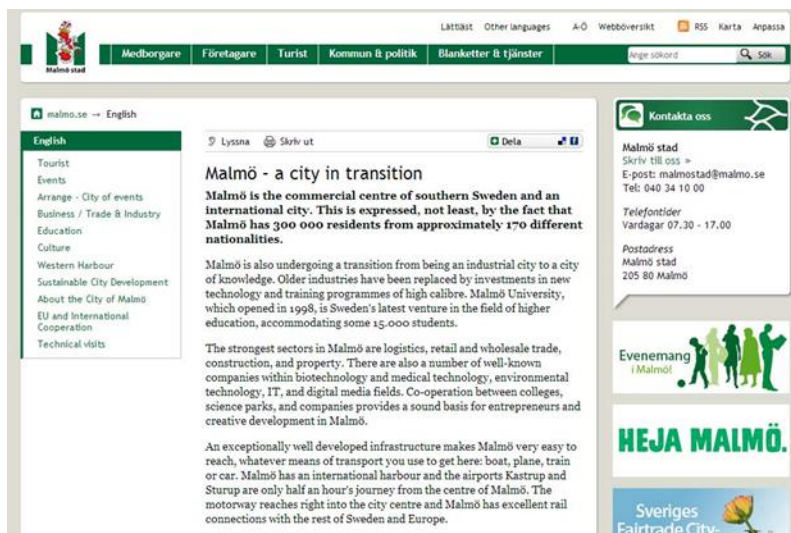
Image 8: The Malmö Homepage.

The other Swedish city, Sundsvall had only a very small visibility of water on their homepage in the following image:[81]

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[81] http://visitsundsvall.se/en/ (accessed 10.1.2013).

Image 9: From the Sundvall Website.

Gdansk,[82] Vaasa,[83] and Oulu[84] all displayed banners of water images. Liepaja and Tallinn had rotating images in their banners that displayed water only a percentage of times one visited the site. These differences, I think, tell a lot about the identity the people of the cities perceive of themselves and what they want to portray to others.

It would seem in the case of Sweden, a country that has not been caught up in the turmoil of war for hundreds of years, the Swedish cities examined here identified themselves less as "Baltic." Maybe the lack of involvement with the wars has given Sweden a different identity than the other countries in this study. Rostock, on the other hand, being part of a country that has been at the center of war in the last decade, had incorporated the sea the most into its online image. This is surely also because it seems to be the main gateway of continental Europe to the Baltic Sea region.

Another obvious difference between the examined websites is the portrayal of history. Rostock marketed its history by telling interesting tales of the Stassi and connecting itself with the horrors of war. This could be because overtime, the city has begun to see itself as having "moved on" and now something modern and different from its troubled past.

Gdansk strongly emphasizes history on its site. It tells its story as a victim of war and a freedom fighter. It claims that freedom from communism in Europe began in Gdansk in 1980. There is an informative historical timeline and lots of photos.

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[82] http://www.gdansk.pl/en/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[83] http://www.visitvaasa.fi/en/Pages/home.aspx (accessed 10.1.2013).
[84] http://www.visitoulu.fi/en/home (accessed 10.1.2013).

Liepaja, similarly, told its story on its website as a victim.[85] There were links to a most interesting story about part of the city that was entirely closed off and used by the Soviets. A war prison had even been turned into a "prison hotel" where one could "experience" Soviet prison life for a day. This was advertised on a link on the site.

Tallinn, like the previous two cities, advertised its role as a victim and promoted the story of its "Singing Revolution." The website was more playful than the others, displaying fun facts about the city in its banner.[86]

On the websites of the Finnish cities, Vaasa and Oulu, there was much less about history. On the Vaasa site, one had to follow a series of links to get to any historical information, and even then, there was not very much to be found.[87] Oulu displayed even less history, but instead presented itself as a completely modern city and technologically oriented. It displayed cultural heritage by including a welcome note from the mayor testifying to the "Northern Hospitality" the city claimed to have. The Oulu site also linked to its modern cultural heritage by including information about the Air Guitar World Championship held there.[88]

The Swedish cities of Sundsvall[89] and Malmö,[90] like the Finnish cities, had little information about history or heritage on their websites, even less than the Finnish cities. Instead, the Swedish websites were very straightforward, practical, and comparatively dull. Perhaps their less colorful and dramatic pasts have shaped the cultural identities into plain and practical.

Overall, based on this simple case study, it seems that, generally, the more involved the city has been in wars in the past decade, the stronger their "Baltic" identity is. Additionally, the stronger their "Baltic" identity is, the greater the cities portray their history and heritage on their websites.

The second case study involves an informal survey of the online presence of Toys "R" Us stores in various countries and to what extent, if any, they market Halloween. I chose to make these comparisons based on my observance of the significant cultural differences between the celebration of Halloween between in

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[85] http://www.liepaja.lv/page/22 (accessed 10.1.2013).
[86] http://www.visittallinn.ee/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[87] http://www.visitvaasa.fi/en/Pages/home.aspx (accessed 10.1.2013).
[88] http://www.visitoulu.fi/en/home (accessed 10.1.2013).
[89] http://visitsundsvall.se/en/ (accessed 10.1.2013).
[90] http://malmo.se/English.html (accessed 10.1.2013).

the US and in Finland. Although this research was done informally, for personal interest, I assert that the results can shed light on how images are used to represent key cultural differences and similarities as well as *glocalization*.

The countries I chose to include in this study were chosen based on a desire to include countries I have called home and also countries that represented completely different cultures and parts of the world. The countries that were included had to have a Toys "R" Us online presence, either a website or a Facebook page, that in some way featured Halloween. Below are some screenshots from the chosen websites, or Facebook pages, if there was no website. The countries included are: USA,[91] Finland,[92] France,[93] Colombia (a)[94] (b),[95] Japan,[96] Spain,[97] Poland,[98] South Africa,[99] Singapore,[100] UK,[101] and Australia.[102] Note that the Finnish page is also representative of other Nordic countries, as they all belong to one "group." Each screenshot is of the *most Halloween I could get in one shot* for each country's online presence (with the exception of Colombia, for which I included two images because they were so different from each other). The US site, naturally, is so vast that only the category titles are visible in this shot, but I thought it was interesting that there were so many categories.

[91] www.toysrus.com/products/halloween (accessed 14.10.2015).
[92] www.toysrus.fi/uutuuksia/halloween-fi (accessed 14.10.2015).
[93] www.toysrus.fr/family (accessed 14.10.2015).
[94]

https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.337692199723427.1073741828.337685416390772&type=3 (accessed 14.10.2015).
[95]

https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.337703733055607.1073741829.337685416390772&type=3 (accessed 14.10.2015).
[96] www.toysrus.co.jp (accessed 14.10.2015).
[97] www.toysrus.es (accessed 14.10.2015).
[98] www.toysrus.pl (accessed 14.10.2015).
[99] https://www.facebook.com/ToysRUs.SouthAfrica?ref=hl (accessed 14.10.2015).
[100] www.toysrus.com.sg/halloween (accessed 14.10.2015).
[101] www.toysrus.co.uk (accessed 14.10.2015).
[102] www.toysrus.com.au/halloween (accessed 14.10.2015).
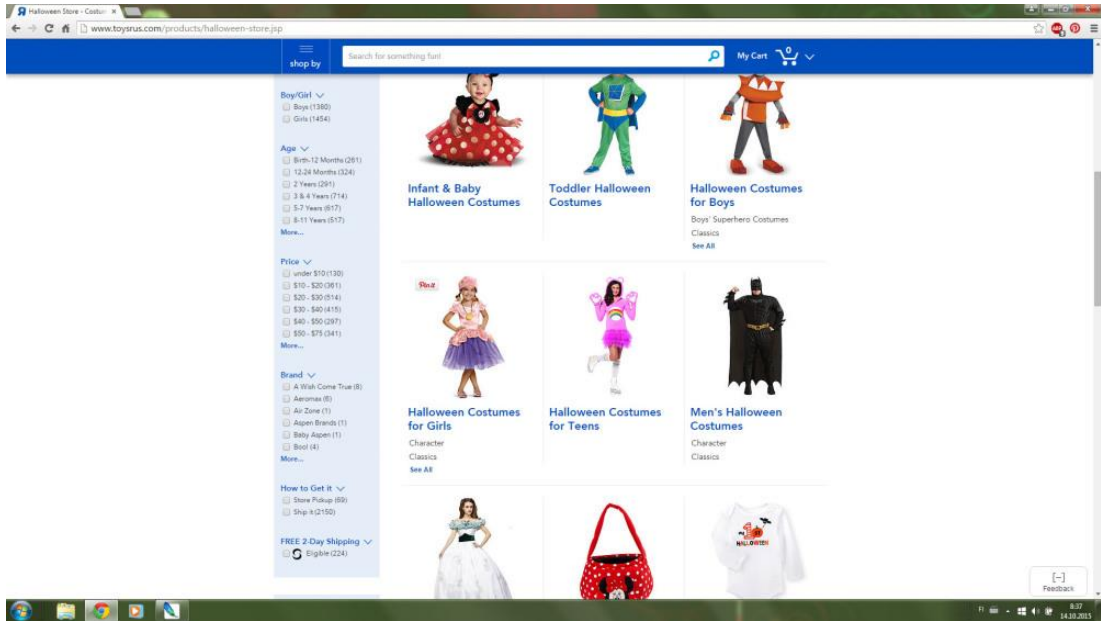
Image 10: USA – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.

Image 11: Finland – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
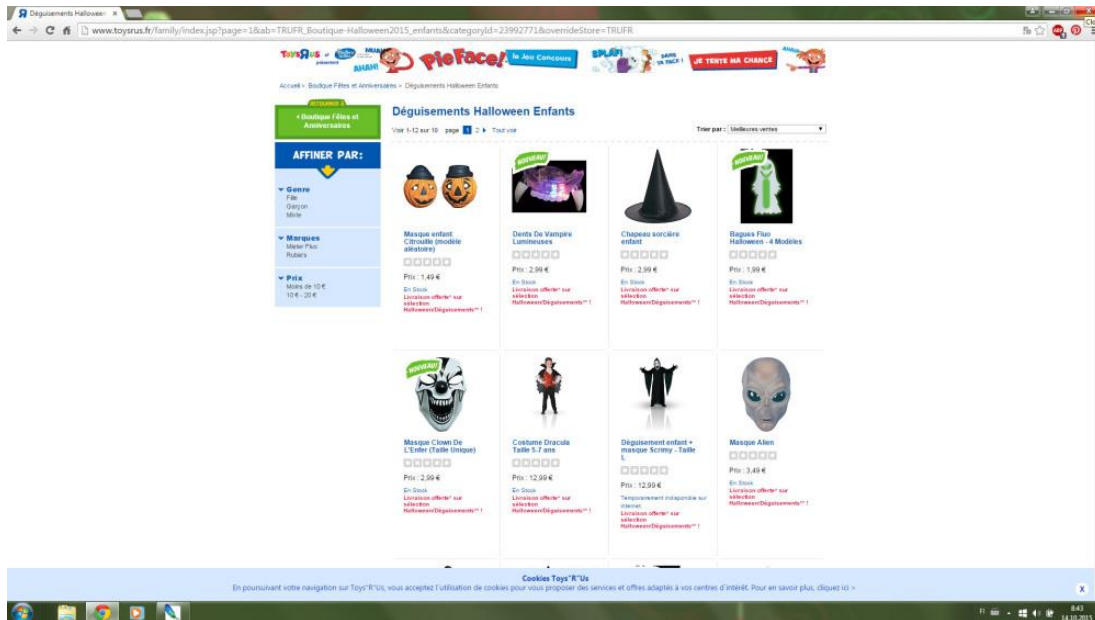
Image 12: France – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
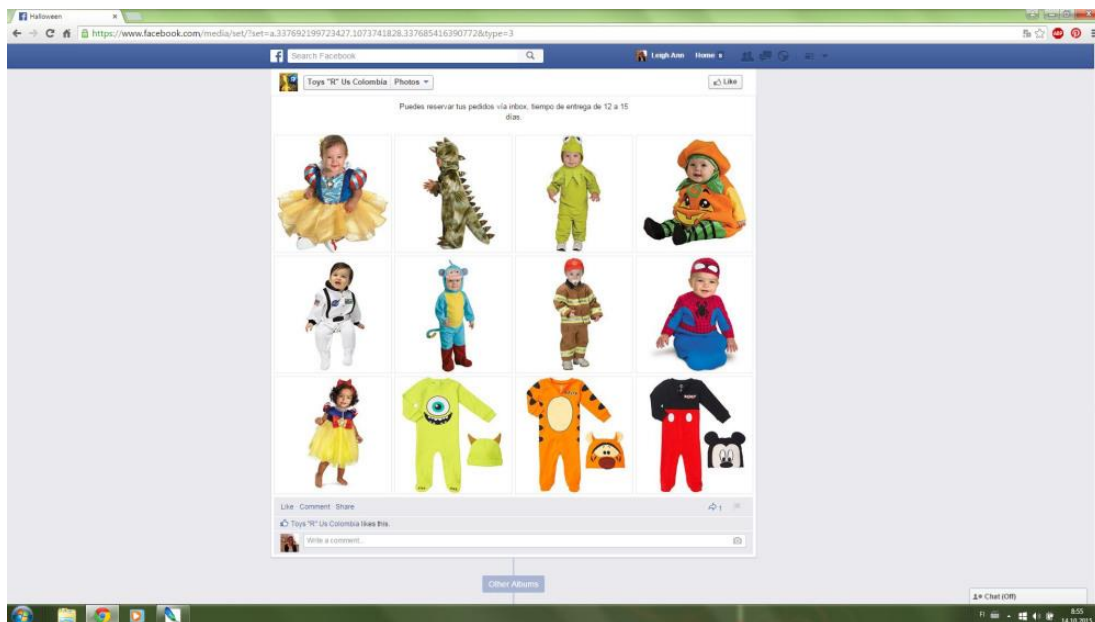
Image 13: Colombia (a) – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
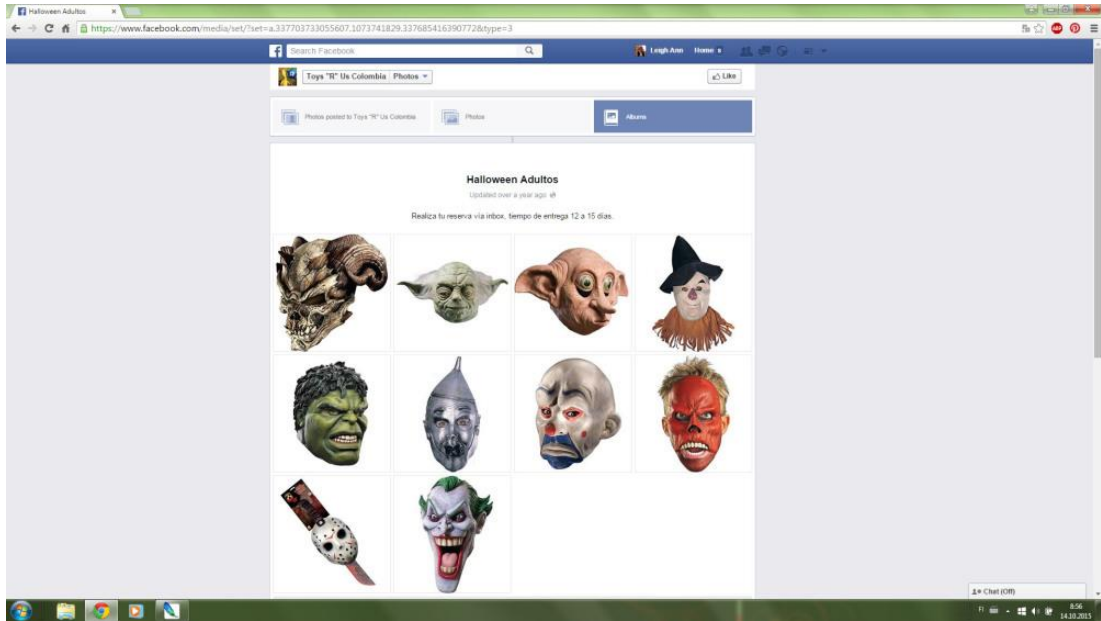
Image 14: Colombia (b) – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
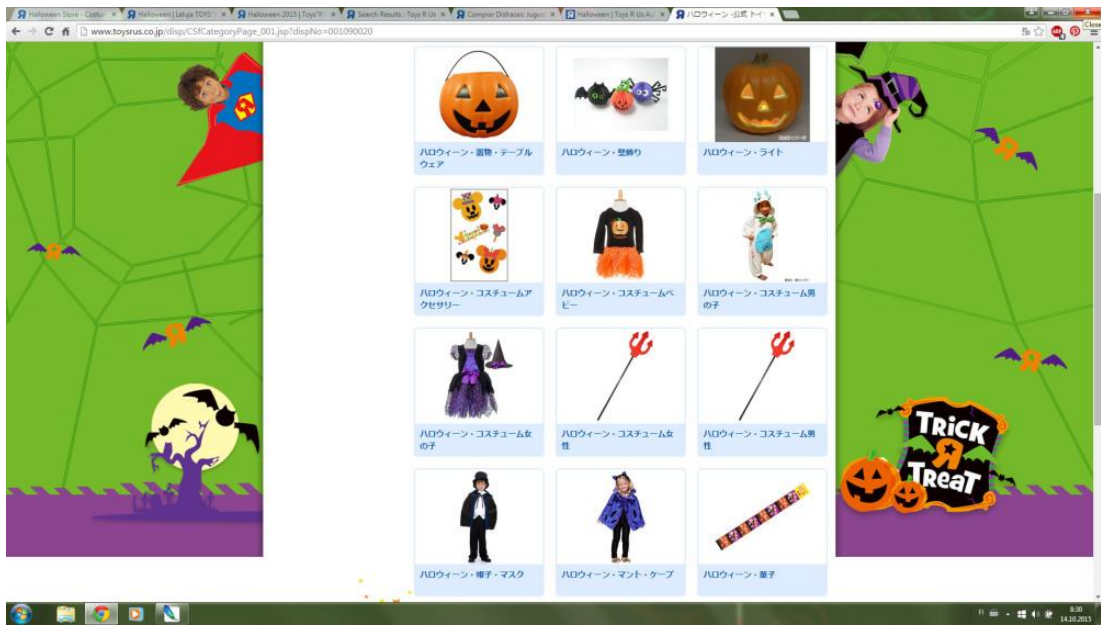
Image 15: Japan – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
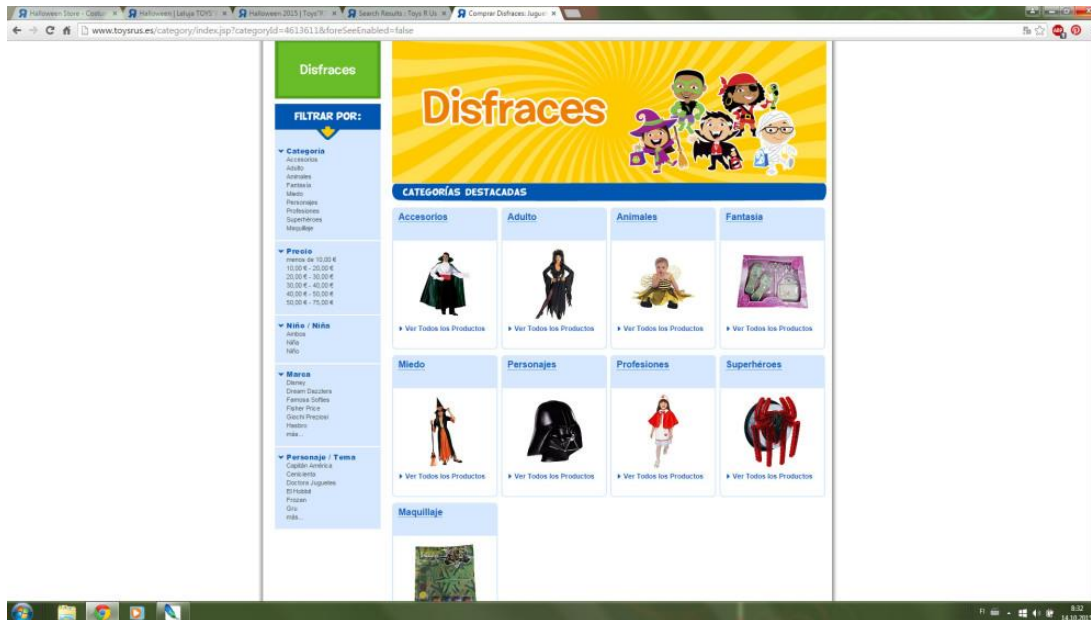
Image 16: Spain – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
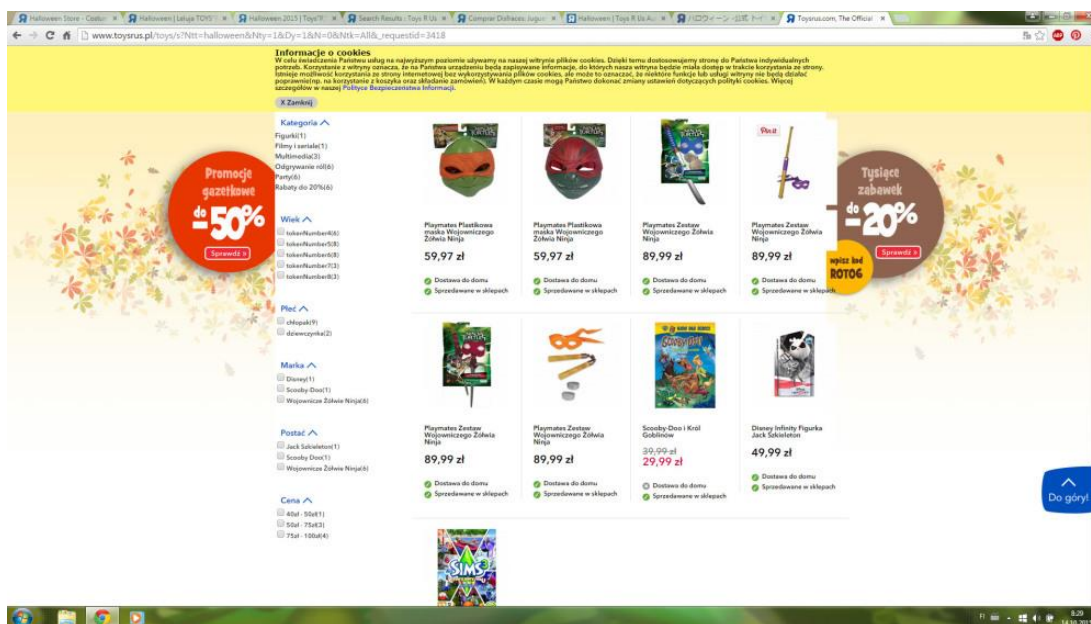
Image 17: Poland – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.

Image 18: South Africa – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
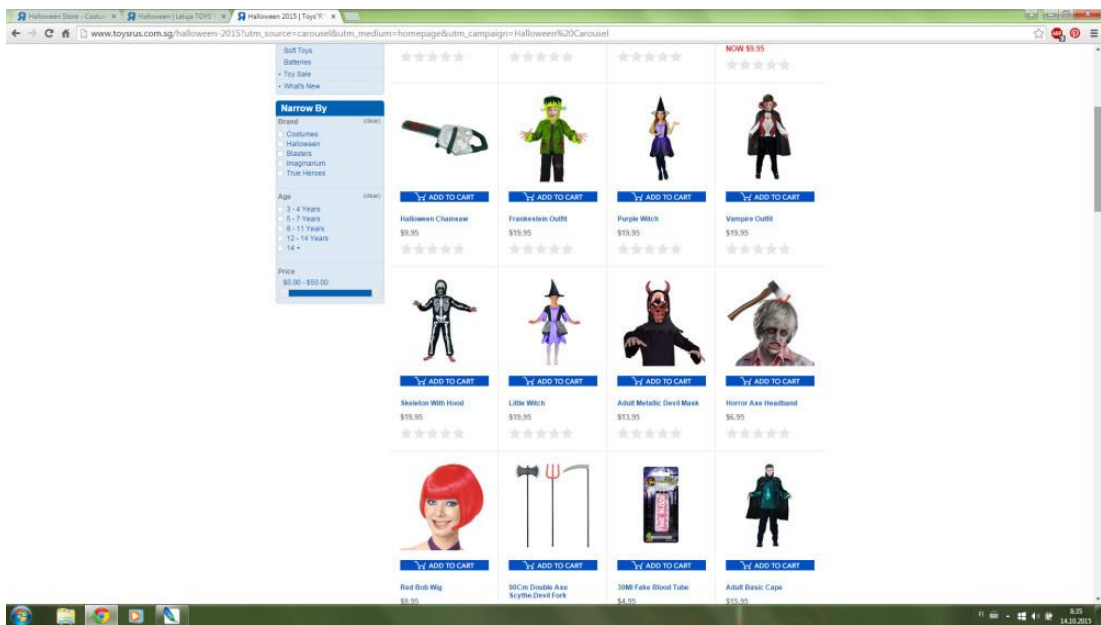
Image 19: Singapore – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
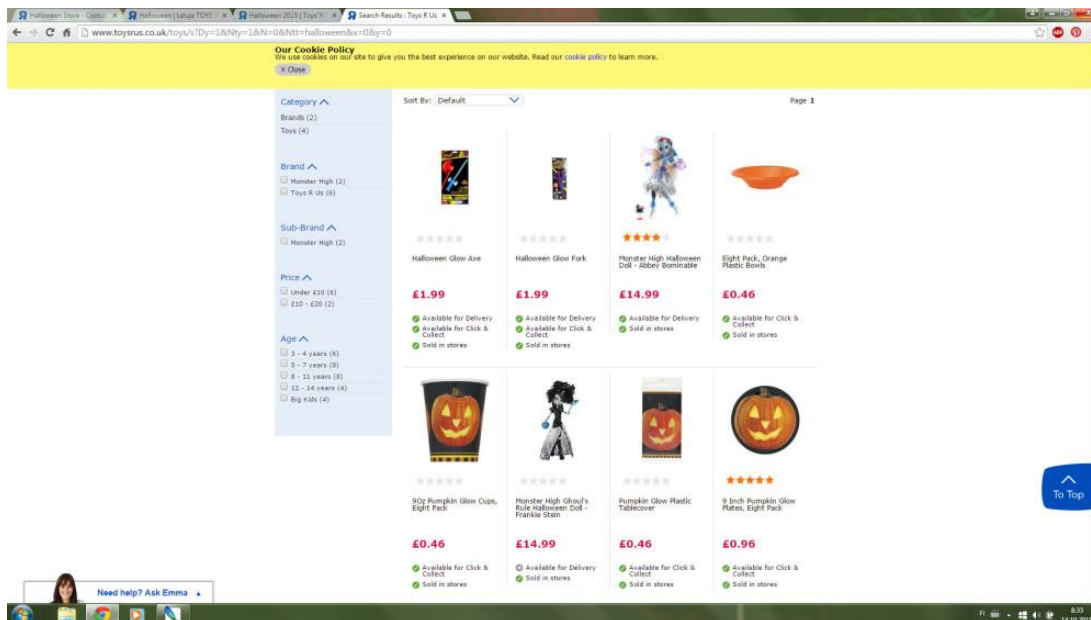
Image 20: UK – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.
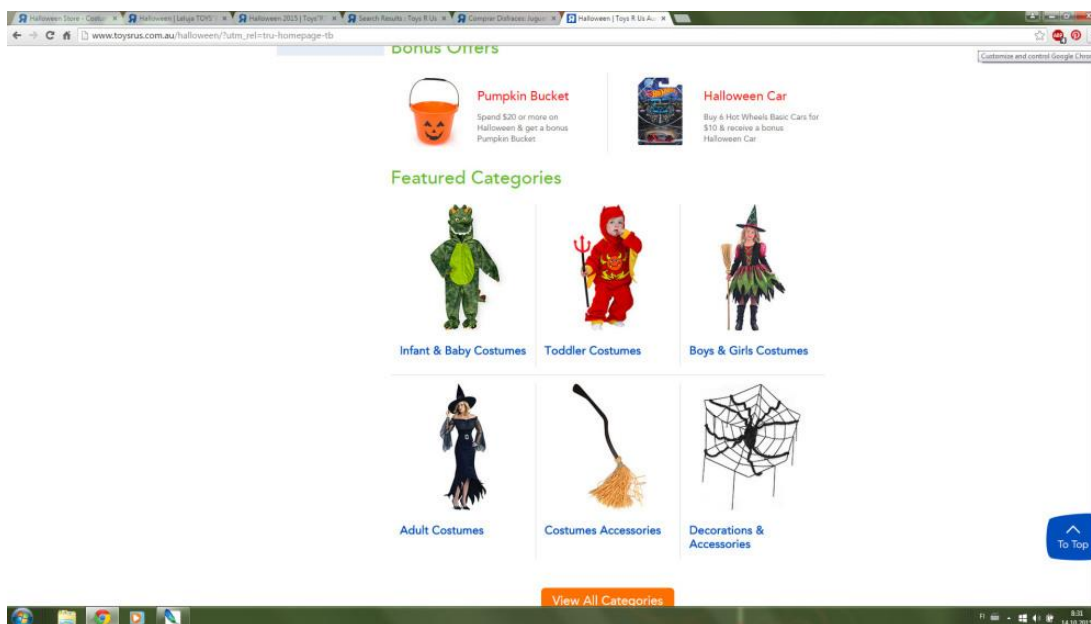
Image 21: Australia – Toys 'R' Us Halloween Online.

It is noteworthy that the image from the US website, the US being where Halloween most likely has the strongest place in the culture, is among the images that look the least scary; rather, the webpage features more general costumes, not necessarily only bloody and gory ones. Interestingly, the UK site image, the UK being another country where Halloween has a cultural stronghold (although less so than in the US) is very simple and low-key. Singapore, Colombia, and Finland, in my opinion, portray the scariest images and are the pages mostly associated with death. In the South African and Polish images, Halloween seems to be portrayed as somewhat of a side thought, while Japan's image is just twee.

Although we cannot know the full extent of the purposes and motivations of what is on these webpages, we can observe that in the countries where Halloween is a significant cultural phenomenon (the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK), the holiday seems to have settled so deep into the culture that its portrayal in these pages is not excessive. On the other hand, if we look at Finland, for example, the celebration of Halloween has grown tremendously over the past decade, but is still a relatively new concept, contrasting harshly with the established All Saints Day observance. The Finnish webpage image perhaps communicates Halloween the most extensively, at least in the number of costumes featured, and the costumes are almost all within the scary and death-related realm. Singapore and Colombia feature the most morbid images, and it would be most interesting to further investigate the cultural reasons for these observations.

For the purposes of the thesis, these two case studies exemplify how cultural identity can be portrayed online. More specifically, through the comparison of these websites, we can see how images play a large role in communicating identity. Although we cannot know the extent to which the choice of an image is purposefully made to determine the impression that image will give, we understand that that choice is determined by some sort of intrinsic motivation. Just as an individual chooses a profile picture on a social media website or another image to share, getting at the reasons why certain images, or more broadly, specific content, are selected is a question at the heart of this thesis.

2.3. Transnational Cultural Transfer

Let us now zoom out a little to take a look at a third major theoretical theme of this thesis: transnational culture. Globalization has no doubt been greatly accelerated with the ubiquitousness of the internet, although commercialism paved the way and parented the internet through its coming of age. Global brands, such as Coca-Cola and Apple, have spread in each and every direction, making life across cultural boarders more relatable in some respects. At this moment in time, the United States is the most dominant source of popular culture flow, and it is expected to remain as such, at least for a while.[103] With this being said, it is important to remember that culture transfers in various directions.[104] It can also be risky to use the terms *Western* or *American* too generally, as these can change meaning depending on the point of reference or the person. For this thesis, however, I use these labels loosely, and I implore my reader to receive these words in a generalized sense. A further note regarding cultural trends flowing from the US outwards that I wish to point out is that, in today's global situation as in the past, the acceptance of US-originating popular culture by the rest of the world can take place at the same time as the rejection or disapproval of other aspects of the US, i.e. the nation's political or economic actions.[105]

A term that is often linked with globalization is *deterritorialization*: the phenomenon of when social structures expand beyond physical space, weakening the connection between culture and geography.[106] It is logical that this phenomenon would naturally occur, as seen in our example of McDonald's in Finland, when a "finanscape" and other "scapes" expand.[107] With the rise of the internet and global markets, deterritorialization has certainly taken place on a large scale. People across the globe buy the same products from stores, eat the same types of foods, and wear the same brands of clothes, be they originally French, American, or even Finnish. A marketing campaign was recently launched in the US for a major affordable retail store, Target. The ad is for one of the most recognizably Finnish brands,

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[103] Berger 2002, 2-3.
[104] The popularity of Korean pop music (K-pop) is one example of East-West cultural transfer.
[105] Van Elteren 2011, 163.
[106] Marti 2006, 92-93.
[107] These terms will be further explained later in this section.

Marimekko, (seen in Image 22)[108] known for its bold patterns, good quality, and high prices. Also Marimekko textile products began selling in the US in 1959,[109] it did not open up a store in the US until 2011, and up until 2015, the brand was not well-known. However, selling its products in Target puts it on the massive mainstream level very quickly. Marimekko seems to have gone through a recent *deterritorialization*, and thus *reterritorialization*, having expanded and redefined its boundaries as a result of all of the "scapes" aligning for the company in the right way.

Image 22: Marimekko at Target

Appadurai begins his classic paper, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, with the line, "The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization." He goes on to point out that there is often a negative stereotype, or even fear, associated with the notion of cultural homogenization – a reputation that is often misconstrued or unnecessarily fretted over. In this paper, Appadurai names "five dimensions of global cultural flow," which are: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. Each of these "scapes," he suggests is part of "imagined worlds" that exist around the globe – worlds that

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[108] http://www.glamour.com/story/8-colorful-pieces-were-buying-from-targets-marimekko-collaboration (accessed 5.5.2016).

[109] http://company.marimekko.com/about-marimekko/history (accessed 5.5.2016).

individuals participate in and make up.[110] I understand these "scapes" as being various intersecting planes of human existence and the things we create. "Ethnoscapes" refer to shifting groups of people that shape societies, such as expatriates, immigrants, or tourists. It is these types of individuals, contrasted against more situated people and communities, which create the ever-flowing movement of human existence on Earth. "Technoscapes" refer to movement of technology, spread all over the world, making previously unlikely connections between people and places. "Finanscapes" are economic markets, which ultimately, are linked to all individuals and affect and are affected by the first two mentioned "scapes". "Mediascapes" are the planes of information flow. These are usually "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality … out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places." "Ideoscapes" are the realms of ideologies and world views – usually political in nature.[111]

       Out of these five "scapes" all of them, although to a much less extent, "ideoscapes," are applicable for understanding the ideas attempted to harness with my study involving online cultural identity, food culture, and a select "ethnoscape" of Americans living in Finland. Viewing this particular group of people in this light allows for an opportunity to see how their movement from one geographical location to another impacts their identities and actions as well as contrast this "ethnocape" with others. Thinking in terms of social media, or Pinterest specifically, being a "mediascape" gives us the space for conducting this study as a virtual ethnography at the point of intersection between the identified "ethnoscape" and "mediascape." The "technoscape" here is most important, as digital technology and online developments are what have allowed for the very "mediascape" we are examining. Furthermore, the "finanscape" at play here also must be taken into consideration, as it gives both reasons for and boundaries to the "ethno-" and "mediascape." It is with all of these "scapes" in mind that we approach our research question, looking for meaning in the intersections. It is in one specific meeting point, where just the right "scapes" come together, that we find the space where the data collection for this study could take place.

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[110] Appadurai 1990, 296-297.
[111] Appadurai 1990, 298-299.

Within the framework of these "scapes" we can return to the ideas of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Cultures have been influencing one another since cultures came into existence and began interacting with each other. Outside forces have and continue to shape and change cultures, just as aspects of a culture are taken in and phased out. Globalization of the 21st century involves changes to cultural boundaries at a greater scale than ever before. This is because of capitalism's driving force in the global economy and the easier than ever flow of people, information, and material goods, including food. The result we find because of these movements is boundaries that are more blurred than they once were and cultural indicators that are less obvious. Van Elteren speaks of a "cultural 'homelessness'" that exists today. In contrast to the third space(s) referred to in Section 2.1., van Elteren calls social spaces such as malls, airports, and chain restaurants "nonplaces," void of cultural meaning because of globalization. The ultimate third space of the digital age, the internet, is the ultimate "nonspace." When referring to material goods, and I think he would include food in this category, van Elteren claims that most of them are also lacking in cultural significance; things these days are hybrids, perhaps designed in one country, assembled in another, and sold in another, therefore not being "from" any one place or culture.[112] This is most probably the case in the example of Marimekko arriving in mainstream America. The ads may claim Finnishness, but nothing in them other than the prints themselves resemble anything particularly Finnish. Moreover, we can assume that the products being sold in the US under the Marimekko label have not actually been produced in Finland.

The following dualities presented by van Elteren are also introduced here to add to our theoretical understanding of the study at hand: universalization/homogenization versus particularization/differentiation. The current processes of globalization and transnationalism universalize some aspects of what makes up modern life today, often resulting in a homogenized society or societies (McCulture). Simultaneously, out of the sameness comes a desire for individualism and uniqueness (the rye bread and xylitol at McDonald's in Finland).[113]

I mentioned at the beginning of this section that American culture tends to be dominant in the course of globalization. Because of the history of the US as

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[112] Van Elteren 2011, 149-150.
[113] Van Elteren 2011, 150.

well as many other reasons, including economic and political, or the "finanscape" and the "ideoscape" of the US and global scenes, as it were, globalization is often synonymous with "Americanization." Van Elteren does a fine job of going into this in detail.[114] However, for this study, it is mainly important to keep in mind that this is the case for the time being. The results of this study would have most likely been very different if we would have included a group of participants from other countries, at least when it came to motivations for pinning.

        As a final thought on transnational culture flow, I wish to reiterate that "the flow" goes in various directions. There is even a concept of "Americanization in reverse," which "recycles Americanization and sells it back to America."[115] For example, the Japanese cartoon character, Pokémon, is a regurgitation of a Disney-type character, which is now marketed to children in the US and all over the world.[116] Korean pop music, takes the Brittney Spears image, serves it back to the West, and people love it!

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[114] Van Elteren 2011, 153-159.
[115] Hornung 2002, 114.
[116] Van Elteren 2011, 159.

3. Methodology

3.1. Virtual Ethnography

In the previous chapters I have laid the foundation for an explanation of the actions I took towards being able to answer my research question. To find these answers, I needed to observe a group of people, in this case pinners, in their "native" environment, Pinterest.[117] Therefore, I used the method of virtual ethnography to gather information about the pinners.

Ethnography, is commonly used to gather information about people in particular environments. In this study I have used virtual ethnography to take a closer look at the behaviors, practices, and organized actions of a particular set of Pinterest users, in hopes of giving some kind of cultural meaning to it all. Guided by a drive to find out what is going on with people in particular situations, not unlike my own in many ways, in an online environment when it comes to food culture. Since the concept of culture is polysemous, it stands to reason, that cultural ethnographic observations can include a wide variety of subject matter. In this study, I hope to especially bring out the observations which can possibly relate to my own adaptation to a "foreign culture," and at the same time, zero in on what is specifically happening when this group of women use this social media, and what that means.

In the late 1990's, sociologists along with academics from many other fields were abuzz with the rise of virtual communities, and the term *virtual ethnography* was established. In the age of digital information, traditional ethnographers scrambled to apply their practices in an online world. Starting with the first computer-mediated communications systems and considering social media in its most recent stages, virtual communities have been deemed worth studying just as any human community is, as is seen in, for example, Hiltz and Turoff's computer conferencing "bible," *The Network Nation*.[118] Hine, building on Hiltz and Turoff, describes *social inertia* as "the practices through which the technology is used and understood in everyday settings."[119] Grint and Woolgar, viewing the internet as first and foremost a social construction,[120] would concur with Hine's assertion that virtual

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[117] The term *native* is, of course, used loosely.
[118] Hiltz and Turoff 1993, xxxix.
[119] Hine 2000, 4.
[120] O'Reilly 2009, 216.

ethnography is a study of everyday practices done online, not some completely new phenomenon caused by digital technology. The present study is not one that accredits Pinterest with creating certain social interactions, rather it is as study of social interactions that have adapted to current digital media. However, when it comes to online identity, I suggest that in regards to the participants of this study, the act of pinning can have shaping effects on their cultural identity.

Because Pinterest is organized into a sequence of pins in reverse chronological order, it is possible to gather a narrative from any given Pinterest board, or more broadly, any collection of a pinner's boards. Watson and Watson provide an explanation of ethnography in terms of the process of relaying a narrative, which very much suits the methodology of this paper. They draw on previous literature to suggest that narratives represent and explain human beings.[121] They point out how one's *self* is a product of the narrative texts one has been exposed to. Moreover, it is the time-sequence that holds together the narrative, and therefore contributes to *self*. The points that Watson and Watson bring forth here can be interpreted for the sake of this paper to suggest that the sequence of material created for, by, and on social media, viewed over a period of time, create a narrative of an identity – a window into *self*.

In order to get at this view of *self*, an ethnographer – in this case, me – must consider the medium through which the data to be observed is created. When studying the internet, Hine suggests two approaches. One view assumes that the internet is a dimension, a space where culture happens. In this light, a virtual ethnographer can, as George Marcus puts it, "follow the people."[122] The second approach views the Internet as a cultural object itself.[123] I have combined these two approaches in the current study, analyzing the pins of the observed participants as well as zooming out to observe any effects on the participants from the social media.

3.2. Introspecition

Embracing the fact that no sort of ethnography can be fully objective since the ethnographer is always seeing the observed through his or her personal lens, I extrapolate my own personal influence on both the gathering and interpreting data.

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[121] Watson and Watson 2012, 686.
[122] Marcus 1995, 106.
[123] Hine 2000, 9.

Although objectivity is always strived for, I do not hesitate to use my cultural understanding of all of the spaces and people involved to connect the dots and create a whole narrative. When deciding to conduct a study about which is so meaningful to me personally and one that I am so deeply involved in outside of the world of academia, it was recommended by my research advisers to explore the possibility of using introspection as a method to process this study. As an American living in Finland who uses Pinterest to collect food ideas, it is only fitting that I "allow" myself to use my own experiences and intuition about the subject matter.

Introspection as a research method is not universally favorable. In a paper entitled, *Data from Introspective Reports: Upgrading from Commonsense to Science*, Gualtiero Piccinini discusses what he calls the "the introspection agnostic" and "the introspection believer." Piccinini describes the "agnostic" as one who subscribes to the notion that, "since introspection is private and introspective reports are consequently unverifiable," and therefore, cannot be considered to be scientific. Because the mental state of someone, as far as thoughts, feelings, etc., cannot be undeniably proven, some believe that these factors should not play into scientific research. On the other hand, the "introspection believer" is of the opinion that through these mental processes, we can gain data for research that would otherwise be unavailable. Despite the fact that these factors are not able to be proven, the "believer" asserts that they are legitimate because they exist, and they can offer unique information.[124]

One should take introspective research with the understanding of what it is, keeping in mind that it is not public, proven knowledge, but extremely valuable just the same. I am, of course, siding with the "introspection believer" in respect to this study. I suggest that it is a legitimate and beneficial approach to the topic at hand. Throughout this thesis, I often refer to my own experiences, thoughts, and opinions. I believe that this adds to the thesis, and in fact, makes it possible.

In the following three sections I tell how I went about approaching the participants of this study, categorizing their pins, as well as carrying out the questionnaire, using both virtual ethnography and introspection.

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[124] Piccinini 2003, 3.

3.3. The Participants

Understanding boards and pins is the first step towards attaching a cultural significance to Pinterest. In order to analyze pins and their origins in hopes of finding answers to my research question, I needed to set up a participant observation group. Recognizing the magnitude of food related pins as well as the unique role that food plays in culture, I decided to study food-themed boards. For the purpose of highlighting qualities of the social media that showcase acts of online cultural identity management, I chose to form a group of Americans living in Finland who used Pinterest. With these restrictions on what kinds of boards and pins I would analyze, I gathered a data sample.

I contacted several organizations asking for participants: The American Women's Club in Finland (AWC)[125], The International English Speakers' Association of Finland (IESAF)[126], and The Finnish-American Society (SAYL)[127]. I also personally contacted three acquaintances of mine, two of whom I know through the AWC, and all three agreed to participate. I ended up with ten women in the group. All participants are or were US citizens who lived in Finland at the time of this study and were members and users of Pinterest prior to this study.

At the time of this study, each of the ten participants had one or more food related board, a criteria for participation. The determination of what qualified as a food board was based on whether the majority of the pins on a particular board, that is to say, over half, were food related. The number of food boards per user ranged from one to seventy. The latter amount however was an outlier. The next highest number of food related boards was eighteen.

Some of the participants of this study had jointly contributed to boards with other pinners both within and outside of this study. If the contributors of a shared board were all in the group of pinners I was studying, I analyzed the pins of that board. If there were other contributors, I disregarded the board.

Each participant was assigned a letter, from A to J, and each food board was assigned a number. Rather than using participants names or the names they entitled

[125] www.awcfinland.com (accessed 4.12.2013).
[126] http://iesaf.fi/ (accessed 4.12.2013).
[127] http://sayl.fi/ (accessed 4.12.2013).

their boards, when referring to a particular board I have classified each board with a letter and a number, for example, A.1. (see Appendix).

3.4. Categorizing

Pins were filed into one of the following categories: American, Expat, Finnish, Other, Indeterminate, or American-like. As noted earlier, "American" refers to a person living in the US. I gave the title of "expat" to one of the categories towards the beginning of this study, before I had considered at length the differing terminology and possible controversy the labels could cause. However, for the categorizing process, I chose to keep the title of "expat" for simplicity's sake. "American living in a foreign country" seemed too long-winded. Here, "expat" refers to a person from the US who was living outside of the US at the time of sourcing the image that eventually made its way to the boards I examined. The "expat" category was included early on, as I noticed as I was observing the boards that for some of the bloggers the pinners were pinning from were purposefully keeping track of their experiences in a foreign country, and food was one of the things, sometimes the only thing, they were highlighting.[128] The category labeled, "Finnish" was distinguished in an attempt to observe if and how the participants were using Pinterest to connect with their current geographical location and its culture. The "Other" category includes all pins which came from a source outside of the US and Finland and was not an American or an American organization living or existing in a foreign country. In some cases, the pin's source was unidentifiable. Sometimes, this was because of a malfunctioning website, a virus warning, etc. I did not want to run the risk of contaminating my own computer while doing this research. Therefore, if a link looked suspicious, I did not investigate it further. On some occasions, the source blog or website simply gave no clues to the location of the source. In both cases, these pins were categorized into the "Indeterminate" group.

Throughout this study, I have been well aware of the fact that geographical location does not always directly determine culture. In fact, that is exactly what I aim to show through this study: Americans living in Finland are using Pinterest as a means of importing US culture. In the analysis of each pin, however, I am using geographical location as a strong indicator of culture. I am making this link based on

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[128] One example of this can be seen on the blog, Tokyo Terrace: http://www.tokyoterrace.com/ (accessed 21.1.2016).

the assumption that, generally speaking, physical location does shape culture, allowing for individual variances. Although the terms *location* and *culture* are not interchangeable – I do not culturally identify as Finnish although I live in Finland – I maintain that location heavily influences culture, in this case, food culture – I identify as US American because I grew up in the US, and I sometimes experiment with Finnish food making because I currently live in Finland. Therefore, in my analysis, I looked for geographical location as an indication of what cultural background the source supplier might have. Through the analysis process, because I often was able to find out exact information on not only where, geographically, the source came from, but also the cultural identification of the source supplier, I am confident in the linking of the two terms for the purposes of this study.

The actual data analysis includes the inspection of each food-related pin on every participant's food-related boards and a determination of the geographical source of each pin inspected. Additionally, this study is based on a survey given to each participant to further explore the findings from the source determination.

Going back to *image 3*, if the pin image is left clicked on, the user is directed to the origin of the pin, in this case gimmesomeoven.com. In the case of this example, the pin origin is a personal blog. In analyzing the data, I came across numerous personal blogs and online magazines. There were also a number of aggregate sites which collected popular or trending pins. The original source of the image was not relevant for this study. I was only concerned with determining from where the image was linked to Pinterest.

In the case of blogs, there was almost always an "about me" section which could be briefly read to find out the author's location at the time of writing the post in question. If the pin origin was found to be an online magazine or other trademarked website, an "about us" section could usually be found. Pins were categorized into the following groups of origins: US, US expat, US-seeming, Finnish, Other, and Indeterminate. The label, US-seeming, was given to origins that, because of language and content and introspection as a US cultural native, could almost certainly be classified as US sourced but allowing for the possibility of being something else. The sources were tallied by hand onto paper and then entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

There were a number of occasions that I came across bloggers from a country other than the US, but had moved to the US and were blogging from the US.

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I chose to categorize these sources as American. On the other hand, I included the category of US expat which encompassed any American living outside of the US at the time of content production.

3.5. The Questionnaire

As a member of a social group, one may look within the group when searching to build one's self esteem.[129] We recall the Spartacus example from the beginning of this thesis. Just as the rebelled slaves got courage from each other to solidify their identity as individuals and as a group, users of Pinterest fuel each other's identities. Therefore, in addition to finding out *what* participants were pinning, equally important is understanding their motivations for pinning. With this in mind, I constructed a questionnaire that was administered and answered by all ten participants (see Appendix). The aim of this questionnaire was to gain more insight into the participants' backgrounds, behavior in the social space of Pinterest, as well as perceptions of themselves as "Americans living in Finland." There were 18 questions in total, and the last one simply asked for permission to contact the participant regarding follow-up questions should the need arise. The first 17 questions were grouped into five categories: "A little about you," "Culturally speaking," "Regarding Pinterest," "Regarding the topic of food on Pinterest," and "Regarding Finland and language." In asking the questions that I did, I wanted to establish offline cultural identity as well as development of online identity on Pinterest.

As mentioned in the Introduction, I also contacted the participants with a follow-up question about age as well as a question relating to how I should refer to the group of people I was involved with, and ultimately decided on "Americans living in Finland."

The question, "Do you feel more American or Finnish or something else?" was asked to get an impression of the participants' perception of their cultural identity. With the question, "Other than people, what are the top three things you miss about living in the US?" I was actively looking for answers related to food, to help justify my claim that food was one of the main things people miss about home when they go abroad; I found the answers I sought. Question 6, regarding the

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[129] Tajfel 1982, 33.

importance of food when living abroad, may have been too guiding. However, I think that the participants answered honestly even so.

The questions then focus on the participants' Pinterest usage, as well as their feelings attached with that. Then there is a question that asks, "Do you feel that your identity image on Pinterest accurately represents your cultural identity? Please explain." This question was included in an attempt to get answers of sorts to my research question directly from the participants. There are also a couple of questions regarding food pins, and then finally, questions about how long they have lived in Finland as well as their language abilities and willingness to use Finnish in an online setting like Pinterest (and thus the linked websites).

4. Results

4.1. Board Statistics

I analyzed a total of 3685 pins on 76 boards. The pinners had varying amounts of boards to analyze. In every case but one, pinner H, I used all of the food boards on the pinners account at the time. Pinner H had a total of 62 usable food boards. Her pins accounted for 43% of all pins in this study. After analyzing 23 of her boards, I decided to leave out the remaining 39, since an obvious pattern had been established. I made this decision based on time restraints as well as viewing the remaining boards as unnecessary for this study. The 23 boards that I did include were analyzed in alphabetical order, according to the title of the board, and therefore not chosen by content. While most of the pinners of this study organized their boards based on general topics, such as "Fun in the Kitchen" or "Desserts," Pinner H had boards for more specific ingredients or dishes, like "Blueberries" or "Cheesecake." Even considering the 39 boards I omitted, her pins accounted for nearly half of all pins analyzed.

As I was recruiting participants to observe, I learned that pinners C and H are acquaintances with each other outside of this study, and have plans to create a cookbook together. This accounts for at least some of their motives for pinning. At the time of writing, however, the cookbook is still in the brainstorming stage. Pinner C stated that she pins, "any recipes I find interesting that we could make here in Finland easily − without trips to Behnford's."[130]

Table 1 shows the results of the categorization by board. This includes the number of pins that fell into all six categories as well as the percentage of pins represented in each category on every board. The category of American-origin pins totaled at 2749. That is, 74.6% of all of the 3685 pins. This table also shows a column for the combined the categories of American, Expat, and American-seeming, because in these groups, the origin is thought to be American or originally American. Following Table 1, Table 2 shows the results by each pinner.

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[130] Behnfords is a Helsinki-based business which specializes in foods from English speaking countries, namely the US, Great Britain, and Australia.

Table 1: Pin Categorization by Board

	American	Expat	Finnish	Other	Ind.	A-S	Total		Am	Ex	Fin	O	Ind.	A-S	Am+Ex+A-S	Am+Ex+A-S
A.1.	23	1	0	4	3	0	31	31	74,19 %	3,23 %	0,00 %	12,90 %	9,68 %	0,00 %	24	77,42 %
B.1.	28	0	1	1	3	7	40		70,00 %	0,00 %	2,50 %	2,50 %	7,50 %	17,50 %	35	87,50 %
B.2.	75	3	0	5	19	13	115		65,22 %	2,61 %	0,00 %	4,35 %	16,52 %	11,30 %	91	79,13 %
B.3.	111	0	0	9	20	29	169		65,68 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5,33 %	11,83 %	17,16 %	140	82,84 %
B.4.	15	0	3	11	3	1	33		45,45 %	0,00 %	9,09 %	33,33 %	9,09 %	3,03 %	16	48,48 %
B.5.	11	1	0	2	1	6	21		52,38 %	4,76 %	0,00 %	9,52 %	4,76 %	28,57 %	18	85,71 %
B.6.	3	0	0	0	1	1	5		60,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	20,00 %	4	80,00 %
B.7.	2	0	0	1	1	1	5	388	40,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	20,00 %	20,00 %	3	60,00 %
C.1.	3	0	0	0	0	0	3		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	3	100,00 %
C.2.	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	1	100,00 %
C.3.	8	0	0	0	2	1	11		72,73 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	18,18 %	9,09 %	9	81,82 %
C.4.	3	1	0	0	1	0	5		60,00 %	20,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	0,00 %	4	80,00 %
C.5.	7	1	0	0	0	0	8		87,50 %	12,50 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %
C.6.	4	0	0	1	1	1	7		57,14 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	14,29 %	14,29 %	5	71,43 %
C.7.	4	0	0	0	0	1	5		80,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	5	100,00 %
C.8	4	0	0	1	0	0	5		80,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	4	80,00 %
C.9.	6	0	0	3	1	1	11		54,55 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	27,27 %	9,09 %	9,09 %	7	63,64 %
C.10.	10	0	0	3	1	3	17		58,82 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	17,65 %	5,88 %	17,65 %	13	76,47 %
C.11.	5	0	0	1	0	4	10		50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	0,00 %	40,00 %	9	90,00 %
C.12.	9	1	0	3	0	3	16		56,25 %	6,25 %	0,00 %	18,75 %	0,00 %	18,75 %	13	81,25 %
C.13.	4	0	0	0	1	0	5		80,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	0,00 %	4	80,00 %
C.14.	9	0	0	1	0	0	10		90,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9	90,00 %
C.15.	9	0	0	0	1	0	10		90,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	0,00 %	9	90,00 %
C.16.	2	0	0	1	0	0	3		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	33,33 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	2	66,67 %
C..17	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	130	100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	3	100,00 %
D.1.	2	0	0	0	0	2	4		50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	50,00 %	4	100,00 %
D.2.	209	1	0	52	16	23	301	305	69,44 %	0,33 %	0,00 %	17,28 %	5,32 %	7,64 %	233	77,41 %
E.1.	14	1	0	4	2	2	23		60,87 %	4,35 %	0,00 %	17,39 %	8,70 %	8,70 %	17	73,91 %
E.2.	12	0	0	2	1	2	17	40	70,59 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,76 %	5,88 %	11,76 %	14	82,35 %
F.1.	48	1	0	7	3	3	62		77,42 %	1,61 %	0,00 %	11,29 %	4,84 %	4,84 %	52	83,87 %
F.2.	162	1	7	13	6	5	194		83,51 %	0,52 %	3,61 %	6,70 %	3,09 %	2,58 %	168	86,60 %
F.3.	156	1	3	14	7	1	182		85,71 %	0,55 %	1,65 %	7,69 %	3,85 %	0,55 %	158	86,81 %
F.4.	24	0	0	0	1	7	32		75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	3,13 %	21,88 %	31	96,88 %
F.5.	16	1	0	5	0	2	24		66,67 %	4,17 %	0,00 %	20,83 %	0,00 %	8,33 %	19	79,17 %
F.6.	22	1	1	1	0	0	25		88,00 %	4,00 %	4,00 %	4,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	23	92,00 %
F.7.	7	0	2	1	3	1	14		50,00 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	7,14 %	21,43 %	7,14 %	8	57,14 %
F.8.	14	0	0	2	3	2	21		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9,52 %	14,29 %	9,52 %	16	76,19 %
F.9.	18	0	0	2	0	1	21	575	85,71 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9,52 %	0,00 %	4,76 %	19	90,48 %
G.1.	28	0	0	4	5	1	38	38	73,68 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,53 %	13,16 %	2,63 %	29	76,32 %
H.1.	13	0	0	3	1	0	17		76,47 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	17,65 %	5,88 %	0,00 %	13	76,47 %
H.2.	12	0	0	2	2	0	16		75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12,50 %	12,50 %	0,00 %	12	75,00 %
H.3.	47	1	0	2	4	3	57		82,46 %	1,75 %	0,00 %	3,51 %	7,02 %	5,26 %	51	89,47 %
H.4.	12	0	1	1	0	0	14		85,71 %	0,00 %	7,14 %	7,14 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12	85,71 %
H.5.	71	1	3	12	8	4	99		71,72 %	1,01 %	3,03 %	12,12 %	8,08 %	4,04 %	76	76,77 %
H.6.	126	1	0	31	13	3	174		72,41 %	0,57 %	0,00 %	17,82 %	7,47 %	1,72 %	130	74,71 %
H.7.	8	0	0	0	0	0	8		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %
H.8.	5	0	0	0	0	0	5		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5	100,00 %
H.9.	181	4	2	30	18	16	251		72,11 %	1,59 %	0,80 %	11,95 %	7,17 %	6,37 %	201	80,08 %
H.10.	47	2	0	5	5	5	64		73,44 %	3,13 %	0,00 %	7,81 %	7,81 %	7,81 %	54	84,38 %
H.11.	27	0	1	8	3	3	42		64,29 %	0,00 %	2,38 %	19,05 %	7,14 %	7,14 %	30	71,43 %
H.12.	15	0	0	3	0	1	19		78,95 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	15,79 %	0,00 %	5,26 %	16	84,21 %
H.13.	49	0	0	7	7	2	65		75,38 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,77 %	10,77 %	3,08 %	51	78,46 %
H.14.	3	0	0	2	1	0	6		50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	33,33 %	16,67 %	0,00 %	3	50,00 %
H.15.	168	1	2	23	20	8	222		75,68 %	0,45 %	0,90 %	10,36 %	9,01 %	3,60 %	177	79,73 %
H.16.	32	0	0	0	2	2	36		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5,56 %	5,56 %	34	94,44 %
H.17.	179	4	0	27	32	5	247		72,47 %	1,62 %	0,00 %	10,93 %	12,96 %	2,02 %	188	76,11 %
H.18.	20	0	0	2	1	1	24		83,33 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8,33 %	4,17 %	4,17 %	21	87,50 %
H.19.	52	1	0	13	3	1	70		74,29 %	1,43 %	0,00 %	18,57 %	4,29 %	1,43 %	54	77,14 %
H.20.	12	0	0	2	3	0	17		70,59 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,76 %	17,65 %	0,00 %	12	70,59 %
H.21.	36	3	0	7	6	1	53		67,92 %	5,66 %	0,00 %	13,21 %	11,32 %	1,89 %	40	75,47 %
H.22.	13	1	0	2	5	2	23		56,52 %	4,35 %	0,00 %	8,70 %	21,74 %	8,70 %	16	69,57 %
H.23.	121	3	0	10	7	5	146	1675	82,88 %	2,05 %	0,00 %	6,85 %	4,79 %	3,42 %	129	88,36 %
I.1.	18	0	0	1	1	0	20		90,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5,00 %	5,00 %	0,00 %	18	90,00 %
I.2.	46	1	0	7	6	3	63		73,02 %	1,59 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	9,52 %	4,76 %	50	79,37 %
I.3.	86	0	0	9	6	3	104		82,69 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8,65 %	5,77 %	2,88 %	89	85,58 %
I.4.	6	0	0	0	0	2	8		75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	25,00 %	8	100,00 %
I.5.	6	1	0	1	1	1	10		60,00 %	10,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	10,00 %	10,00 %	8	80,00 %
I.6.	8	0	0	1	0	0	9		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %
I.7.	0	0	0	0	0	2	2		0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	100,00 %	2	100,00 %
I.8.	23	0	0	3	1	1	28		82,14 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,71 %	3,57 %	3,57 %	24	85,71 %
I.9.	12	0	0	2	1	4	19		63,16 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,53 %	5,26 %	21,05 %	16	84,21 %
I.10.	7	1	0	1	0	0	9		77,78 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %
I.11.	4	0	0	2	3	0	9		44,44 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	22,22 %	33,33 %	0,00 %	4	44,44 %
I.12.	8	0	0	1	0	0	9		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %
I.13.	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	298	100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %
J.1.	177	2	3	13	6	4	205	205	86,34 %	0,98 %	1,46 %	6,34 %	2,93 %	1,95 %	183	89,27 %
ALL	2749	42	29	387	272	206	3685		74,60 %	1,14 %	0,79 %	10,50 %	7,38 %	5,59 %	2997	81,33 %

Table 2: Categorization by Pinner

	American	Expat	Finnish	Other	Ind.	A-S	TOTAL	Am	Ex	Fin	O	Ind.	A-S	Am+Ex+AS	Am+Ex+AS
A	23	1	0	4	3	0	31	74,19 %	3,23 %	0,00 %	12,90 %	9,68 %	0,00 %	24	77,42 %
B	245	4	4	29	48	58	388	63,14 %	1,03 %	1,03 %	7,47 %	12,37 %	14,95 %	307	79,12 %
C	91	3	0	14	8	14	130	70,00 %	2,31 %	0,00 %	10,77 %	6,15 %	10,77 %	108	83,08 %
D	211	1	0	52	16	25	305	69,18 %	0,33 %	0,00 %	17,05 %	5,25 %	8,20 %	237	77,70 %
E	26	1	0	6	3	4	40	65,00 %	2,50 %	0,00 %	15,00 %	7,50 %	10,00 %	31	77,50 %
F	467	5	13	45	23	22	575	81,22 %	0,87 %	2,26 %	7,83 %	4,00 %	3,83 %	494	85,91 %
G	28	0	0	4	5	1	38	73,68 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,53 %	13,16 %	2,63 %	29	76,32 %
H	1249	22	9	192	141	62	1675	74,57 %	1,31 %	0,54 %	11,46 %	8,42 %	3,70 %	1333	79,58 %
I	232	3	0	28	19	16	298	77,85 %	1,01 %	0,00 %	9,40 %	6,38 %	5,37 %	251	84,23 %
J	177	2	3	13	6	4	205	86,34 %	0,98 %	1,46 %	6,34 %	2,93 %	1,95 %	183	89,27 %
ALL	2749	42	29	387	272	206	3685	74,60 %	1,14 %	0,79 %	10,50 %	7,38 %	5,59 %	2997	81,33 %

It is important to show the category of Indeterminate when considering the total number of pins. However, for this study, because this category has no bearing on my interpretation of the results, two additional tables were created excluding all Indeterminate pins. I am focusing on Tables 3 and 4 for the interpretation of the results. From this point onward, when discussing results, it is to be understood that when I discuss amounts of pins on boards, I am only referring to food pins which were of origins that could be determined.

The total number of pins without the Indeterminate pins, is 3413. American pins represent 80.54% of this total. If the categories of American, Expat, and American-Seeming are combined, they represent 87.81%. American and American-Seeming combined are 86.58%. These figures clearly show that a significant majority of the food pins the women in this study are pinning are American in origin.

Only 1.23% of all pins were classified as Expat and 0.85% were labeled Finnish. These values are significantly low and show that it is rare that the pinners in this study pinned from Expat or Finnish sources. In fact, 48 of all 77 sample boards included zero Expat pins and 64 boards included zero Finnish pins. Among the boards that do contain Expat pins, percentages range from 0.35% to 25%. However the boards with the highest percentages in this category contained relatively few pins, giving more weight to each pin.

Out of 77 boards, there were 19 cases were American pins made up less than 70% of a board. In almost all of those cases, the number of pins analyzed on the board was noticeably lower than the average number of pins on a board, 44.9. Ten of those boards included 10 or fewer pins, five included 11-20 pins, three included 21-30 pins, and only one board was made up of 31-40 pins. Likewise, on the 11 boards with percentages of American pins exceeding 90, nine of them included 10 or less pins, one board had 19 pins, and one board had 34 pins. The results shown on Table 3 show an unmistakable trend of American pins making up around 80 % of boards.

Table 3: Categorization by Board, Excluding Indeterminate Pins

	American	Expat	Finnish	Other	A-S	total		American	Expat	Finnish	Other	A-S	am+ex+as	am+ex+as	am+as	am+as
A.1.	23	1	0	4	0	28	28	82,14 %	3,57 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	0,00 %	24	85,71 %	23	82,14 %
B.1.	28	0	1	1	7	37		75,68 %	0,00 %	2,70 %	2,70 %	18,92 %	35	94,59 %	35	94,59 %
B.2.	75	3	0	5	13	96		78,13 %	3,13 %	0,00 %	5,21 %	13,54 %	91	94,79 %	88	91,67 %
B.3.	111	0	0	9	29	149		74,50 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	6,04 %	19,46 %	140	93,96 %	140	93,96 %
B.4.	15	0	3	11	1	30		50,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	36,67 %	3,33 %	16	53,33 %	16	53,33 %
B.5.	11	1	0	2	6	20		55,00 %	5,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	30,00 %	18	90,00 %	17	85,00 %
B.6.	3	0	0	0	1	4		75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	25,00 %	4	100,00 %	4	100,00 %
B.7.	2	0	0	1	1	4	340	50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	25,00 %	25,00 %	3	75,00 %	3	75,00 %
C.1.	3	0	0	0	0	3		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	3	100,00 %	3	100,00 %
C.2.	1	0	0	0	0	1		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	1	100,00 %	1	100,00 %
C.3.	8	0	0	0	1	9		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	9	100,00 %	9	100,00 %
C.4.	3	1	0	0	0	4		75,00 %	25,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	4	100,00 %	3	75,00 %
C.5.	7	1	0	0	0	8		87,50 %	12,50 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %	7	87,50 %
C.6.	4	0	0	1	1	6		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	16,67 %	16,67 %	5	83,33 %	5	83,33 %
C.7.	4	0	0	0	1	5		80,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	5	100,00 %	5	100,00 %
C.8	4	0	0	1	0	5		80,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	20,00 %	0,00 %	4	80,00 %	4	80,00 %
C.9.	6	0	0	3	1	10		60,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	30,00 %	10,00 %	7	70,00 %	7	70,00 %
C.10.	10	0	0	3	3	16		62,50 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	18,75 %	18,75 %	13	81,25 %	13	81,25 %
C.11.	5	0	0	1	4	10		50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	40,00 %	9	90,00 %	9	90,00 %
C.12.	9	1	0	3	3	16		56,25 %	6,25 %	0,00 %	18,75 %	18,75 %	13	81,25 %	12	75,00 %
C.13.	4	0	0	0	0	4		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	4	100,00 %	4	100,00 %
C.14.	9	0	0	1	0	10		90,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	10,00 %	0,00 %	9	90,00 %	9	90,00 %
C.15.	9	0	0	0	0	9		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9	100,00 %	9	100,00 %
C.16.	2	0	0	1	0	3		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	33,33 %	0,00 %	2	66,67 %	2	66,67 %
C..17	3	0	0	0	0	3	122	100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	3	100,00 %	3	100,00 %
D.1.	2	0	0	0	2	4		50,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	50,00 %	4	100,00 %	4	100,00 %
D.2.	209	1	0	52	23	285	289	73,33 %	0,35 %	0,00 %	18,25 %	8,07 %	233	81,75 %	232	81,40 %
E.1.	14	1	0	4	2	21		66,67 %	4,76 %	0,00 %	19,05 %	9,52 %	17	80,95 %	16	76,19 %
E.2.	12	0	0	2	2	16	37	75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12,50 %	12,50 %	14	87,50 %	14	87,50 %
F.1.	48	1	0	7	3	59		81,36 %	1,69 %	0,00 %	11,86 %	5,08 %	52	88,14 %	51	86,44 %
F.2.	162	1	7	13	5	188		86,17 %	0,53 %	3,72 %	6,91 %	2,66 %	168	89,36 %	167	88,83 %
F.3.	156	1	3	14	1	175		89,14 %	0,57 %	1,71 %	8,00 %	0,57 %	158	90,29 %	157	89,71 %
F.4.	24	0	0	0	7	31		77,42 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	22,58 %	31	100,00 %	31	100,00 %
F.5.	16	1	0	5	2	24		66,67 %	4,17 %	0,00 %	20,83 %	8,33 %	19	79,17 %	18	75,00 %
F.6.	22	1	1	1	0	25		88,00 %	4,00 %	4,00 %	4,00 %	0,00 %	23	92,00 %	22	88,00 %
F.7.	7	0	2	1	1	11		63,64 %	0,00 %	18,18 %	9,09 %	9,09 %	8	72,73 %	8	72,73 %
F.8.	14	0	0	2	2	18		77,78 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	11,11 %	16	88,89 %	16	88,89 %
F.9.	18	0	0	2	1	21	552	85,71 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9,52 %	4,76 %	19	90,48 %	19	90,48 %
G.1.	28	0	0	4	1	33	33	84,85 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12,12 %	3,03 %	29	87,88 %	29	87,88 %
H.1.	13	0	0	3	0	16		81,25 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	18,75 %	0,00 %	13	81,25 %	13	81,25 %
H.2.	12	0	0	2	0	14		85,71 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	0,00 %	12	85,71 %	12	85,71 %
H.3.	47	1	0	2	3	53		88,68 %	1,89 %	0,00 %	3,77 %	5,66 %	51	96,23 %	50	94,34 %
H.4.	12	0	1	1	0	14		85,71 %	0,00 %	7,14 %	7,14 %	0,00 %	12	85,71 %	12	85,71 %
H.5.	71	1	3	12	4	91		78,02 %	1,10 %	3,30 %	13,19 %	4,40 %	76	83,52 %	75	82,42 %
H.6.	126	1	0	31	3	161		78,26 %	0,62 %	0,00 %	19,25 %	1,86 %	130	80,75 %	129	80,12 %
H.7.	8	0	0	0	0	8		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %	8	100,00 %
H.8.	5	0	0	0	0	5		100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5	100,00 %	5	100,00 %
H.9.	181	4	2	30	16	233		77,68 %	1,72 %	0,86 %	12,88 %	6,87 %	201	86,27 %	197	84,55 %
H.10.	47	2	0	5	5	59		79,66 %	3,39 %	0,00 %	8,47 %	8,47 %	54	91,53 %	52	88,14 %
H.11.	27	0	1	8	3	39		69,23 %	0,00 %	2,56 %	20,51 %	7,69 %	30	76,92 %	30	76,92 %
H.12.	15	0	0	3	1	19		78,95 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	15,79 %	5,26 %	16	84,21 %	16	84,21 %
H.13.	49	0	0	7	2	58		84,48 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12,07 %	3,45 %	51	87,93 %	51	87,93 %
H.14.	3	0	0	2	0	5		60,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	40,00 %	0,00 %	3	60,00 %	3	60,00 %
H.15.	168	1	2	23	8	202		83,17 %	0,50 %	0,99 %	11,39 %	3,96 %	177	87,62 %	176	87,13 %
H.16.	32	0	0	0	2	34		94,12 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5,88 %	34	100,00 %	34	100,00 %
H.17.	179	4	0	27	5	215		83,26 %	1,86 %	0,00 %	12,56 %	2,33 %	188	87,44 %	184	85,58 %
H.18.	20	0	0	2	1	23		86,96 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8,70 %	4,35 %	21	91,30 %	21	91,30 %
H.19.	52	1	0	13	1	67		77,61 %	1,49 %	0,00 %	19,40 %	1,49 %	54	80,60 %	53	79,10 %
H.20.	12	0	0	2	0	14		85,71 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	0,00 %	12	85,71 %	12	85,71 %
H.21.	36	3	0	7	1	47		76,60 %	6,38 %	0,00 %	14,89 %	2,13 %	40	85,11 %	37	78,72 %
H.22.	13	1	0	2	2	18		72,22 %	5,56 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	11,11 %	16	88,89 %	15	83,33 %
H.23.	121	3	0	10	5	139	1534	87,05 %	2,16 %	0,00 %	7,19 %	3,60 %	129	92,81 %	126	90,65 %
I.1.	18	0	0	1	0	19		94,74 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	5,26 %	0,00 %	18	94,74 %	18	94,74 %
I.2.	46	1	0	7	3	57		80,70 %	1,75 %	0,00 %	12,28 %	5,26 %	50	87,72 %	49	85,96 %
I.3.	86	0	0	9	3	98		87,76 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	9,18 %	3,06 %	89	90,82 %	89	90,82 %
I.4.	6	0	0	0	2	8		75,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	25,00 %	8	100,00 %	8	100,00 %
I.5.	6	1	0	1	1	9		66,67 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	11,11 %	8	88,89 %	7	77,78 %
I.6.	8	0	0	1	0	9		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %	8	88,89 %
I.7.	0	0	0	2	0	2		0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %	2	100,00 %	2	100,00 %
I.8.	23	0	0	3	1	27		85,19 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	3,70 %	24	88,89 %	24	88,89 %
I.9.	12	0	0	2	4	18		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	22,22 %	16	88,89 %	16	88,89 %
I.10.	7	1	0	1	0	9		77,78 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %	7	77,78 %
I.11.	4	0	0	2	0	6		66,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	33,33 %	0,00 %	4	66,67 %	4	66,67 %
I.12.	8	0	0	1	0	9		88,89 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	0,00 %	8	88,89 %	8	88,89 %
I.13.	8	0	0	0	0	8	279	100,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	8	100,00 %	8	100,00 %
J.1.	177	2	3	13	4	199	199	88,94 %	1,01 %	1,51 %	6,53 %	2,01 %	183	91,96 %	181	90,95 %
ALL	2749	42	29	387	206	3413	3413	80,54 %	1,23 %	0,85 %	11,34 %	6,04 %	2997	87,81 %	2955	86,58 %
AVERAGE	36,17105	0,6	0,4	5,1	2,7	44,9		78,05 %	1,62 %	0,75 %	10,78 %	8,80 %	39,43421	88,47 %		
MEDIAN	12,5	0	0	2	1	18		79,83 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	11,11 %	3,83 %	16	88,89 %		

In the rare cases that the results of a board vary noticeably from the norm, a closer look at the board itself can explain the deviant numbers. Board B.4. provides an interesting example. B.4. is entitled "Finland" and is a collection of Finnish related information, including food recipes and ideas. Pinner B has used the board to collect a variety of information about Finland and Scandinavia. Food pins make up one-third of the sample selection of pins from that board. This board has

the second lowest percentage of American pins[131] also has the second highest percentage of Finnish pins, 10%. It is interesting to note that even though 10% is a relatively high value when comparing the Finnishness of other boards, when considering that the purpose of the board is to collect Finnish information, the 10% value seems low. Even though the point of this board is to collect Finnish material, the percentage of American pins is 50%. If we add the pins labeled American-Seeming, the combined value of the categories is 53.33%, which is surprising considering the nature of the board. Pins labeled Other made up 36.67%. It can be noted that most of the Other pins were from English speaking countries, i.e. England and Australia, and in a significant number of cases, the sources were blogs written by people of Finnish or Scandinavian heritage. The total number of analyzed pins from this board is 30, which is a relatively small number. However, in contrasting the supposed purpose of the board with the sources of the material found there, the small sample size still relays an interesting analysis. The results of this particular board suggest that even when purposefully seeking Finnish online materials, the pinner chose to collect non-Finnish sources, mostly American.

As mentioned earlier, only a sample selection of Pinner H's boards were analyzed due to the vast number of material her boards provided as well as a clear pattern emerging from early on in this pinner's data. Pinner H's boards included one entitled, "Fourth of July," which has been used to collect material associated with US Independence Day. This board fell outside of the selected boards to analyze, yet is mentioned here, as it provides further example of a board's purpose affecting its pin analysis. As could be assumed, all of the pins on this board are American-sourced. These results clearly contrast those found in board B.4.

Board D.2. includes 289 analyzed pins, out of which 18.25% were classified as Other. The fact that this board contains a substantial number of pins makes it necessary to further examine its relatively large percentage of Other pins. This board clearly lies outside of the 11.34% board average of Other pins. A closer look at Table 3 reveals that Pinner D only had two food boards. Furthermore, D.1.

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[131] The lowest percentage, 0%, was found in board I.7. However, there were only two pins in this board, and both were classified as American-Seeming. Because of the low amount of pins, this board by itself cannot be considered as representative of any patterns, and is not discussed further. There were three other boards, B.7., C.11., and D.1., that were found to include 50% American-sourced pins. These boards had as few as four and as many as ten pins. Additionally, the American and American-Seeming pins combined represented from 75% - 100% of pins on these boards. Therefore, these boards are not discussed further either.

only contains 4 analyzed pins, making it unreliable in exemplifying patterns. The title of D.2. is "Food N Drink," a general topic that does not provide any clues to explaining why this board would deviate noticeably from the others. Therefore, I will look to the pinner for possible explanation. A closer look at Pinner D and other individual pinners will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter.

4.2. Pinner Statistics

Table 4 displays the pin analysis by pinner. The results discussed in this section take a step toward connecting the statistical data with individual cultural identity. All of the pins of each pinner were totaled and categorized. Although the clear dominance of American-sourced pins is evident from this table, here we can start to see slight differences between pinners.

Table 4: Categorization by Pinner, Excluding Indeterminate Pins

	Am	Ex	Finn	Other	N-S	Total	Am	Ex	Finn	Other	N-S	am+ex+as	am+ex+as	am+as	am+as	pinner %	
A	23	1	0	4	0	28	82,14 %	3,57 %	0,00 %	14,29 %	0,00 %	24	85,71 %	23	82,14 %	0,0082039	0,82 %
B	245	4	4	29	58	340	72,06 %	1,18 %	1,18 %	8,53 %	17,06 %	307	90,29 %	303	89,12 %	0,0996191	9,96 %
C	91	3	0	14	14	122	74,59 %	2,46 %	0,00 %	11,48 %	11,48 %	108	88,52 %	105	86,07 %	0,0357457	3,57 %
D	211	1	0	52	25	289	73,01 %	0,35 %	0,00 %	17,99 %	8,65 %	237	82,01 %	236	81,66 %	0,0846762	8,47 %
E	26	1	0	6	4	37	70,27 %	2,70 %	0,00 %	16,22 %	10,81 %	31	83,78 %	30	81,08 %	0,0108409	1,08 %
F	467	5	13	45	22	552	84,60 %	0,91 %	2,36 %	8,15 %	3,99 %	494	89,49 %	489	88,59 %	0,1617345	16,17 %
G	28	0	0	4	1	33	84,85 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	12,12 %	3,03 %	29	87,88 %	29	87,88 %	0,0096689	0,97 %
H	1249	22	9	192	62	1534	81,42 %	1,43 %	0,59 %	12,52 %	4,04 %	1333	86,90 %	1311	85,46 %	0,449458	44,95 %
I	232	3	0	28	16	279	83,15 %	1,08 %	0,00 %	10,04 %	5,73 %	251	89,96 %	248	88,89 %	0,0817463	8,17 %
J	177	2	3	13	4	199	88,94 %	1,01 %	1,51 %	6,53 %	2,01 %	183	91,96 %	181	90,95 %	0,0583065	5,83 %
ALL	2749	42	29	387	206	3413	80,54 %	1,23 %	0,85 %	11,34 %	6,04 %	2997	87,81 %	2955	86,58 %	1	100,00 %
Average	274,9	4,2	2,9	38,7	20,6	341,3	79,50 %	1,47 %	0,56 %	11,79 %	6,68 %	299,7	87,65 %				
Median	194	2,5	0	21	15	239	81,78 %	1,13 %	0,00 %	11,80 %	4,89 %	210	88,20 %				

It is prudent to bear in mind that not every pinner contributes equally to the data pool. While Pinner E only produced 37 analyzed pins, representing 1.08% of all pins, Pinner D's data includes 289 pins, representing 8.47% of the analyzed pins. Pinner H has the highest percentage of representation, 44.95%, even when half of her pins boards were not included in the analysis. After Pinner H, Pinner F has the second highest percentage of representation, 16.17%. The more pins attributed to one individual, the stronger that individual's pinning habits can be concluded.

The table shows that the pinners' average percentage of American pins were 79.5%. Pinner E had the lowest percentage, 70.27%, and Pinner J had the highest, 88.94%. When American-Seeming pins are factored in, Pinners E and J maintain the lowest and highest values, respectively, but Pinner D's American and American-Seeming value is 81.66%, which is very close to E's value, 81.08%.

As stated earlier, the categories of Expat and Finnish pins, make up so few of the total number of pins that they are seemingly insignificant. However,

when looking at individual pinners, we notice that Expat percentages range from 0%, the value of Pinner G, to 3.57%, the value of Pinner A. The average of each pinner is 1.47%. Finnish pins have an even lower representation, averaging at 0.56% and ranging from 0%, the value found in six pinners' data, and 2.36%, seen in the data of Pinner F.

Pins categorized as Other made up an average of 11.79% of each pinner's pins. The lowest amount of Other pins, 6.53%, was found on Pinner J's boards and the highest amount, 17.99%, was seen on Pinner D's boards.

In looking at the results by individual pinner, we notice some interesting observations. In the following paragraph, I will again summarize the results of each pinner that discussed above in terms of categories, this time presenting the results pinner by pinner, highlighting possible points of interest to be further explored in Section 4.4.

Pinner A's analyzed pins represent 0.82% of all analyzed pins, making her the least influential pinner to the results. She only had one food board with 28 pins. She had zero Finnish pins, but higher Expat and Other pins than average. Pinner B's pins make up 9.96% of pins, with seven boards and 340 pins. The results of her pins correlated closely with the overall results. Pinner C's data makes up 3.57% of all data. She had 17 boards and 122 pins, meaning she had an average of 7.18 pins per board, a significantly less number than the average of 44.9 pins per board. She had no Finnish pins, and her other values were close to the average values. Pinner D's pins represent 8.47% of all data. She has two boards and 289 pins, making her average number of pins per board 144.5, a value noticeably higher than the average. Her combined American, Expat, and American-Seeming value is the lowest of all pinners and her American pin value along with her American and American-Seeming combined value are among the lowest. Pinner D also has the highest percentage of Other pins. Pinner E's data contributes 1.08% of all data in this study. She had two boards and a total of 37 pins. She has the lowest percentage of American pins as well as combined American and American-Seeming. She has zero Finnish pins and a relatively high Other value, 16.22%. Pinner F's data makes up 16.17% of all data. She has nine boards and 552 pins. She has the highest percentage of Finnish pins, 2.36%. Pinner G's pins represent 0.97% of all pins with only one board and 33 pins. She had zero Finnish pins. Pinner H represents the largest portion of the data with 44.95%. The results include 23 of her boards and

1534 pins. Her personal results closely resembled the average results. Pinner I's pins make up 8.17% of all pins with 13 boards and 279 pins. She has zero Finnish pins. Pinner J's pins account for 5.83% of the data. She had one board with 199 pins. She had the highest percentage of American pins, 88.94%. She also had the highest combined values of American, Expat, and American-Seeming pins, 91.96%, as well as combined American and American-Seeming pins, 90.95%. She had the lowest percentage of Other pins, 6.53%.

4.3. (General) Questionnaire Results

All of the ten participants responded to the e-questionnaire first sent out in December 2013 by email and Facebook. Questionnaires were electronically returned at varying times. The last answered questionnaire was returned on June 30, 2014, meaning there was a period of over six months that the pinners responded. The return dates[132] are important in relationship to the answers to Question 14, which inquires about the length of tie the pinner has lived in Finland. Additionally, the return dates can reveal how closely the answered questionnaires correlate with the actual observation period. Because of the nature of the questions, answers, and additional information I have learned about the participants, I do not think that potential answers of a pinner would have varied greatly over half a year. However, it is still prudent to keep the date discrepancies in mind when considering each participant's answers.

With the questionnaire, I surveyed the participants in five general topics: personal status, cultural identity assessment, Pinterest as social media, Food on Pinterest, and a section about living in Finland and the Finnish language. In the first section, "A little about you," I asked participants their gender, their ethnic background, and their current city or country of residence. The gender question, although redundant since I knew before the questionnaire all participants were women, was asked to give a chance for the respondents themselves to identify their gender. To the question of ethnic background, F, H, I, and J identified themselves as Caucasian. Pinner G classified herself as WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), and Pinner B called herself English. Pinner D answered with "American of European descent," which can be interpreted as White-American. Although Pinner C

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[132] Appendix

did not respond to the questionnaire, I am aware that she is White-American as well. Pinner E identified as Black-American. Pinner A classified herself as Italian, and unlike B, who I am convinced simply implied with her answer that she had English ancestry, A is actually from Italy. In our first email exchange,[133] when she was volunteering to be part of my study, she disclosed to me that she was originally an Italian citizen and had become a naturalized US citizen "a couple of years ago." She indicates in her answer of question 4 that she spent six years in the US. This information sets her apart from the other participants as far as her cultural background. In her response to question 4, she reveals that culturally, she identifies mainly as Italian, but also "somewhat American". In my treatment of A's data in this study, I have chosen to assess her pinning and question responses in the same way as the other participants. I feel that this is fair, in that she represents a segment of American pinners who are not originally from the US. All participants who responded to the questionnaire lived in southern Finland at the time of responding, seven in the Helsinki region.[134]

Question 4 deals with how participants view their own cultural identity. I asked whether they felt more American, Finnish, or something else. The purpose of this question was to identify each pinner's assessment of her own cultural identity. A few months after the initial questionnaire was sent out, I asked the participants how they labeled themselves concerning their nationality and residency. With this question, I was primarily seeking clarification on what terminology I should be using when discussing the participants, but the responses shed light on each individual's view of their position in society. The answers given in response to Question 4 and the follow up question reveal how the participants identify both their internal and external cultural identity, respectively. By jointly analyzing both given answers of each pinner, an understanding of individual cultural identities begins to develop. This analysis combined with further investigation into the answers of the other questions are explored in the next section, pinner by pinner.

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[133] January 23, 2013.

[134] Although Pinner J answered Question 3 with, "Finland," she indicates she lived in or near Helsinki in her answer of Question 13.

4.4. Pinner Identities

Pinner A was the only one who did not answer the follow-up question. However, comparing what we do know of her self-described cultural identity and observed Pinterest activity brings out an interesting discussion. As mentioned earlier, she, unlike the other participants, is not a native to the US. Therefore, it is no surprise that she identifies culturally as Italian and, to a lesser degree, American. She mentions food in her answer to Question 5, regarding things missed about the US. She lists "the vast choice of ethnic restaurants/supermarkets," connecting the Americanness of her cultural identity with the food culture of that place. In her answer to Question 6, she states that when living abroad, food is "the first and most immediate way to find out about the country . . ." The responses to Questions 5 and 6 become interesting when considering Pinner A's answer to a later question about pinning Finnish material. She states that she does not pin Finnish links because of the language, nor would she want to.[135] She does not feel that she understands Finnish well enough and is also aware that her followers would not understand pins of Finnish language material. She also states that she rarely pins in Italian either, stating that English, being a universal language is a more practical solution. When we look back at A's data on Table 4, we notice that she indeed has zero Finnish pins. These results may suggest that, despite her belief that food plays a crucial role in connecting with a culture, Pinner A does not use Pinterest to practice this belief in regards to her relatively new host country of a year and a half.[136] Instead, her Pinterest usage continues to connect her with her former home, the US. Furthermore, these findings would imply that she is not using Pinterest to connect with her Italianness, the part of her cultural identity with which she more strongly identifies.

Pinner B generally represents the average in this study. Her results shown on Table 4 do not deviate from the normal overall pattern in any significant way. Her answers in the questionnaire and follow-up questions show that she has lived in Finland for a couple of years, still feels American, plans to move back to the US, and is interested in pinning Finnish pins despite her elementary level Finnish language skills.

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[135] See A's answer to Question 17.
[136] At the time of answering the questionnaire.

In her question responses Pinner C clearly conveys her desire to preserve her American cultural identity. For example, despite having lived in Finland longer than most of the other participants,[137] she answers Question 4 with one word, "American."[138] In her reply to the follow-up question on labeling, she implies that she still feels "'loyal' to America" and that she has not "forsaken [her] American identity because [she's] in Finland." Unlike Pinners A and B, who in their answers to Question 6 imply that, when living abroad, food can be used to get to know new cultures, Pinner C answers this question by highlighting the importance of being able to prepare and eat food from and in the style of one's native culture. She again mentions her cookbook intentions in her answer to Question 13, but states that the plans are currently "on the back burner," and that she now pins for her personal fulfilment. We can assume then that sometime between the beginning of this study and the end, she shifted her pinning purposes. Even so, she seems focused on using Pinterest primarily to stay in touch with her home culture, and this is reflected in her data in Table 4. Based on all of the information we can observe from Pinner C, we can conclude that she is using Pinterest to intentionally maintain a link between herself and American food culture.

As mentioned briefly in Section 4.2. Pinner D's results are on the fringes of the collected data. She not only has one of the lowest percentages of American pins but also the highest percentage of Other pins, nearly 18%. A look at her self-labeling potentially provides an explanation for these results. Firstly, in her answer to Question 4, she says that she feels like an "American exile / permanent expatriate." This was reiterated in her answer to the follow-up question on labeling. She describes her family situation in which her non-Finnish, non- American husband, who she met in a country other than Finland or the US, is not allowed to enter the US or return to his home country. Although D expresses in her answer to Question 11 that she does not think that her image on Pinterest accurately represents her cultural identity, it is interesting to observe that the participant who sees herself as furthest away from "American" and also describes an international and multicultural family situation does indeed produce results in this study that are one of the least American and most Other.

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[137] 10 years.

[138] Four other participants answered Question 4. with "American," but the others had only lived in Finland for two to three years. The other participants who had lived in Finland longer than three years all expressed mixed emotions or descriptions about their cultural identity.

When beginning to analyze Pinner E's boards, the first thing I noticed was that one of her two food boards was entitled, "The Way to My Man's Heart."[139] Knowing that her partner is Finnish, I expected to find at least some Finnish recipes or foods pinned on the board. What I did not expect to find was Finnish food pins coming from non-Finnish, English-language sources. Pinner E is another self-labeled "American" who has lived in Finland for three years. In her questionnaire answers, expresses interest in pinning Finnish material, but because of her lack of Finnish contacts and language limitations, she would rather pin information about Finland in English. In my observations of this study, I noticed that a substantial number of pins about Finland in English came from non-Finnish sources. I encountered this phenomenon multiple times over the course of the entire data analysis.

Pinner F was the only participant who, in her answer to Question 4, states that she feels more Finnish than American. At the time of returning the survey she had lived in Finland for seven years, and identified that her level of the Finnish language is "fluent." She also mentions in her response to Question 11 that she does not feel that her Pinterest identity image accurately represents her cultural identity because of the lack of Finnish representation in her pinning. Question 16's answer explains her attitude towards pinning Finnish material:

> *Because I use my Pinterest as a visual bookmark storage, I don't mind pinning Finnish items (although the photos are usually far worse!). I am aware that I'm putting Finnish material into the feeds of my friends who don't understand it, so I usually write down what it is in English as I save the pin too (though I don't need to do that for my own understanding).*

She then concludes in her response to Question 17 that "Food is probably the most culturally American part of me." All of these answers do indeed translate to the results seen in Table 4. Pinner F has the highest percentage of Finnish pins, 2.36%. However, this value is greatly exceeded by the number of American and American-seeming pins.

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[139] The other board being, "Recipes I Would Love to Try."

At the time of returning the questionnaire, Pinner G had been living in Finland for 33 years, by far the longest period of time of all the participants. She and Pinner F were the only pinners to assess their Finnish language skills as "fluent." Despite her long time in Finland, learning the language, and being described by others as "more Finnish than American,"[140] she states in her response to Question 4 that she "can never be more Finnish than American." She gives several examples of the significance of food when living abroad in her answer to Question 6. She recalls that peanut butter, a food she had not particularly liked before she came to Finland, suddenly became very important to her. In the same way that Pinner E associated food with comfort, G mentions that cinnamon candies, a product not found in Finland, brings her solace when she is feeling "lonely or vulnerable." She also briefly tells two related anecdotes.

> *I remember bringing salmiakki to a Finnish friend [in the] US and watched her sit down to gobble it up like a child. Another time we got a box of goodies from the US and an exchange student, who happened to be visiting us, was on the floor with my small boys, charging at the sweeties like a starving child herself. I watched as three 'babies' silently went about the serious business of gobbling goodies (sensual memories from home) from their home country.*

Here this pinner clearly illustrates her view of the implications food can have outside of one's home cultural at a basic and even primal level.

Pinner H differed from the other participants in that her total number of food pins was nearly as many as all of the other nine pinners put together. Because roughly half of her food boards were analyzed for this study, her pins represented 44.95% of all pins analyzed. Pinner H had boards for specific ingredients, such as blueberries and mushrooms, boards for special diets, such as gluten-free and low-carb, boards for a variety of ethnic food boards, as well as numerous holiday boards. In spite of all of these pins, the breakdown of the pins into categories was very similar to most of the other pinners'. Although she had lived in Finland for 16 and a half years at the time of the questionnaire, she assessed that her level of the Finnish

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[140] See Pinner G's response to Question 4.

language was "intermediate," and labels herself as "something else" in her response to Question 4. She notes in her Question 16 answer that she pins for herself, and therefore pins in Finnish, since she can read it, or uses Google Translate to help, but she does not come across Finnish material very often since she does not browse Finnish sources. Nine out of her 1534 food pins were from Finnish sources.

Pinner I clearly states in her answer to the follow-up question on labeling that she is only in Finland for a limited time. She is the only pinner who did not live in one of Finland's more populated cities, meaning that her physical food resources were probably more limited than the other pinners. Still, she seems to be less attached to food comforts of home. She disclosed to me in an email, when first responding to my inquiry for participants, that she even kept a blog about "kitchen challenges," that is making certain dishes with limited ingredients and cooking accessories, due to living in Finland. Perhaps knowing she is not in Finland indefinitely, like some of the others are, gives her less attachment to comforting foods from home, since she knows she will return. In spite of this attitude, Table 4 shows that she has zero Finnish pins on her boards. She states in her response to Question 16 that she enjoys pinning Finnish material for the benefit of her "friends back home." She also indicates that she makes sure to post English-language links so that her friends can read them. This most likely leads to the phenomenon mentioned by Pinner D, pinning Finnish themed material from non-Finnish sources.

As explained in the previous section, Pinner J had the highest percentage of American pins. She explains in her answer to Question 6 that she likes "to have access to food that reminds [her] of home." She then reveals that the longer she lives in Finland, "having food that reminds [her] of home has become less important." She also notes that finding this food has become easier. She, like Pinner I, mentions her enjoyment of sharing "recipes with family and friends at home," although she does not explicitly identify these recipes as Finnish. She shows in her response to Question 11 that she is aware that she pins mostly American sources, and that correctly correlates with her cultural identity, in her opinion. She then mentions later in the questionnaire that when she pins, she does so under the condition that

she can "find the ingredients easily in Helsinki." On the subject of pinning in Finnish, she says she does not do so much, because she wants to be able to "read and understand with little effort." She also states that she would like to pin more in Finnish to improve her Finnish language skills. There were six pinners who had zero Finnish pins, but Pinner J was not one of them; she had three.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

I made a number of interesting observations in collecting source origins of the pinners and comparing that data with the answers the participants gave in response to the questionnaire. In this chapter, I will give these findings a voice in the bigger conversation discussing online cultural identity. First of all, all ten pinners showed similar patterns and habits in their pinning of food related items. The fact that the overwhelming majority of their food pins were US-sourced demonstrates "reterritorialization." The pinners have used the social media platform, Pinterest, to actively maintain the connections between their cultural selves and American culture in a third space. The structure of this "mediascape" allows for this particular "ethnoscape" to use the "technoscape" in ways that only a few years ago were impossible. Furthermore, as was discussed in the Introduction, we know that the "finanscape" has been driving this motion all along. These cultural transfers seem to be happening in directions that maintain the Pinners' American cultural identity.

When I reflect on my own experiences as an American living in Finland, keeping this study in mind, I can absolutely understand why I got the results that I did. Pinterest is an American social media platform that offers the user a chance to connect with the *idea of* American perfectionism. This is a phenomenon that is by no means limited to Americans living in Finland, but seems to be hard to escape for users of this type of media, even for those who might not want to consciously seek to preserve their Americanness (Pinner D).

Putnam may have been correct in his assessment that gatherings of people such as bowling leagues have faded away, but as we can see from this study, community and interaction is alive and well in third places and online social spaces. It is within these communities and interactions that people of today's digital society live (more or less), and where they have a chance to formulate and manage their identity/ies. However, online third places offer new environments and possibilities for combining *the real* and *the imagined*.[141] The participants of this study, for example, have used Pinterest to, in a way, cement the *realness* of their Americanness, even when they were *really* living in Finland, while at the same time

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[141] Rutherford 1998, 211.

projecting their *imagined* futures towards (mostly) American goals in the form of food pins that they chose to associate themselves with.

As van Elteren asserts, in today's global situation as in the past, the acceptance of US-originating popular culture by the rest of the world can take place at the same time as the rejection or disapproval of other aspects of the US, i.e. the nation's political or economic actions.[142] This notion is seen in the results of this study, as even in cases where a pinner felt comparatively less American than the others, or even wishing to "become" more Finnish, her food pins were still found to be overwhelmingly US-sourced. The transnational nature of a social media tool such as Pinterest does indeed allow for culture flow in a multitude of directions, but the nature of this particular social space, and to a lesser but still dictating extent, the majority of the internet, sets the stage for a particular flow direction for pinners like the ones we have gotten to know. The *deterritorialization* of social spaces, though, means allows for cultural trends to transcend geographic boarders. This study exemplifies *reterritorialization*, in that American culture dominates at least the sphere of the social space that is Pinterest where our pinners collect their food ideas, and the fascinating part about this is that it is happening outside of the US, not just once in a lifetime, as when migrants settle in new locations and bring their culture with them, but continually and contemporarily.

Lefebvre and Soja, with their ideas on social spaces, unknowingly described the structure of a third space social media website such as Pinterest. In this type of third space, however, people meet each other through their online identities, which in this case are represented by images and web links – a digital curation of culturally inspired ideas that give unique insight into an individual's cultural loyalties and aspirations for the future. In this study, the social setting of Pinterest was such that pinners could, without meaning to, strengthen their Americanness simply by "showing up" in the space.

It would be interesting, and much more telling, to carry out this type of study with a larger participant group. I highly suspect we would see very similar results to the ones we have found here. This is because, although Americans come to live in Finland for many reasons, in my experience, most of us are similar in terms of what we enjoy about Finland and what we miss about "home." Also, simply being a

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[142] Van Elteren 2011, 163.

user of Pinterest automatically puts one at a certain intersection between an "ethnoscape," a "mediascape," and "technoscape," and finding oneself at that particular juncture is bound to all but guarantee a set of cultural characteristics that go with it.

Moreover, it would be enlightening to carry out a study on Americans living in the US pertaining to food culture and pinning behaviors on Pinterest as well as people who have moved to the US from other countries. It would be exciting to compare the current study's results with both of these hypothetical studies, and the results of that comparison would most likely be quite fruitful.

Since I am "allowing" myself to use introspection as a method of study here, I feel justified in saying that I consider this research to be on an important subject of study – a subject that, in some regards changes quickly, but yet echoes traditional cultural studies as well. The subject of online cultural identity is one to be paid attention to for many years to come.

5.2. Conclusion

This study has explored several concepts that, when overlapped, provide insight on cultural identity in today's digital information society. I chose to use Pinterest as a sample of a social space. I focused on a group of Americans living in Finland to provide examples of online cultural identity. I focused on food as an expression of cultural identity. These concepts created a perimeter of study, which was manageable after a bit of tweaking. I was able to form a study group which was limited in the number of participants, yet vast enough to observe clear patterns in the collected data.

One of the most straightforward observations is that all ten participants had relatively similar pin distribution among the designated categories. The women shared certain aspects of their life circumstances – they were all US citizens living in Finland – yet they varied in age, ethnicity, background, time spent in Finland, language abilities, and future plans. For each participant's pin distribution to be so strikingly similar suggests that these findings could be generalized to apply to other Americans living in Finland who use Pinterest, although with only 10 participants, this should be done with extreme caution.

Based on these results, we can conclude that these Americans living in Finland who use Pinterest, by simply using this social media tool, are contributing to the maintenance of their American cultural identity. This conclusion is, in a way, unsurprising, since Pinterest is, after all, an American website, and the participants were American, at least by way of citizenship, at the time of this study. However, when considering the times when participants were actively searching out Finnish content and chose to pin an English language recipe of a Finnish food, for example, we can see that language and cultural view point plays a crucial role in forming an online identity on Pinterest. In other words, despite living in Finland, these American pinners more often than not sought out (the comfort of) the familiar.

All in all, this study exemplifies, by using food as a cultural marker, how Pinterest is one channel, one third space, which is both a result and instigator of the intersection of many "scapes." For the time span of this study at least, it has served a unique purpose for the participants and me in forming and shaping our ever-changing and multifaceted identities.

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Appendix: Questionnaire and Follow-up Question

The questionnaire was originally sent out on December 4, 2013, and included an 18th question asking participants for permission to contact them further if needed. All responding participants gave said permission.

Date of Questionnaire Return

A. December 4, 2013

B. February 25, 2014

C. July 1, 2014

D. March 4, 2014

E. June 10, 2014

F. December 4, 2013

G. December 8, 2013

H. January 12, 2014

I. December 5, 2013

J. January 2, 2014

A little about you:

1. What is your gender?

A. female

B. female

C. female

D. female

E. female

F. female

G. female

H. female

I. female

J. female

2. What is your ethnic background?

A. Italian

B. English

C. White

D. American of European descent

E. Black-American

F. American – Caucasian

G. WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) from New England USA

H. Caucasian

I. Caucasian

J. Caucasian

3. What is your current city/country of residence?

A. Helsinki, Finland

B. Espoo, Finland

C. Helsinki, Finland

D. Helsinki, Finland

E. Turku, Finland

F. Espoo, Finland

G. Helsinki, Finland

H. Espoo, Finland

I. Rauma, Finland

J. Finland

Culturally speaking:

4. Do you feel more American or Finnish or something else?

A. I feel mostly Italian, but the six years spent in the US also make me feel somewhat American.

B. American

C. American

D. American exile / permanent expatriate

E. American

F. Lately, more Finnish. I'm not really American anymore nor will I ever be entirely Finnish, but my habits and thoughts are beginning to feel more like those of my Finnish friends.

G. I often feel very Finnish but I can never be more Finnish than American, I don't think. I do many things and behave in many ways like most Finns. New people who

move here, say I am more Finnish than American but I don't know if I've actually come to the turning point.

I understand and accept the Finnish mentality for the most part but sometimes Finnish thinking will baffle me. I was born in America and brought up by my American parents and grandparents so this part of me can never change, or at least has not yet after 30+ years.

H. Something else, but only because the US that I left behind has changed so much. I don't feel like I belong there anymore. Finland is home, but I don't feel Finnish.

I. American

J. American

5. Other than people, what are the top three things you miss about living in the US?

A. The overall positive attitude of people, the vast choice of ethnic restaurants/supermarkets, the wide empty spaces.

B. Friendships, comforts, shopping

C. smiling, the weather, eating out

D. NPR, local coffee roasting and brewing clubs, specific types of food

E. Services, reasonable prices, variety of food (dining out)

F. Food, particularly In'n'Out burger and burritos, mountains, and the sound of the waves at the beach.

G. Good manners and polite open friendliness, people's generosity and willingness to help others, and the ability to gather together to accomplish a goal.

H. Inexpensive clothing, Tex-Mex restaurants, really good steaks.

I. Certain foods (Monterey Jack cheese, certain sweets like sweethearts and smarties and spree – the more sour candies); the ability to go to the grocery store at midnight and pick up cough medicine; diversity in people and restaurants and such (it's probably not as bad in the bigger towns, but here there's simply not a lot of variety).

J. Cultural diversity, low-priced high-quality food, arts/entertainment

6. To you, what is the importance of food when living abroad?

A. It's the first and most immediate way to find out about the country you are visiting/just moved to.

B. We like food and trying new things, but I also have a child that issues with the food dyes especially the dyes used in the USA.

C. Very important. I no longer need to import my food from the States, because now I can make it myself. But I still cook using American cookbooks and resources.

D. Extremely. I feel like I've become a better and more balanced cook since I moved abroad.

E. Food is very important. It is the source of many discussions and arguments. The kids miss their special foods and treats, I am always missing some ingredient I need. We are very open-minded and enjoy things here that we cannot get at home. However, being a southerner, food is comfort. It is not just sustenance. I miss my comfort foods, and find it frustrating when I cannot, at least, recreate them.

F. That it be a mix of the familiar and the new. Freshness and quality is important wherever you are.

G. In the beginning food is VERY important to help people feel safe and secure. I never cared much for peanut butter but when I came here it was very important to have peanut butter, even if I didn't eat it. I also love hot cinnamon candies and when I feel lonely or vulnerable, I'll eat one.

I remember bringing salmiakki to a Finnish friend it US and watched her sit down to gobble it up like a child. Another time we got a box of goodies from the US and an exchange student, who happened to be visiting us, was on the floor with my small boys, charging at the sweeties like a starving child herself. I watched as three 'babies' silently went about the serious business of gobbling goodies (sensual memories from home) from their home country.

H. I like to be able to make some of my favorite dishes or at least capture the flavor of my favorite foods from home. Especially Tex-Mex.

I. Not too important. I know people who import peanut butter and ranch dressing and chips and other things because the stuff here "isn't right." Well, no, it's not what I might be used to, but I feel that if you separate the idea of "what it's supposed to taste like" and "is it good," everything here is perfectly fine. No, I can't find certain foods, and I have to make my own mixes (like Bisquick or Jiffy cornbread), but I can certainly make do with what's available.

J. I like to have access to food that reminds me of home, but also just want to live in a place where good, quality food is available and affordable. As I continue to live in

Finland, having food that reminds me of home has become less important, but I have also noticed that it has become easier to find.

Regarding Pinterest:

7. Why did you join?

A. A friend got me interested.

B. I'm an educator and I like using to find ideas.

C. Because everyone was joining?

D. I was curious after reading an article in Salon or Slate several years ago.

E. I was invited to join by a friend.

F. To have a convenient place to visually bookmark things I wanted to be able to find again.

G. I joined to collect interesting things I stumble upon that I may not find again.

H. I can't even remember. I think some friends on Facebook said they had some invitations available. Ha! Remember when it was closed beta? Of course, I had to be in on that.

I. I like the ease of keeping track of things – it's like bookmarks or favorites on your internet toolbar, except it doesn't take up a bunch of room on your toolbar.

J. It's an easy way to keep track of important links, and also an easy way to share recipes with family and friends at home.

8. How often do you usually browse?

a. less than once a week

b. several times a week

c. once a day

d. multiple times a day

A. c. once a day

B. b. several times a week

C. b. several times a week

D. a. less than once a week

E. a. less than once a week

F. A. Usually less than once a week. I usually use my 'pin-it' button to save things I see from Facebook rather than browsing Pinterest.

G. B. several times a week, sometimes for hours!

H. b. several times a week – maybe this one

I. b. several times a week

J. b. several times a week

9. How often do you search for specific topics?

a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

b. I search for specific topics/things about as much as I browse.

c. I search for specific topics/things less than I browse.

A. c. I search for specific topics/things less than I browse.

B. b. I search for specific topics/things about as much as I browse.

C. a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

D. a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

E. a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

F. A. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

G. a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse.

H. a. I search for specific topics/things more than I browse. - definitely

I. c. I search for specific topics/things less than I browse.

J. c. I search for specific topics/things less than I browse.

10. Which of the following best describes you when you are using Pinterest?

a. excited

b. overwhelmed

c. annoyed

d. satisfied

e. other _____

Please explain why you think this is the case.

A. e. other – creative, I mostly use it when I need inspiration for my crafts/recipes and it helps me envision stuff that I'd like to make.

B. a. excited

C. d. satisfied

D. b. overwhelmed – It's rather difficult to find specific items, and there is just so much on pinterest anymore. I don't browse it like I did when I first signed up and now only go to pinterest to find my own pins rather than look at what other people have pinned.

E. d. satisfied

F. E. Other: Inspired – there are a lot of great ideas out there. I have been very picky about who I 'follow' so that I can maximize the quality of the pins I see. I get a lot of great ideas, particularly for things with my kids.

G. a. excited

H. d. satisfied – I can usually find what I'm looking for.

I. e. other – bored/zoned out – I tend to browse pinterest when I'm bored, and am looking for something to do. I find most of what is on there to be of no interest to me, and I often end up scrolling and scrolling (hence "zoned out"). But then something sparks my interest – at that point, I guess I feel more amused or interested or inspired, depending on what it is.

J. d. satisfied

11. Do you feel that your identity image on Pinterest accurately represents your cultural identity? Please explain.

A. I've never really thought about it. My cultural identity is a composite one (two nationalities, three countries, four spoken languages) and I wouldn't know how to represent it on Pinterest. I guess people just have to figure it out based on my pins.

B. I think it probably does. You can pretty much understand me and my interests and also who I am by looking at my boards.

C. I don't know what my identity image is.

D. Not really. Because I don't often use pinterest to post things which are vitally important to my identity as a person, I don't really feel like it represents anything more than my food preferences.

E. Not exactly. Pinterest has been more of a place to like and re-pin ideas others have shared. I think Facebook is a more accurate representation of who I am and my true interests.

F. It matches my personality and interests. I'm not sure if it would be culturally' representative because the Finnish side is not very well represented. I find that most

of the blogs I follow (from which I pin ideas) are American and it is reflected culturally, especially with holidays like Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving.

G. That never occurred to me but it must do so since I am who I am and collect the things that attract me. Since I have lived away from my own country for so very long, I'm sure I collect things on Pinterest from other cultures that I enjoy looking at. I must admit I do not collect much in the way of foods, but I most definitely would have done that if Pinterest were available 20-30 years ago. Maybe I'll collect more gluten-free recipes now that I need those, and perhaps more kids' foods as grandchildren possibilities are approaching.

H. I don't know that it represents my cultural identity. It represents my likes and interests.

I. Probably. I've never really considered that my pins and boards would represent my culture – just my interests and personal style. But the "hodge-podge" –ness of it and the lack of truly foreign things probably is very American.

J. Yes, because I mostly Pin American recipes (and other links).

Regarding the topic of food on Pinterest:

12. How often do you pin food related pins?

a. less than once a week

b. several times a week

c. once a day

d. multiple times a day

A. a. less than once a week

B. a. less than once a week

C. b. several times a week

D. b. several times a week

E. a. less than once a week

F. B. several times a week

G. a. less than once a week

H. b. several times a week

I. b. several times a week

J. a. less than once a week

13. What makes a food pin pin-worthy?

A. It must be something I'm willing to try in the immediate future, otherwise I'll forget that I pinned it. Or, it needs to be a genius twist on a specific recipe/ingredient I'm researching. Nothing too fancy or complicated that I'll never make. My cooking is everyday cooking, not for special occasions.

B. something that fits with an occasion - berry season, holiday or party idea

C. If it seems unique, a new twist on an old standard. Also, previously I was pinning in hopes of making a cookbook. The cookbook is on the back burner, now I just pin for myself.

D. It must be a recipe for which I can find ingredients here, something which I'd like to make at some point, and/or something which isn't necessarily available elsewhere.

E. I eat with my eyes first, so great photos are a must.

F. Good recipe. It should be something I could actually see myself making. I avoid recipes that are too complicated to ever become a reality in my home.

G. Food, like anything else 'pin-worthy', needs to be something really good that I'm afraid I won't find again when I need it. Let's say homemade marshmallows, I may run across it while searching for something else, and want to pin it because if I ever want to make marshmallows I may not remember where I saw it. I feel Pinterest is a wonderful and important tool. I think I'll probably use it more after reading what I wrote, myself. It saves time searching for things the usual way.

H. It can't use any kind of condensed soup, mix in a box, or things I can't find in Finland.

I. Something new, something I haven't seen before and is unusual. A new twist on something old. Or something that I can't get here (like how to make your own cream of mushroom soup). Simple recipes that I feel would add some variety to our dinner menus. Things I can make for gatherings and get togethers.

J. It not only has to appeal to me taste-wise, but I have to know that I will be able to find the ingredients easily in Helsinki.

Regarding Finland and language:

14. How long have you lived/did you live in Finland?

A. One and a half years.

B. 2 years 2 months

C. 10 years

D. 6.5 years

E. 3 years

F. 7+ years

G. 33 years

H. I've lived here 16.5 years.

I. Almost two years

J. On and off for 3 years

15. Which of the following best describes your level of the Finnish language?

a. elementary

b. intermediate

c. fluent

d. native/native-like

A. a. elementary

B. a. elementary

C. b. intermediate

D. a. elementary

E. b. intermediate

F. C. fluent

G. c. fluent

H. b. intermediate – because I don't try harder

I. a. elementary (is there a choice under elementary? ☺)

J. b. intermediate

16. Please describe your attitude towards pinning Finnish material on your Pinterest boards. Try to explain why you would pin or would not pin something in Finnish.

A. I just don't pin anything in Finnish. I don't understand the language well enough and none of my contacts on Pinterest would understand it anyway. I also rarely pin in Italian. I find that English as a universal language is more immediate and practical.

B. I have a Finnish Board and also Swedish. I enjoy pinning things that I've experienced or want to experience since living here.

C. I don't pin Finnish recipes. They don't appear on my newsfeed, and I'm not particularly interested in making Finnish food. However, I do pin Finnish-looking

design. When I look at the things for kids' rooms, I love Finnish clean spaces, not gendered, play worthy spaces. Not overdesigned, with the aim of USING them.

D. Since I don't speak any Finnish at all, I wouldn't pin any Finnish-language material.

E. I have very few Finnish friends. All of my friends speak fluent English. I do pin English articles that discuss Finnish culture and food traditions.

F. Because I use my Pinterest as a visual bookmark storage, I don't mind pinning Finnish items (although the photos are usually far worse!). I am aware that I'm putting Finnish material into the feeds of my friends who don't understand it, so I usually write down what it is in English as I save the pin too (though I don't need to do that for my own understanding).

G. I'll pin anything without giving though to whether it's Finnish, Swedish or anything else. The pinning is mostly for me, my collection, so I don't consider what others may or may not read.

H. I pin Finnish material because I can read it or because I'll use Google translate for anything I don't understand. I pin for myself, not for other people.

I. I love pinning Finnish things, because I know my friends back home are really interested in those kinds of things. However, if I pin it, I need to make sure the link is in English, and not just Finnish. I don't often run across Finnish pins, though, so I have to go out looking for them, which I rarely think to do.

J. I have only Pinned a couple of Finnish pins—I only pin things that I know I can read and understand with little effort.

17. Would you like to pin more Finnish content? Why or why not?

A. No, for the aforementioned reasons.

B. I would pin more. I like trying to get some Finnish food dishes translated in English.

C. No, I'm happy with my pinning.

D. Not really. See answer to 16.

E. Not really. No. Language is a true barrier.

F. I would if it was good I suppose, but I pin what I like, mostly food, and food is probably the most culturally American part of me.

G. Since my first language isn't Finnish I don't feel I would rather post more Finnish things but if I saw Finnish things I liked I would pin them regardless of language.

H. If I see it and I like it, I pin it. I don't usually browse Finnish blogs or sources.

I. Yes – see above. I love the ability to share the place I live with more people, people who may never think of Finland, who may not even know where it is. (Funny story – when I moved here, my boss at the time said, "Finland? Is that near New Zealand?") The internet has made the world more local, and finding bits and pieces of different cultures is easier than ever.

J. I would like to pin more Finnish content. I think it would help me as I learn to practice the language and also help me integrate more—I haven't done it before now because I've just been a bit lazy/overwhelmed with learning Finnish.

Follow-up question on cultural labeling, sent February 25, 2014, answered by nine pinners

Which best describes you? Why?

a. expat

b. immigrant

c. American living in Finland

d. other?

B. This is tough question. I feel like by definition I am an expat because we are returning to our homeland. However we pretty much emigrated here with being paid in euros, reporting to the government and paying taxes. I was treated like a Finnish citizens in that since with having a KELA card and a Residency Card. I feel our experience is totally different than Americans that are here through the US Embassy. They still receive American luxuries and some of the parties that are American. I do feel at times like an American living in Finland mostly because I feel very alone a lot of the time. Not such an outgoing country. I am a stay home mom now and I miss my stay home moms back in the US. I would tell someone coming here to work if you want to get to know more people.

C. An American living in Finland- The word "expat" seems like I'm no longer "loyal" to America. Like I've forsaken my American identity because I'm in Finland. Although I'm technically an immigrant, because I moved here for my Finnish husband, I haven't had all the struggles that immigrants who don't have family ties in Finland face. I always have a native Finn to fight major battles for me. Any time I describe myself, I use the exact words, "I'm an American living in Finland." It's

exactly what I am. I'm still very much an American- loud, polite, open, but I live in Finland (and in many ways have been changed by that).

D. I honestly consider myself an American exile. I have been living abroad now since August 1999, when I moved to Moscow. I met my husband (who is Cuban) in Moscow and we later moved to Finland when he was offered a job here. My husband is not allowed to enter / visit the US, and his country will not let him return to live. Thus, we have stayed in Finland for a variety of reasons, primarily because it is a country will allow both of us to remain together and to live / work here. (Our situation is rather complicated and unusual. So, feel free to let me know if you need further explanation for my response!).

E. I always call myself an American living in Finland. The fact that I am here temporarily, and came with my sons, whom are citizens, makes me feel that description is most appropriate.

F. Expatriate for me. It feels more permanent which my situation is. I have no intentions of returning. Perhaps it's something about the 'ex' part. Something of me if different and it can't be reverted.

G. c. American living in Finland – I chose C, because I'm a little unclear what expat really means. I doubt I'll return but I could change my mind at any moment.

H. That's a hard one because they are all so different. I am probably more expat than American in Finland. I am not an American-Finn. Expat.

I. I generally say I'm an expat, because it's a familiar term and it's easier than saying "American living in Finland." Plus, there's a cool factor. ;-) Definitely not an immigrant, as we are only here temporarily.

J. I best identify as an American living in Finland, because the future as to where we will end up living permanently is still uncertain and I am open to living both in the US and Finland. It's also likely that I will spend many years, if not forever, pretty much splitting my time between both countries.

Follow-up question on age, sent June 30, 2014, eight answers received June 30 and July 1, 2014

How old are you?

B. 42

C. 30

E. 41

F. 30

G. 64

H. 47

I. 38

J. 32