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Young Asian Dutch constructing Asianness

Understanding the role of Asian popular culture

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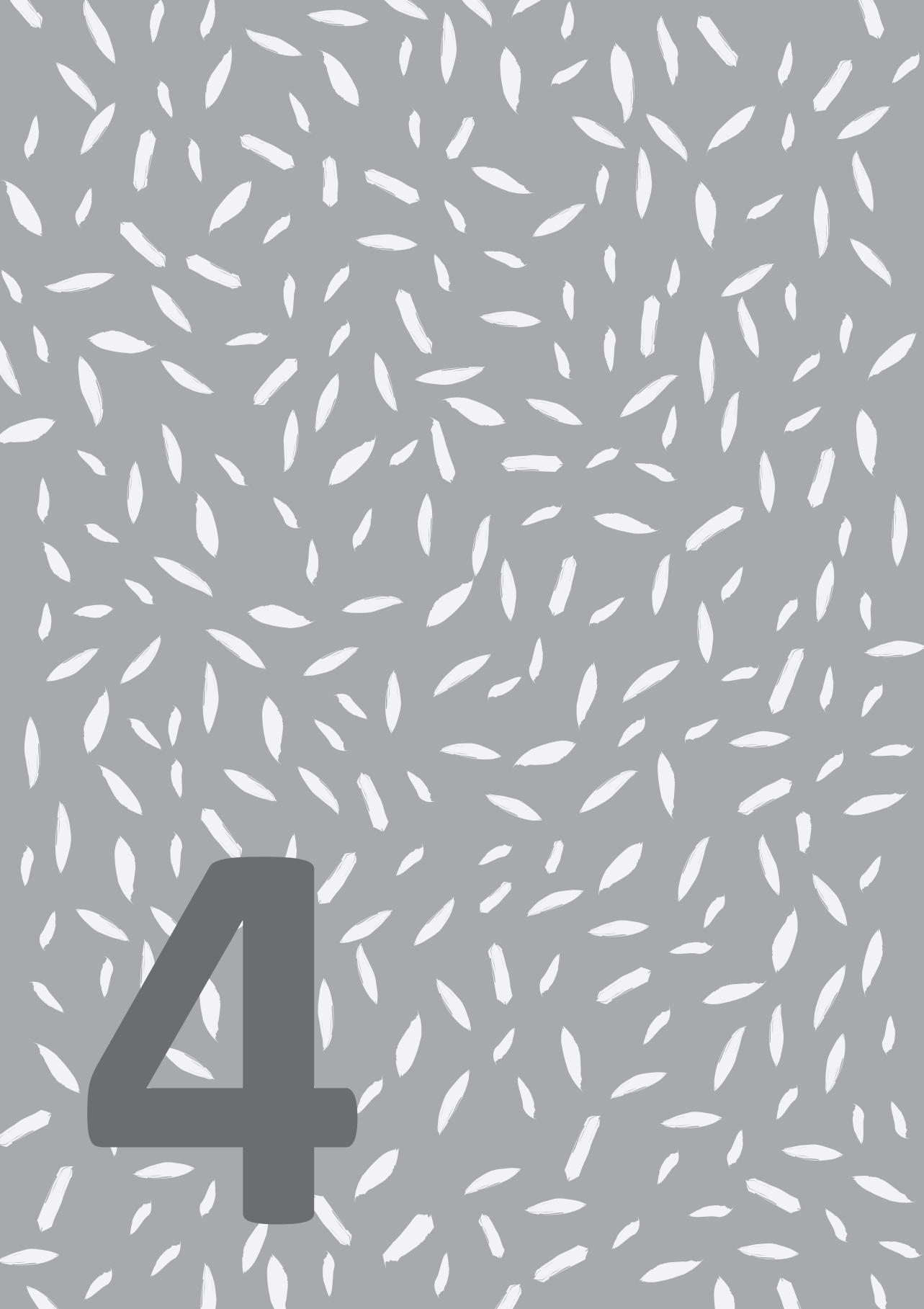
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CHAPTER 4

Imagining Asianness: Young Asian Dutch and Japanese/South Korean Film and Television

A shortened version of this chapter has been submitted to *Journal of Communication* as:

Kartosen-Wong, R. & Tan, E. Imagining Asianness: Young Asian Dutch and Japanese/South Korean film and television.

Popular culture from Asian countries has received quite some scholarly attention in recent years. Studies concerned with Asian diaspora in the West have demonstrated that there is a reciprocal relationship between Asian minorities' homeland cultural identification (e.g., Chinese or Korean) and their consumption of popular media from their homelands (e.g., Chow, Zwier, & Van Zoonen, 2008; Lee, 2004; Oh, 2011; Park, 2004). In addition, Park (2004) found some preliminary evidence suggesting a relationship between Asian minorities' panethnic *Asian* sensibilities and their consumption of popular media from Asian countries other than their homeland. Park called for further research into the matter, but so far little empirical research has been done in this direction. A recent survey study has, however, established that young Asian Dutch consume relatively high levels of non-homeland Asian popular media and that this is related to their sense of Asianness (Kartosen & Tan, 2013). The present study builds on the findings of this quantitative study and will further explore in depth, by means of qualitative inquiry, how young Asian Dutch' panethnic Asian cultural sensibilities are related to their consumption of popular media from non-homeland Asian countries.

The present study will focus on Japanese and South Korean popular film and television given that Japan and South Korea produce and export (to both Asian and non-Asian countries) more popular films and television series than any other East or Southeast Asian country (e.g., Iwabuchi, 2011; Jung, 2011; Lee, 2004). The aim of this study is to reveal how young Asian Dutch (18-30 years old) of diverse East and Southeast Asian origin make sense of the Japanese and South Korean popular film and television they consume. Young Asian Dutch may engage with different and defining cultural spheres – i.e., dominant (White) Dutch, homeland and panethnic Asian culture – in their everyday lives, and this prompts several questions relating to their consumption of Japanese and South Korean popular media texts. How, for instance, might they employ these media texts to navigate in and between the different cultural spheres and to socioculturally position themselves? Why and how do, for example, Dutch citizens of Indonesian or Chinese origin watch Japanese and South Korean film and television and identify with these? And, ultimately, how is this consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television related to the emergence and maintenance of shared panethnic Asian sensibilities?

By examining young Asian Dutch' consumption of Japanese and South Korean popular film and television, this study will illuminate the role of transnational popular culture in processes of cultural identity formation and identification in general, and in particular where it concerns new and emerging cultural group identities such as panethnic Asian identities. This will enhance our understanding of the ramifications of cultural globalization and the multiple ways in which the global and the local intersect, which is especially relevant given the increasing global interconnectedness and the growing (non-Western) transnational flows of media and popular culture as well as people (e.g., Crane, 2002; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2010; Park, 2004). Furthermore, by investigating young Asian Dutch, this study sheds light on ethnic minorities who have been virtually invisible

in public, political and academic discourse on multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the Netherlands as well as in other Western societies. This study will thus add a fresh and more encompassing perspective to an understanding of Dutch multicultural society by showing how Dutch citizens of Asian origin negotiate their Dutch, homeland and Asian identities and identifications, and carve out their own cultural space in Dutch society.

Cultural Proximity and Cultural Identification

If Japanese and South Korean films and television series play any role of significance in Asian Dutch' imagination and articulation of panethnic Asian identities and Asian identifications, they should at the very least elicit some sense of Asian cultural sameness or commonality in Asian Dutch audiences. Given this, the concept of cultural proximity is a helpful tool to investigate young Asian Dutch' consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television. According to the cultural proximity thesis, people have a preference for media and popular culture that feel close to them in cultural and linguistic terms (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005; Straubhaar, 1991; Straubhaar, 2003). Often, shared language constitutes a main component of cultural proximity, for instance in the case of the circulation of Spanish language telenovelas across Latin America (e.g., Straubhaar, 1991) and the consumption of Arab soap operas by Arab diasporas in the West (e.g., Georgiou, 2012). However, besides shared language there are many other components in television and other cultural texts that may constitute cultural proximity, including (representations of) ethnicity, religion, cultural values and body language (e.g., La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005; Straubhaar, 2003). Thus, for example, Taiwanese prefer Japanese popular culture over US popular culture, despite language differences between Japanese media producers and Taiwanese media consumers (Iwabuchi, 2005, 2008).

The notion of cultural proximity implies that films and other cultural texts facilitate processes of cultural identity and cultural identification among their viewers (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). More specifically, cultural proximity first implies processes of identification as a member of particular sociocultural groups that are linked to the textual components that constitute cultural proximity. In this regard, Shaw's (2013) observation that there "is a flaw in research on media representation and identification that conflates identifying *as* a member of a particular group with identifying *with* a media character" (p. 133) is helpful. She argues that identifying *as* a member of a particular social group such as 'African Americans' does not necessarily entail identifying *with* a media character belonging to the same group and vice versa, as we will elaborate later. In addition to media characters this may also apply to other components of media texts that signify a particular social group and 'its' culture and are consequently assumed to constitute cultural proximity (e.g., language).

The proposed link between textual components that are perceived to constitute cultural proximity and facilitate identification as a member of particular sociocultural groups, should not, however, be understood in a rigid fashion, but, rather, in a more fluid sense. As Iwabuchi (2011) argues, cultural proximity is not to be "considered as something

static, natural and given” (p. 266) and it should not be seen as an essential cultural similarity (Iwabuchi, 2006, 2011). Cultural proximity may thus be conceived of as located in the moment of consumption instead of as located in the text per se. And rather than an essence, cultural proximity may be seen as a process, in a manner similar to identity. Also, while identifying *as* a member of a particular sociocultural group does not necessitate identifying *with* a media character or other textual components perceived to be linked to that same group, it is, in fact, directly related to cultural proximity. Any level of cultural proximity experienced requires the viewer to identify *as* a member of a particular sociocultural group being signified.

Cultural Proximity and Panethnic Asian Identities

The abovementioned already hints at the polysemic nature of cultural proximity and the textual components that facilitate this. Evidently, the meaning and structure of cultural proximity are multiple and contextualized, as consumption and sense-making of media texts are embedded in the specific sociocultural environments and practices of viewers (e.g., Hall, 2003). However, notwithstanding viewers’ agency and contextualization, media texts do, in fact, provide viewers with particular frameworks for identification and identity, which can be seen as “components of the collective imaginary and resources for collective action” (Silverstone & Georgiou, 2005, p. 434). Media texts contain textual components that frame processes of cultural proximity and privilege the imagination of particular collective identities. Thus, in the context of the present study, we need to investigate which components of Japanese and South Korean films and television series may facilitate and evoke a sense of cultural proximity and Asian identification in Asian Dutch viewers. Furthermore, we need to investigate what kind of Asian identities are privileged by these media texts. The growing body of literature on the circulation and consumption of Japanese and South Korean popular culture in Asia provide a point of departure. Based on this literature, we identified three textual components in Japanese and South Korean film and television that may evoke a sense of cultural proximity and Asian identification and may facilitate the imagination of Asian identities: 1) articulations of ‘Asian modernity’, 2) ‘Asian’ physical appearances of characters, and 3) representations of ‘Asian’ (traditional) culture, values and virtues. These will be elaborated below.

It is argued that Japanese and South Korean pop culture combines Western formats and production values with representations of (traditional) ‘Asian’ values and culture as well as representations of ‘Asian modernity’. This renders Japanese and South Korean pop culture more ‘modern’ than traditional Asian pop culture and simultaneously culturally closer than Western pop culture for audiences in Asia (e.g., Fung, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2005, 2006, 2011; Jung, 2011; Lee, 2004). The depictions of skyscrapers and shopping malls are a reflection of the economic, technological and cultural developments in Asia, and they fit in the celebratory discourse of ‘booming Asia’ (e.g., Chua, 2012; Lee, 2004; Lin & Tong, 2008). Furthermore, these representations of Asian urban modernity evoke a sense of cultural proximity among middle class audiences in Asia, based on a shared sense of ‘Asian modernity’ and coevality (Chua, 2012; Iwabuchi, 2010, 2011).

Particular physical and physiognomic traits of actors and characters that are perceived as 'Asian', such as particular skin colour and facial expressions, are perhaps the most basic aspects in film and television that Asian audiences can perceive as 'similar' and that consequently evoke cultural proximity and Asian identification (e.g., Chua, 2012; Fung, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2005, Lin & Tong, 2008). As ethnic minorities in the West are generally underrepresented and stereotypically depicted in Western popular culture (e.g., Gillespie, 1995; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Silverstone & Georgiou, 2005), the presence of media characters carrying Asian physical and physiognomic traits in Japanese and South Korean film and television may be of particular importance for Asian Dutch viewers. Watching people on screen who they perceive to look like themselves "is reassuring and feels good" (Park, 2004, p. 282), and may engender feelings of Asian commonality and shared Asian identities.

Japanese and South Korean films and television series contain ample representations of (perceived) 'Asian' culture and 'Asian' values. These depictions and narratives of, for instance, strong family relations, filial piety and social harmony, resonate with audiences across Asia and evoke feelings of cultural proximity and Asian identification (Chua, 2012; Iwabuchi, 2008, 2011; Lin & Tong, 2008). These traditional Asian values are perceived as collectivistic values which are not foregrounded in Western popular culture and society at large, where individualistic values prevail. Thus, representations of Asian values in Japanese and South Korean popular culture may especially strike a chord with Asian minorities in the West who are seeking for 'Asian' cultural knowledge.

METHOD

Composition of the Focus Groups

The data for the present study were collected by means of focus group interviews conducted from July through November 2013. Participants were 1) of East and/or Southeast Asian origin, 2) between 18 and 30 years old, and 3) born in the Netherlands or migrated to the Netherlands at a young age. Participants were recruited through announcements posted on websites and social networks aimed at young Asian Dutch and included in their newsletters, as well as through the personal and professional networks of the present study's first author. Participants selected for the study were asked to invite three to four eligible friends or relatives with whom they (occasionally) watch and/or discuss Japanese and/or South Korean films and television series to participate in this study as well. Thus, 'natural' focus groups could be composed of participants who already knew one another and who had already built up social rapport, which would be beneficial for the course of the focus group interviews. Eventually, 27 participants were selected and divided into nine focus groups consisting of two to four participants. Eight focus groups consisted of participants who were friends (six groups) or siblings (two groups), while the remaining group consisted of two friends and a third participant they had not met before but who resided in the same city. Furthermore, efforts were made to

ensure that the selected participants represented a diversity of sociocultural categories in terms of gender, age, homeland-ethnic origin (i.e., Indonesian, Indo-Dutch, Chinese Indonesian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai, Malaysian, Chinese Singaporean, Korean and Chinese Surinamese) and place of residence (large urban areas such as Amsterdam and small towns or villages in more rural areas). The appendix provides an overview of the composition of the individual focus groups.

Procedure

Prior to the actual focus group meetings, participants filled out a short online questionnaire. Amongst others, they were asked to list their favorite Japanese and South Korean films and television series. Table 1 provides an overview of the titles that were mentioned most often as a favorite by the participants.

Table 1 | Most Popular Japanese and South Korean Films and Television Series among Participants

Title	Country	Year	Genre
<i>Spirited Away</i>	Japan	2001	Anime, fantasy (film)
<i>Death Note</i>	Japan	2006-2007	Anime, psychological thriller (TV)
<i>1 Litre of Tears</i>	Japan	2005	Drama (TV)
<i>Naruto</i>	Japan	1999- ...	Anime, fantasy, action (TV)
<i>My Sassy Girl</i>	South Korea	2001	Romantic, comedy, drama (film)
<i>City Hunter</i>	South Korea	2011	Action, thriller, drama (TV)
<i>You're Beautiful</i>	South Korea	2009	Romantic, drama, gender bending (TV)
<i>Full House</i>	South Korea	2004	Romantic, comedy (TV)

Based on these lists, films and television series were selected which all or most of the participants in a particular focus group listed as one of their favorites. These included *Spirited Away*, *My Sassy Girl*, *You're Beautiful* and *City Hunter*. During the focus group meetings participants were shown clips of these films and television series and discussed them. The first author acted as the moderator of the focus group interviews and guided the group discussions by asking probing questions based on a semi-structured topic list. In the second half of the interview participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire. Amongst others, the questionnaire included additional questions regarding the degree to which specific textual aspects render Japanese and South Korean film and television enjoyable to them. Subsequently, the answers given by the individual participants were discussed with the group.

Five of the focus group interviews were conducted in participants' or their parents' homes, one in a restaurant owned by one of the participants' parents, and three at the University of Amsterdam. The focus group interviews were audio taped and conducted and transcribed in Dutch. The transcripts, questionnaires and additional field notes made by the moderator were subjected to qualitative data analysis. Salient quotes and

excerpts were translated in English for inclusion in this paper. Finally, the names of all participants were changed to ensure their anonymity.

RESULTS

Consuming and Enjoying Articulations of Asian Modernity?

The majority of the participants in this study are (or have been) avid consumers of Japanese and South Korean films and television series. Although they do watch more film and television from the US, they watch more film and television from Japan and South Korea than from their Asian homelands or the Netherlands. Participants show an explicit preference for, and emotional bond with, Japanese and South Korean films and television series. When participants are asked why they watch Japanese and South Korean film and television and what they like about it, one of their first responses is that they enjoy them for their high standards. In the group discussions most participants explicitly evaluate the quality of Japanese and South Korean film and television vis-à-vis the quality of Western film and television as well as film and television from their Asian homelands. They appreciate US film and television's generalized style and high production value as expressed in amongst others state-of-the-art special effects and art direction. However, when it comes to qualities such as plot, screenplay and character development, the participants generally find Japanese and South Korean films and television series more complex, imaginative and sophisticated than US films and television series, which they find predictable, simplistic and unrefined.

Notwithstanding their critical assessment of US films and television series, the participants do, in fact, enjoy these to a certain degree, which is underlined by the aforementioned finding that the majority of participants consume US film and television the most. This is not the case for Dutch film and television, which the participants rarely watch and unequivocally dismiss; in the group discussions they candidly denounce and sometimes ridicule these for their perceived low quality, banality and superficiality. Furthermore, most participants also prefer Japanese and South Korean films and television series to productions from their Asian homelands. This is clearly articulated in an interview with Chinese Dutch sisters Li-Wei and Li-Ming:

Moderator: Do you watch Chinese films or television series as well?

Li-Wei: In the past I did.

Li-Ming: Well, I didn't.

Li-Wei: Yes, but I really don't find them as good as the Korean ones.

Li-Ming: No, it's simply... I find them bad. (...) If they were any good and if subtitles were available then I would watch it. But I just think the quality is... it is simply worse [than Korean productions].

Li-Wei: Yes, I find them *really* bad too.

(...)

Li-Ming: In China it is still a bit like how it *used* to be in Korea I think. Because now we are used to a certain standard in media [production] I guess, especially due to American series and so on. And China is still lagging behind, I think. (...) And in Korea the acting is more realistic [than in China].

Evidently, the ‘Westernized’ or ‘Americanized’ production standards that have become part and parcel of Japanese and South Korean media industries (e.g., Iwabuchi, 2011; Jung, 2009), render Japanese and South Korean films and television series more appealing to participants than productions from their Asian homelands. Growing up in the Netherlands, they have been exposed to an abundance of US popular media and have consequently internalized the formats and production values defined by Hollywood. ‘Backwards’ films and television series from their Asian homelands are simply harder to digest because they lack in ‘American’ production values and are not regarded as ‘cool’ – just like films and television series from the Netherlands.

The participants’ perception that homeland film and television are old fashioned and ‘uncool’ is further underlined by some participants who express a certain pride of Japanese and South Korean film and television. Especially among the younger participants there is a sense that with Japanese and South Korean film and television, they finally have “something of their own” (Mei-Yin) and “something that makes them proud, something they can be happy about” (Lanh). Apparently, the participants were in need of something they could be proud of. Homeland film and television cannot fulfil this need because they are deemed old fashioned and tacky, but the modern Japanese and South Korean films and television series are perfectly able to fill that void.

Considering that participants appreciate Japanese and South Korean films and television series for their perceived ‘coolness’, one might expect that they would also appreciate the ample depictions of skyscrapers, shopping malls and other aspects of modern Asia featured in them. However, while depictions of modern Asia elicit a sense of cultural proximity based on notions of coequality among middle class audiences in Asia (e.g., Chua, 2012; Iwabuchi 2002, 2011; Jung, 2009), the participants in this study are rather indifferent about these. Moreover, some participants are even critical about these images of modern city life in Asia, arguing that they are one-sided, as Japan and South Korea also have many less affluent and less modern (rural) areas. The difference between audiences in Asia and young Asian Dutch in making sense of images of Asian modernity can be attributed to their lives in different localities. Asian audiences are often part of a select group of urban, middle class citizens in countries where significant and visible segments of the population are poor and live in rural areas. This explains how images of modern Asia resonate with middle class Asian audiences and feel familiar to them. But this is different for the participants in this study. The Netherlands is a country that is modernized throughout, even in the more rural areas. Thus, even though there are

very few Asian-like skyscrapers and shopping malls in the Netherlands, the depictions of Asian modernity do not particularly resonate with the participants as they are immersed in a modern sociocultural context themselves.

Seeing Media Characters of Asian Origin and Identifying as Asian

During the focus group interviews, most participants display an acute awareness of the underrepresentation, as well as stereotypical depictions, of people of Asian origin in Dutch and US film and television. At first sight it appears that in general the participants are not too bothered with this; they are used to it and it is not something they consciously think about when watching US or Dutch films and television series. However, they also indicate that whenever a Dutch or US production they watch contains a character of Asian origin, they instantly notice this. This forces them to reflect and contemplate what seeing an Asian character means to them. The participants acknowledge that they do indeed enjoy seeing people of Asian origin in a Western film or television series. This also includes Huynh and Fajar, who are among the few participants who are expressly dismissive about sharing panethnic Asian identities and Asian identifications:

Huynh: I do like it when I see someone of Asian origin playing a lead role or a certain role [in a film]. That's nice.

Moderator: But why do you like that?

Huynh: Yeah, I don't know. It's more like... Do you know *The Fast and the Furious*?

Moderator: Yes, I do.

Huynh: For instance, [in that film] you've got Han, he is obviously of Asian origin. And that's just nice, like: "hey, we've got an Asian in the group!"

Fajar: Oh, Chau too...

Huynh: ... or Chau...

Huynh and Fajar: (simultaneously) ...from *Off Centre*! (they both laugh)

Huynh: (...) ...it's great, really great! Cause then I can identify with it.

Moderator: You can?

Huynh: Well, in terms of physical appearance I mean.

(...)

Huynh: Let me put it this way: I like it because in the past you wouldn't see any Asians at all [in US film and television]. And if you did see an Asian it was stereotypical. And now you see Asians in it, and he has a [proper] role. (...) Yes, I think that's beautiful. (...) To me it doesn't matter whether this Han is Vietnamese or Japanese... it's about Asians among themselves, you know.

The instant pleasure that is invoked in participants Huynh and Fajar by the mere presence of media characters who look ‘Asian’, points to a deeper felt lack that most participants find difficult or irrelevant to address during the open discussions. However, the specific probing questions and propositions in the short questionnaire pertaining to the presence of people of Asian origin in Western as well as Japanese and South Korean film and television, drive some participants to elaborate on this and, perhaps unwittingly, to expose a certain degree of pain and sorrow felt:

Moderator: (...) those physical traits [of characters in South Korean film and television] seem to be important to you, don’t they?

Li-Ming: Hmm, yes... (...) because when we were growing up there were *very few* Asian characters in the [Western] media we watched. (...) It’s still like that, actually.

Li-Wei: Yes, that’s right.

(...)

Li-Ming: Yes, and [in South Korean film and television] it was just simply natural [to see Asian characters].

Moderator: Does that make watching those television series enjoyable?

Li-Ming: Yes, it was nice.

Moderator: So is that something you have missed you think? When you were growing up?

Li-Wei: Missed what?

Moderator: That, in fact, you didn’t see ‘yourselves’ in television series and films?

Li-Ming: That’s something you didn’t think about, I guess. Maybe [now] in retrospect we do, but back then it was more like... what we watched was simply considered normal.

Li-Wei: Yes.

(...)

Li-Wei: Well, I didn’t really *miss* it or anything, because that was just normal. But then later you realize: “Oh!”

Li-Ming: ...it could have been different.

Li-Wei: Yes.

Li-Ming: But I mean, what’s done is done and... well, it made you into who you are now, so...

Thus, when participants reflect more elaborately on how they feel about the representation of people of Asian origin in Western film and television, it turns out that the underrepresentation and stereotypical depictions actually do affect them negatively and they acknowledge this – albeit now and in hindsight, and by contemplating what it means to them to see a character of Asian origin. Participant Chen makes an even more forceful and political point:

In America it's actually different [compared to the Netherlands]. Because [in film and television] over there Asians simply appear [to be] 'part of the nation' so to say, and here [Asians] are still [depicted as] a different race.

Surprisingly however, the participants do not explicitly call for more Asian characters or 'people like themselves' in Western film and television to 'fix' the lack. It can be argued that this is because through the Internet the participants have easy access to Japanese and South Korean films and television series, which feature ample (non-stereotypical) Asian characters. The participants do not need Western popular media for matters of representation anymore, which underlines the growing impact of transnational flows of popular culture on the local.

Furthermore, the participants perceive Japanese and South Korean actors as 'similar' and as people 'like themselves' based simply on their physical appearance which they consider to be 'Asian'. These appearance characteristics such as sleek, black hair, but also perceived behavior and personality, thus serve as markers of Asianness and as such they are employed to signify an imagined boundary between Asians and non-Asians, between in-group and out-group. It should be noted, however, that participants do not hold similar ideas about who constitute a panethnic Asian in-group based on this assessment of shared 'Asian' physical characteristics. Some participants, especially participants of Chinese origin who have no or few friends of Southeast Asian origin, imagine an Asian in-group of a particular East Asian nature. They do not feel that they share distinct Asian physical characteristics with people of Southeast Asian origin. Participants of Southeast Asian origin, however, do, in fact, identify with Japanese and South Korean characters based on their perception of shared Asian physical appearances, and, consequently, they imagine a broader Asian in-group that includes people of both East and Southeast Asian origin. Still, whether participants imagine a narrower or a broader Asian in-group, they all imagine a new Asian in-group that is 'larger' or more encompassing than traditional notions of in-groups imagined around their homeland origins. The findings thus underscore the importance of media characters' Asian physical appearance for invoking a sense of cultural proximity and Asian identification in participants.

What the focus group data ultimately demonstrate is that media characters' Asian physical traits are, in fact, meaningful to participants and they evoke feelings of cultural proximity and Asian identification. Furthermore, seeing a character of Asian origin in Western films and television series prompts participants to reflect on their position and representation in Dutch society. On the other hand, seeing characters of Asian origin in Japanese and South Korean productions is common and nothing special, and it does not necessarily prompt participants to contemplate about the representation of people of Asian origin. Instead, being 'surrounded' by characters with whom they perceive to share Asian physical traits gives them a "warm feeling", as Jing says, and it makes them "feel at home" in these films and television series. The presence of characters who look like themselves in Japanese and South Korean films and television series thus evokes feelings of belonging in participants. Finally, participants need and employ Asian physical

traits to determine who is Asian and who is not and to imagine a broader Asian in-group. Thus, ultimately, participants identify *as* Asian through the consumption of media characters' Asian physical traits.

Consuming Representations of 'Asian' Virtues, Culture and Lived Experience

The participants indicate that they identify with Japanese and South Korean media characters through the characters' personality traits, dispositions, actions, and lived experience. They stress that the characters' Asian physical appearances are of little significance to this identification process. However, when participants' processes of identification with Japanese and South Korean characters are more closely investigated it becomes apparent that the Asian physical traits of said characters do, in fact, play a pivotal role. This is because the participants consider characters' actions, personality traits and so on as 'Asian', as the following interview excerpt demonstrates:

Moderator: What do you mean when you say that you can identify with the characters?

Yuna: I think personality traits actually.

Moderator: Yes, like what?

Sandra: Taking decisions that you are *also* more likely to take. It's like, in American television series you often think "Why would you do that?"

Yuna: Yes.

Cynthia: I think that characters in Asian television series have to take the people around them into account more often. In Western films and television series people often are more individualistic, while in Asian culture that is less so, I think. (...) Yes, [it is] more like collectivist. (...) And also what Sandra is saying, that when you take decisions you also take into account how, for example, your parents will feel about it. (...)

Sandra: Often in American television series I feel like "You really haven't thought about the consequences of your actions." So that's indeed a personality trait that is different, I think. (...) That's why you're better able to identify with [an Asian] character...

Yuna: Yes.

Sandra: ...because he makes decisions that are [compatible with] your feelings.

Clearly, participants understand Japanese and South Korean characters' personality traits, actions, and so forth as 'Asian'; as derived from and closely linked to 'Asian' values and culture. In order to be able to perceive these characters' lived experiences as Asian – and thus as familiar – participants first need to identify the characters as Asian, and this is facilitated by the characters' Asian physical traits. This is underlined by an interview excerpt wherein participants Mei-Yin, Binh and Anh discuss a scene from romantic comedy *My Sassy Girl*, in which male protagonist Kyun-woo is chased and hit with a vacuum cleaner hose by his mother:

- Moderator: The fact that it concerns people who look Asian, does that make it easier for you to identify [with them]?
- Anh: Yes. It's not that you pay attention to it per se, but just unconsciously.
- Mei-Yin: Yes, I'm like "Yes, they're just exactly like me in certain ways."
- Moderator: Yes, even though... she is Korean, isn't she? And you have a Singaporean background. But nonetheless you feel some sort of commonality?
- Mei-Yin: Yes, because when it's an American I think I would just (...) watch it and not think about it, you know? Because when an American would be beaten by his mother, I would simply laugh. But then I really wouldn't think like "That happens to me too!"
- Binh: I think that it's less funny when white people...
- Mei-Yin: Yes, it's just not funny.
- Anh: Because [when it's about] Americans you think "Ok, they have a different culture." And from there on [the feeling] is different....
- Moderator: Ah, I see. And what if it were a Dutch character, would that be the same as an American?
- Anh: Yes, the same.
- Mei-Yin: I wouldn't even watch! (laughs)
- Anh: (laughing) Ehm no, me neither!

This excerpt underlines the importance of characters' Asian physical appearances to participants' identification processes. Participants identify the characters as Asian through their Asian physical traits. This enables participants to compare characters' particular actions, lived experiences, and so forth with their own lived experiences, recognize these as familiar, and qualify these as 'Asian'. This evokes a sense of 'Asian' cultural proximity. Japanese and South Korean characters' 'Asian' lived experiences thus resonate with, as well as facilitate, participants' Asian subject-position and self-identification as Asian. Finally, the participants identify with the Japanese and South Korean characters.

It should be noted that in the end participants may not identify *with* certain characters after all, for example if they do not agree with the characters' dispositions and actions. However, this does not negate participants' self-identification *as* Asian based on the characters' Asian physical appearances and general lived experiences. Furthermore, as the interview excerpt above suggests, participants evaluate Asian and Western characters differently, even when the characters share similar lived experiences, personality traits, and so forth. While the participants may indeed also enjoy watching such Western characters and may even identify with them, this will not be the same as identifying with Japanese and South Korean characters. Western characters and their lived experience will not be perceived as 'Asian' and will thus not resonate with

participants' Asian subject-position. Consequently, participants' will not identify as Asian and their identification with Western characters may be less intense and less emotional than their identification with Japanese and South Korean characters.

It is evident that Japanese and South Korean characters' perceived 'Asian' lived experience, personality traits, and so forth drive participants' identification with the characters and provide depth to their self-identification as Asian. The participants describe and explain these in terms of generalized 'Asian' culture and 'Asian' virtues, which they imagine as transcending particular Asian nations, people and cultures.¹ While and after watching the video clips, vivid discussions about the importance and centrality of 'family', 'harmony' and '(showing) respect' in Asian culture as well as in participants' everyday life emerge spontaneously in the focus groups, thus without the moderator having to ask specific probing questions to start a discussion. This already indicates the salience of these perceived aspects of Asian culture to participants. Furthermore, it suggests that participants perceive these aspects of Asian culture to be similar in Japanese, South Korean and their homeland cultures. Indeed, the participants articulate a deeply felt familiarity with portrayals of family life and filial piety in Japanese and South Korean films and television series, as they are able to relate these to their own lived experience. Below, participants Li-Ming and Li-Wei explain what aspects of the narratives of South Korean television series they feel familiar with and can identify with:

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- Li-Ming: [In the television series] family is important. That's how I feel too.
- Moderator: Do you see that in Korean dramas?
- Li-Ming: Yes, they always talk about "You do it for family" and "This is your family" and...
- Li-Wei: That is actually one of the reasons why I started to watch [Korean] dramas, because I was able to identify with many characters they played. Because it was just Asian and uhm... the way the families are organized, the relationships within the families and so on.
- Moderator: What do you mean by that?
- Li-Wei: For example the way you deal with your parents.
- Li-Ming: Yes, I have the feeling that Asian [children] are expected to show more respect to their parents... obey them more. In the Netherlands [children] are treated more like equals and in Asia more like "You're the child, so you do as we say."

When participants elaborate on the issue of 'family' and 'filial piety' in Japanese and South Korean film and television, most end up talking about (difficult) relationships with parents, the strict 'Asian' upbringing, having to show respect, and the pressure to perform well at school and at work. This is illustrated by an interview segment in which Julia, Steven and Robert describe what aspects from aforementioned *My Sassy Girl* they can relate to, while especially referring to a comedic scene in which the male protagonist

undergoes corporal punishment from his parents for underperforming at school and later at college:

Julia: (...) expectations of parents, wanting to perform well at school... these are aspects that are familiar [to me], and because of that it's easier to identify with such a character.

Moderator: Does that also apply to you Robert, [experiencing] that sense of familiarity?

Robert: That is definitely familiar to me, yes. Yes, the relationship between child and parent as shown in the clip, that is very familiar to me. (...) When your grades were bad, you would also get spanked at home (laughs). And here in the Netherlands they talk it over, people are not prone to spank [their child], [give] a correcting slap [on the wrist]. While that would happen more often in our family.

(...)

Moderator: Does that sense of familiarity also make you feel at home in that film?

Robert: (...) If it's familiar to you, I think that that just makes you feel comfortable. [The film] would raise questions with an outsider sooner than it would with an Asian for instance.

Steven: It's also [the] comical element really... I think it was in the first clip that he is standing like this with his hands, with his hands up (holds his hands up). That is so typically Asian!

Moderator: How so?

Steven: It's really a common sort of corporal punishment of theirs. You have to hold your hands up and then you get slapped on your hand... or when you [get spanked] with the infamous bamboo cane, you know? Most [Asians] will know that. If you haven't experienced this or if you don't know about this at all, then you will not understand the humor of it. That is the familiar element of course, and then you're able to understand that that is funny to watch... that you know what's going to happen next.

What is notable, is that Steven, who is of Chinese Indonesian origin, has not experienced this type of corporal punishment himself. In this regard his upbringing may be typified as more liberal or 'Westernized'. Nonetheless, Steven is in fact familiar with this type of punishment and understands it. This can be explained by his Asian subject-position and the Asian cultural knowledge he has acquired over the years through interacting with relatives and peers of Asian origin. Steven is not unique in this as this applies to some of the other participants of (Chinese) Indonesian and Indo-Dutch origin as well. It appears that especially the participants of Chinese and Vietnamese origin have had a very strict upbringing that included corporal punishment.

What the data show is that participants perceive certain personality traits, dispositions, acts and lived experiences of Japanese and South Korean characters as familiar. They 'understand' these through the lens of the 'Asian' cultural capital they already possess, and through comparing these aspects of 'Asian' everyday life with their own lived experience. These salient aspects of Asian lived experience are all clearly linked to traditional Asian notions of 'family', 'respect', 'harmony' and a combination of the three 'filial piety'. This, thus, underlines that these three concepts are foregrounded in participants' everyday life and participants' conception of Asian culture and Asian identities. Furthermore, the salient perceived commonalities are expressly labelled as 'Asian' rather than 'Korean' or 'Japanese', or, indeed, 'Chinese', 'Indonesian' and so on. Participants thus effortlessly redefine and redeploy their homeland culture based habitus and cultural capital (e.g., Chinese habitus and Chinese cultural capital) as '*Asian*' habitus and '*Asian*' cultural capital. Also, they articulate a sense of cultural proximity and notions of broad, primordial bonds between themselves and other people of East and Southeast Asian origin. These notions of shared 'Asianness' facilitate the engendering of a deep and emotional sense of familiarity and belonging when the participants see representations of salient aspects of Asian everyday (family) life. The latter thus form the essence of any degree of cultural proximity and Asian identification perceived and experienced by the participants when they consume Japanese and South Korean film and television. Also, the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television may evoke a sense of Asianness in participants as well as provide them with additional Asian cultural knowledge. Ultimately then, it may confirm, reinforce and expand participants' notions of what it means to be (a moral) Asian.

Imagining Panethnic Asianness as Non-Dutchness: Resisting Dominant Dutch Culture

Participants' imagination of Asian identities and participants' identification as Asian imply that they subscribe to the notion that they share culture and identities with both co-ethnics and people of different Asian origin. This includes people of Asian origin in their everyday social contexts. The consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television indeed facilitates the imagination and sharing of Asian identities with peers of Asian origin. This is pointed at by the following interview quote in which Chinese Dutch Feng and Timmy, who is of mixed Thai and Dutch origin, discuss how watching Japanese and South Korean films and television series are linked to being and feeling Asian:

Timmy: I do think that most Asians watch anime, or at least watch an Asian movie.

Feng: Yes, certainly.

Timmy: I'm sure of it. (...) Those [Asians] who live here in the Netherlands.

Feng: Certainly. By watching anime or those [Korean drama] series you already feel Asian enough, because you are just simply watching it. (...) What I mean is... because the majority of Asians watch it and you watch it too, then you just feel that you're simply like one of them.

Through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television participants also get a sense of who is Asian and effectively delineate an imagined Asian in-group. This delineation is in part based on their observation that ‘only people of Asian origin’ watch Japanese and South Korean films and television series. The mere consumption of these can thus be seen as an articulation of Asianness by participants and their Asian Dutch peers. Furthermore, and this is essential, the delineation is also based on the notion that peers of certain Asian origin actually understand these films and television series and are able to unlock the ‘deeper’ – or ‘Asian’ – meanings they convey. By extension then, these Asian Dutch peers understand the participants and vice versa, as they also share Asian lived experiences:

- Moderator: The fact that certain things that you’re familiar with occur in that film [*My Sassy Girl*], like that mother... Do you feel those are typical Asian...
- Binh: Yes, that’s very familiar. [We] hear that from everyone.
- Moderator: You mean from your other Asian friends?
- Binh: Yes, when you tell your friends then they will say “We understand it” and so on, and then [the movie] is even funnier.
- Mei-Yin and Anh: (Laugh in agreement)
- Moderator: What’s that like with your non-Asian friends then? Do they feel the same way?
- Anh: No, they would be completely shocked then!
- Mei-Yin: (Imitating non-Asian friends’ reaction) “No, do they hit you?! What?! Really?!”
- Moderator: (Laughs) So it seems it’s easier for you to talk to Asian friends about certain issues?
- All: Yes!
- Binh: Because Dutch find things very weird straightaway. And then it’s actually easier to talk about that [with Asian friends].
- Anh: Yes.

The interview excerpt above emphasizes that when participants talk about Japanese and South Korean film and television with peers of Asian origin, they perceive a high degree of cultural proximity between them and their peers, based on shared lived experiences. At the same time, they perceive a cultural distance between themselves and their White Dutch peers. This then, is a basis for the imagination of Asian identities participants and their Asian Dutch peers share together. Furthermore, the Chinese Dutch participants who, based on an evaluation of perceived Asian physical traits, imagine an Asian in-group of a particularly East Asian nature, do, in fact, imagine an Asian in-group that includes Southeast Asian peers when this is based on perceived shared Asian lived experiences and notions of Asian values and virtues. At the very least, these Chinese

Dutch participants recognize that in terms of these cultural aspects they have more in common with for example Indonesian Dutch peers than with White Dutch peers. Thus, the Asian in-group and Asian identities imagined by participants are also based on conceptions of, and a desire to distinguish from, non-Asian out-groups.

The data also reveal that participants' consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television facilitates the development and maintenance of social relations with Asian Dutch peers in everyday life. This particular social element of consumption practice is of great importance to participants' construction and articulation of Asian identities and Asian identifications. Participants reinforce their bonds and sense of connectedness with siblings, cousins, and friends of diverse Asian origin by watching and discussing these films and television series with them. Moreover, they may even initiate and develop new relationships with Asian Dutch peers:

Moderator: You have indicated that Japanese and Korean films... well, that they make you feel connected to other Asians.

Binh: Yes, because only Asians watch that stuff.

Mei-Yin: Yes, you can just say like "Have you watched this?", "Yes! Yes!" And then you can about it extensively!

Binh: Yes.

Moderator: To whom can you say this?

Anh: Well, other Asians.

Mei-Yin: Yes.

Moderator: Yes? It doesn't matter if they're Vietnamese or Chinese or...?

Anh: No...

Mei-Yin: No. Like, when I didn't know them (referring to Binh and Anh) yet... (...) Then I just asked like "Do you know this [Korean television] series?" And then we talked about it the *entire* bus ride. From that moment on we were friends.

(...)

Moderator: And Dutch peers would for instance talk about *Goede Tijden* (a Dutch popular soap series – RK) instead?

All participants: (laughing) Yes...

Anh: Then they would ask me like "Do you know *Goede Tijden*?" and I'm like "Yes, but I don't watch it." (laughing). And then that's the end of [the conversation].

This interview excerpt underscores that through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television, participants accumulate Asian cultural capital which they can employ to approach and connect with Asian Dutch strangers in school or elsewhere, who they subsequently may befriend. Furthermore, the interview excerpt demonstrates participants' dislike of mainstream Dutch popular culture, their lack of interest in it and

knowledge about it, and how because of that it is difficult for them to connect with their White Dutch peers. To a degree, this leaves them excluded from participating and being acknowledged in mainstream Dutch society. However, they do connect with Asian Dutch peers through *their* preferred popular culture and talk about it with them, thus constructing an Asian Dutch cultural space, facilitated by their consumption of Japanese and South Korean popular culture. This evokes a sense of participation and belonging in the participants. Furthermore, participants' relationships with Asian Dutch peers in everyday life can be seen as tangible articulations of their sense of cultural proximity and Asian identification. In turn, these Asian Dutch social networks, or Asian social capital, gained through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television, reinforce participants' sense of Asianness as well. Thus, in the end, the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television contributes to a sense of Asian unity and community that transcends popular cultural consumption.

Besides highlighting participants' exclusion from mainstream Dutch (popular) culture, the interview excerpt also illustrates how they may distance themselves from their non-Asian Dutch peers. As said, participants' imagination of an Asian in-group through Japanese and South Korean film and television is clearly linked to their imagination of non-Asian out-groups, in particular White Dutch and 'their' culture. Participants appropriate Japanese and South Korean films and television series and regard these as 'something of their own', not only because of a sense of cultural proximity, but also because they believe Dutch (or other Western) people do not watch them. To a degree, the sense of Asianness engendered through this notion is premised on their reluctance to culturally identify as Dutch and their desire to distinguish themselves from Dutch culture. However, participants do acknowledge that people of non-Asian origin may also watch Japanese and South Korean films and television series, but they persist in the notion of difference between people of Asian and non-Asian origin:

Denise: I know non-Asian girls who watch [Korean dramas]... but who for example do not understand why [the characters] act that way.

Lanh: They have a different perspective.

Denise: They have a *very* different perspective and they don't understand it.

This interview excerpt illustrates how participants position themselves as individuals who already possess a certain degree of Asian cultural capital which enables them to consume and 'truly' understand Japanese and South Korean film and television – unlike peers who do not already possess Asian cultural capital and who are thus deemed less culturally sophisticated. The participants link this a priori Asian cultural capital to their Asian origin, suggesting that non-Asian Dutch peers do not possess it. Clearly, here participants articulate a sense of Asianness to emphasize difference, disconnect and distinction from their White Dutch peers and White Dutch culture. Furthermore, the participants employ their consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television as a marker of Asianness with which they can fashion themselves and through which they can articulate a sense of Asianness, membership of an Asian in-group, and cultural

distinction from their non-Asian peers.

Evidently, participants' imagination of an Asian in-group and attached Asian identities is partly based on their perception of essential differences between people of Asian and non-Asian origin, as well as between 'their' cultures. As demonstrated above, during the focus group interviews participants articulate this notion of cultural difference through their unabashed display of disdain for Western – Dutch in particular – films and television series. They deem these to be of lower cultural value than Japanese and South Korean counterparts, most of all because of perceived 'Western'/'Dutch' virtues, values and culture depicted in these films and television series. Participants are critical of certain aspects of Western/Dutch culture, and they express a preference for a generalized Asian culture, which they find superior. Their denouncement of Dutch popular culture is thus inextricably linked to their denouncement of Dutch culture at large. Consequently, it can be argued that the alternative popular cultural hierarchy participants imagine is in fact embedded in a broader alternative cultural hierarchy they imagine. This underlines that this alternative cultural hierarchy – in which Asian culture takes up a higher position than Western/Dutch culture – is thus the basis for distinction between Asians and non-Asians, and hence of pivotal importance for participants' imaginations of Asian identities and Asian identification. Furthermore, the construction of this alternative cultural hierarchy is in part based on, and reinforced by, depictions of Asian virtues and culture in Japanese and South Korean film and television that participants consume. Finally, by constructing this alternative cultural hierarchy the participants implicitly question the legitimacy of Western/White Dutch culture's rather unchallenged dominant position in the Netherlands and beyond. To the degree that they do, participants' imagination of Asian identities and Asian identification, as well as the consumption of Asian popular culture, can thus be read as an act of resistance against dominant White Dutch cultural norms.

Negotiating Identities and Identifications: Towards Imagining Asian Dutchness

It is clear that the participants subscribe to the notion of sharing Asian commonalities and having close cultural bonds with Japanese and South Korean characters (and, indeed, with people of diverse Asian origin in their everyday lives). Moreover, they can identify with these characters and they self-identify as Asian through watching Japanese and South Korean film and television. This emphasizes participants' appropriation of these films and television series as well as their ability to employ them for identity construction and identification purposes, as Jing's statement underlines:

I think I can absolutely state that [Korean film and television] were really a part of discovering that Asian side of me. (...) To me [watching Korean films and television series] has indeed been an enhancement to my exploration of my Asian [and] Chinese roots.

Furthermore, for some participants the images and narratives offered in Japanese and South Korean film and television had also been reassuring and helpful in dealing with

particular 'Asian' situations in everyday life that were difficult to understand and accept when they were growing up. Denise explains:

I could identify very well with [Korean dramas] because I was having difficulties [at home] at first as well. Well, more like [with] the rules or the culture, and that my mother was always so strict, you know. And I could see that very clearly in Korean dramas too. Then I really realized like "Yes, this simply is really the Asian culture." It's how we live, you know? Because generally the parents have much say over your life, like you always have to respect the elderly. (...) And uhm, I could see myself in [the dramas] very well. And because I watched [the dramas] and realized that it was something Asian after all, I was better able to accept it eventually. And I was also better able to deal with it.

Moreover, Japanese and South Korean films and television series offer participants a space to reflect on their everyday life and talk about it with their Asian Dutch peers. Such conversations also take place during the focus group interviews, for instance when Mei-Yin, Anh and Binh discuss *My Sassy Girl* and end up reaching a common understanding and acceptance of the corporal punishment they themselves had received from their parents when they were younger:

- Mei-Yin: (...) for example, when [your parents] would hit you very often... I simply know they meant well for you.
- Binh: Yes, that's true.
- Anh: Yes...
- Binh: But only later you realize this
- Mei-Yin: Yes! At first you don't [realize this] at all, do you?
- Anh: No...
- Binh: [Then] it's like: "Why are you hitting me?"
- Anh: (laughing) Like: "Don't you love me?"

What is notable is that many participants did not understand certain aspects of their upbringing when they were growing up. Participants explain that they were angry, sad and puzzled over the fact that, amongst others, they had to obey strict house rules, had to work hard in school as well as in their parents' restaurant or other business when applicable, were subject to corporal punishment and received little affection from their parents – unlike their White Dutch peers. Some participants felt 'weird' and alone, especially those who grew up in parts of the Netherlands with no or few people of Asian origin. But through depictions of aspects of everyday life that were familiar to them, Japanese and South Korean films and television series enabled participants to understand and accept their situation as 'Asian' and as shared with many others. Moreover, these often painful aspects of their everyday life – in particular corporal punishment, due to its bodily aspect – have left an impression on the participants and as such they are important elements for identification and bonding with Asian Dutch peers.

The findings above illuminate how participants' consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television – and in particular the representations of Asian culture, virtues and lived experience they contain – facilitates and structures their imagination of Asian cultures, identities and in-groups, as well as their Asian identifications. The strong sense of Asianness and notions of Asian commonality evoked in and articulated by participants do not, however, imply participants' uncritical consumption of representations of Asian culture and the wholesale uptake and internalization thereof (nor the denouncement of 'Western/Dutch' culture part and parcel). In fact, during the focus group interviews participants do voice discontent with, and sometimes explicit disassociation from, certain aspects of Asian culture as well as their own Asian upbringing. This underscores that participants are engaged in negotiating their diverse and sometimes conflicting identities and identifications, i.e., Dutch, homeland and Asian.

During the focus groups, especially watching and talking about South Korean romantic dramedy *My Sassy Girl* and action filled drama series *City Hunter* elicits extensive discussions among participants, particularly on the issue of their 'Asian' upbringing. Participants reflect on their upbringing and their relationship with their parents, displaying both understanding and criticism. The highly contested nature of these issues is all the more emphasized by some participants who express disagreement between them on these issues. This is for instance the case when Mei-Yin, Anh and Binh vividly continue their discussion on corporal punishment, strictness and other aspects of their upbringing with regards to possible future children of their own:

Anh: Yes, you do take up [ideas about parenting from] your parents. So I guess you will teach these to your children as well.

Moderator: But including the strictness? Regarding grades and...

Binh: Yes... I would take up certain things [from my parents] while certain things I wouldn't.

Moderator: What wouldn't you take up for instance?

Binh: I ehm... would try not to hit my children.

Moderator: And you?

Mei-Yin: (in a soft voice) Ehm, [I would hit them] sometimes... (starts laughing in response to the surprised looks she gets from Binh and Anh) What?!?

Anh: No, perhaps [I would be strict] in a different way.

Mei-Yin: (laughing) A different way of hitting?

Anh: (laughing) No... For instance, [parents] usually tell you "Go and do your homework," don't they? But then I want to actually see [my kids doing it], you know.

(...)

Mei-Yin: When my little niece [is being naughty], I will already hit her you know. I'll slap her on that hand, like that! I don't know whether Dutch people

- would do that.
- Anh: No, I would tickle them. Then they would say “stop, stop, stop!”
(laughs)
- Mei-Yin: No, I would just hit her, then she won’t do it again.
- Binh: I did it with my younger brothers, but then I was younger. I would hit them when they did stuff. But later I kind of thought like “Well, I shouldn’t have done that actually.”
- Mei-Yin: (sounding surprised) You shouldn’t have???
- Binh: Yes, [I thought about] that I don’t want to raise my children in that way, you know, that I would hit them all and stuff.
- Mei-Yin: Yes, but you have to... Look, what if they [are naughty] and you don’t do anything [about it]?
- (...)
- Binh: A lot of parents can raise their children just as well without hitting them and such.
- Mei-Yin: I don’t know... I don’t know any Asian parents who didn’t hit [their children].
- Binh: Not Asian [parents], no. But I do think that... [corporal punishment] is getting less [common] with newer generations.
- Mei-Yin: Yes, I wouldn’t know... perhaps. I in fact think it’s good when [parents] sometimes hit [their children].
- Binh: Yes, that’s what I used to think as well but... I don’t know, [the way I feel about this] has changed over the past few years. Perhaps because I watch those parenting shows, you know?
- Mei-Yin: Hahaha, what?
- Binh: You know, where they raise those children and such. And then their parents are not raising them well and then one of those nannies comes in and...
- Mei-Yin: Oh nanny, yes. (...) But I mean... not too hard you know, a slap, just a light slap.

This interview excerpt illustrates how, through consuming and discussing Japanese and South Korean films and television series, participants become engaged in critically reflecting on their Asian everyday life, and by extension Asian culture at large. They negotiate notions of Asian identities and their Asian identifications, both individually and among their peers, by critically assessing which perceived aspects of Asian culture – and aspects of their Asian upbringing in particular – they do and do not appreciate and approve of. Moreover, they assess which aspects they intend to perpetuate, discard or change. While participants may express understanding of, reconciliation with, and even approval of certain difficult and painful Asian aspects of their everyday lives, at the

same time they critically assess these and may engender a desire for change as well. The participants do not disassociate themselves from Asian culture altogether however. In fact, their adherence and loyalty to Asian values concerning family, respect and harmony remain solid. The desire for change articulated by participants is thus not so much a critique of (the legitimacy of) the values they perceive as the base of a shared Asian culture. Rather, they address the interpretations of these values and their fulfilment in concrete virtues, ideas and actions in everyday life, for instance by questioning 'Asian' parenting methods to ensure children's obedience and respect towards parents.

In search for new and progressive interpretations and fulfilments of traditional Asian values, participants also look to their White Dutch peers and Western culture, including popular culture, as underlined by Binh's appropriation of Western parenting television shows. Participants express that in matters such as (strict) parenting, personal freedom and public display of affection, their views may be more liberal or 'Westernized' compared to those held by their parents, their peers in Asia, and traditional Asian culture in general. Thus, while only few participants articulate explicit Dutch identifications during the focus group interviews, most have in fact appropriated and internalised (aspects of) generalised Dutch or Western culture. They have become 'bananas' as Mei-Yin jokingly says, "yellow outside, white inside." This however, does not negate participants' strong discontent with, and denouncement of, particular aspects of Western/Dutch (popular) culture, as demonstrated earlier. Notions of difference from their White Dutch peers and Western/Dutch culture continue to inform participants' formation of cultural identities and processes of identification to a great extent.

It can be argued that Japanese and South Korean film and television provide participants with a cultural space in which they can safely negotiate their Dutch, homeland and Asian cultural identities and identifications. Through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean films and television series participants do not only understand and internalise aspects of Asian culture, they also critically reflect on these aspects and may disregard them. Participants thus clearly negotiate their Asian identities and identifications. Importantly, they do so against the backdrop of Dutch and homeland cultures. The panethnic Asian culture they imagine through Japanese and South Korean film and television constitutes both continuity and change vis-à-vis their homeland culture. Furthermore, for an important part the change is elicited by the Dutch culture they are also immersed in. Thus, the Asian identities and identifications the participants imagine are not exclusively Asian. They are, in fact, Dutch in the sense that they could only be imagined in Dutch society, in a cultural space where the diverse cultures, identities and identifications the participants engage with, intersect and can be negotiated.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how young Asian Dutch make sense of Japanese and South Korean film and television, and more specifically, how the consumption thereof is related to their imagination of Asian identities and Asian identifications. The findings

demonstrate that Japanese and South Korean film and television strongly resonate with Asian Dutch viewers' sense of Asianness. Young Asian Dutch engender feelings of cultural proximity and panethnic Asian identification and categorize themselves as well as Japanese and South Korean media characters as 'Asian' rather than as 'Japanese', 'Chinese' and so forth. They identify with these media texts and the characters portrayed in them through their perception of shared 'Asian' physical traits and shared 'Asian' values and lived experience. Furthermore, the consumption of Japanese and South Korean films and television series provides Asian Dutch viewers with (additional) 'Asian' cultural capital, as well as 'Asian' social capital. Thus, on the one hand it provides them with cultural repertoires for living a moral 'Asian' life and facilitates the development and maintenance of relationships with their Asian Dutch peers, while on the other hand it lends them distinction from their non-Asian Dutch peers. The Asian cultural capital they accumulate, in particular notions of certain traditional 'Asian' values and virtues, structures the Asian identities they imagine as well as the distinction they make between an Asian in-group and non-Asian out-groups.

In a quantitative survey study, Kartosen & Tan (2013) already found that young Asian Dutch engender and combine multiple cultural identifications (i.e., Dutch, homeland and Asian), and that young Asian Dutch' consumption of popular media from non-homeland Asian countries is associated with their Asian identifications in one way or another. The present study analysed accounts of lived experiences of viewing and using popular Asian film and television and provides an in depth view of how popular culture may facilitate multiple identifications. The findings illuminate how through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television young Asian Dutch create their own cultural space in which they can negotiate their diverse and conflicting cultural identities and identifications. Thus, the complexities of young Asian Dutch' popular media consumption and how this serves negotiations and structuring of identities and identifications, were laid bare. Above all, young Asian Dutch demonstrate substantial agency in these matters. They are acutely aware of the various options in trans/national media and popular culture as well as identities and identifications offered to them, and they display a certain degree of sovereignty in this. Their preferences, choices and negotiations thereof are highly reflexive and deliberate. This also explains the observed differences between individual young Asian Dutch in terms of media and popular culture consumption practices and sense-making, as well as in terms of conceptions and negotiations of Asian identities and Asian identifications. Some young Asian Dutch identify strongly with traditional 'Asian' values and culture, while certain 'contradicting' aspects of 'Western' values and culture are foregrounded by others. In these processes of imagining identities and identifications, Japanese and South Korean film and television offer young Asian Dutch a mirror as well as a window on Asian values and culture. To differing degree they recognize themselves in the images and narratives and engender feelings of 'Asian' familiarity and commonality, and in addition they acquire additional Asian cultural knowledge to imagine ways of becoming a moral Asian subject. Moreover, interaction with their Asian Dutch peers and processes of shared reflexivity play a

significant role in this, and, importantly, in turn these are also facilitated by young Asian Dutch' consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television.

The findings clearly foreground young Asian Dutch' agency in their media consumption practices, thus resonating with the notion that media do not simply determine identities and identifications, but rather they offer frameworks and symbolic material with which identities and identifications can be imagined. Also, as Silverstone and Georgiou (2005) argue, "these identities are essentially plural" (p. 436). This is all the more underlined by the observation that young Asian Dutch differ from their peers in Asia with regard to the cultural proximity they perceive and experience and the Asian identities they imagine through the consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television. Audiences in Asia lend a sense of cultural proximity and identification from depictions of Asian modernity (e.g., Iwabuchi, 2010, 2011). The Asian identities they imagine are thus centred on notions of Asian modernity and middle class consciousness. Indeed, Chua (2012) even argues that any cultural proximity and identification experienced by viewers in Asia are more likely to be based on shared middle class capitalist consumer ideologies and identities than on notions of shared Asian values and panethnic Asian identities. This is different for Asian Dutch viewers who, in fact, identify more with portrayals of traditional Asian values and culture in Japanese and South Korean film and television than with the portrayals of Asian modernity and middle class consumer culture. Thus, while audiences of Japanese and South Korean film and television across Asia share a sense of Asian modernity and of Asian routes or futures, young Asian Dutch share a sense of Asian tradition and of Asian roots or pasts. Young Asian Dutch are in search for a shared Asian past and shared Asian tradition to serve as a cultural base or anchor. This is in part an act of construing a shared cultural identity that sets them apart from their non-Asian Dutch peers and dominant White Dutch culture, and lends them distinction and cultural capital. For another part, it is a consequence of not being represented in Dutch media and popular culture and of feeling displaced in the Netherlands. The consumption of Japanese and South Korean film and television compensates for Asian Dutch' relative invisibility and the denial of their cultural citizenship in Dutch society. These salient differences between audiences in Asia and Asian Dutch viewers attest to the notion that cultural proximity and the shared identities associated with it are fluid and contextualized (e.g., Iwabuchi, 2010).

Ultimately, the Asian identities and identifications imagined by young Asian Dutch are not necessarily 'Asian' in terms of citizenship or geographical attachment. Notwithstanding the notion that the consumption of transnational media and popular culture offers minority groups "frameworks for participation and agency no longer grounded in singular residence and no longer oriented exclusively to the project of national or singular citizenship" (Silverstone & Georgiou, p. 438), the Asian cultural identities and identifications imagined by young Asian Dutch cannot simply be viewed as articulations of detachment from Dutch society altogether and attachment to Asia instead. Rather, by reworking the symbolic material offered by transnational Asian media and popular

culture, young Asian Dutch imagine particular Dutch forms of Asianness or Asian Dutchness. It can be argued that their sense of Asianness is grounded in their shared awareness that to a certain degree they think and feel 'traditionally Asian' while at the same time they can critically assess 'traditional Asian culture' as involved 'outsiders'. In the end, young Asian Dutch imagine Asian Dutch identities and identifications that are questioning and resisting both dominant Dutch culture and homeland culture. These are thus not global Asian identities and identifications disconnected from Dutch society, but, rather, glocalized Asian Dutch identities and identifications firmly embedded in young Asian Dutch' everyday lives immersed in Dutch and homeland culture.

NOTE

¹ It should be noted that most participants display, at one time or another, awareness that they are generalizing when they talk of 'Asian' values, culture and virtues. Some explicitly question the 'Asianness' of certain values and virtues perceived as Asian, for example when they contend that they know people of non-Asian origin who also have tightknit families, as well as people of Asian origin who do not. Furthermore, the participants do not identify with all aspects of Japanese and South Korean culture; they do find some cultural aspects "strange" or "exotic" and denounce certain aspects, in particular cultural aspects they deem "too conservative" and "too old fashioned".

APPENDIX

Composition of the Focus Groups

Group	Name	Sex	Age	Ethnic origin(s)
1	Anthony	Male	28	Chinese-Surinamese
	Sandra	Female	25	Indonesian and Dutch
	Yuna	Female	25	Malay
	Cynthia	Female	28	Indonesian
2	Binh	Female	20	Vietnamese and French
	Mei-Yin	Female	21	Chinese-Singaporean
	Anh	Female	20	Vietnamese
3	Jing	Female	31	Chinese
	Ling	Female	27	Chinese
4	Nancy	Female	19	Vietnamese
	Lanh	Female	18	Vietnamese
	Denise	Female	18	Vietnamese
5	Julia	Female	29	Chinese-Surinamese
	Robert	Male	30	Chinese-Surinamese
	Steven	Male	30	Chinese-Indonesian
6	Chen	Male	21	Chinese-Indonesian
	Maurice	Male	19	Chinese
	Dave	Male	18	Chinese
	Andrew	Male	20	Chinese
7	Huynh	Male	24	Vietnamese
	Fajar	Male	25	Indonesian
8	Timmy	Male	24	Thai and Dutch
	Aliyah	Female	19	Indonesian and Dutch
	Lian	Female	22	Chinese and Korean
	Feng	Male	21	Chinese
9	Li-Ming	Female	27	Chinese
	Li-Wei	Female	25	Chinese