# BITE ABROAD

Exploring Cultural Identity and Migration through Traditional Thai Dessert Workshops, Bua Loy.

By Plengpai (Pin) Ratnajarn

# Abstract

This thesis, "Bite Abroad", explores the intersection of cultural identity, migration, and self-reflection through the design and implementation of Thai dessert workshops. This study is based on interaction design principles and seeks to create a comfortable and inclusive environment for participants to share their cultural identities and migration experiences, especially in Switzerland, and engage self-reflection. Qualitative methods, such as participant observation and interviews are used in this study. It shows that these workshops are able to help participants feel validated, spark curiosity about others' culture and foster a sense of community.

There are four main frameworks in this study, including embodiment, acculturation, cultural identity, and commensality. Moreover, this study suggests that further research directions may be able to include digital tools and collaborations with Zurich Migration Office or other related organizations. The thesis contributes to both academic research and practical applications, demonstrating how designing Thai-dessert making, Bua Loy, workshops are able to support participants in feeling validated, igniting curiosity towards other cultures, and fostering a social cohesion.

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Figure 1. Me and my Argentinian family. [Photo taken by Paula Fernandez, 2019]

# Chapter 1 : Introduction

## 1.1 Belonging Everywhere and Nowhere: My Story of Migration and Identity

Living among the Alps mountain range and peaceful lake, I, a student from Thailand, embarked on a journey for her Master Degree in Interaction Design at Zurich University of the Arts in Switzerland. Leaving behind the life that is full of the vibrant streets of Bangkok and stability, I jumped into the unknown. The journey that brought me here was winding and filled with questions about identity, belonging and the essence of home.

I grew up in the capital of Thailand, Bangkok, where the vivid life happens and is filled with the thick aroma of street food, busy roads all day long and cosmopolitan feel. Also, growing up in Bangkok also means to be in a very competitive Thai education system, to respect older people no matter what, to try not to have an opinion on anything. I never felt like I belonged. Yet, I wanted to see the world beyond. This curiosity first took me to Argentina as an exchange student when I was 16 years old, where I, in the very first time of my life,

experienced and was exposed to different cultures. A year in Argentina and learning about Latin culture transformed me in ways I could never have imagined. Moving from the metropolis of Bangkok, with its 13 million inhabitants, to the small town of Ucacha, Córdoba, Argentina home to just 6,000 people, was like stepping into a different universe. In Bangkok, the city buzzed with constant activity, sounds, light and life that never stopped. In contrast, Ucacha's slow pace of life, tranquil streets and intimate community presented a big but refreshing change.

My 16-year-old life in Argentina was so immersed into the culture where every interaction was filled with warmth and openness. However, in the beginning, I struggled to adapt due to the significant contrasts to where I am from. For example, the differences between greetings. In Bangkok, greetings are with the distance and often followed by a polite "wai"(Thai vocabolary), where you place your palms together and bow slightly, saying "Sawaddee ka' for a woman or "Sawaddee krub" for men. In Ucacha, the common greeting was "Hola!" and accompanied by a kiss on the cheek which reflects the affectionate nature of Argentinian culture. I remembered, during my first month, running to the

bathroom and needed to clean my face because I was not used to the culture. The level of physical proximity and informality initially felt overwhelming and invasive to someone accustomed to the more reserved Thai customs. My daily life there revolved around communal activities, such as, taking siesta, sharing mates in the afternoon, gathering with friends or family for an Asado and watching football together. At first, it was challenging for me to navigate with the constant socializing and intense personal interaction. The small-town dynamics, where everyone knew each other and also almost every story of each household, was also a big contrast with my previous cosmopolitan life in bangkok. Additionally, barely anyone in Ucacha could speak English. Realizing that I needed to adapt quickly, I picked up Spanish a few months after I arrived. My surviving mode was on.

But as months passed, I began to see the beauty in these differences. I learned the importance of savoring each moment and building strong relationships there in Ucacha. I started to appreciate every moment, the warmth and openness of my Argentinian family and friends, and the initial discomfort slowly gave way to a sense of belonging. The more I spent time and immersed myself in Argentina, the more I felt like I was one of them. When it was time for me to go back to my home country, I quickly realized I was departing from another home.

Last April, we had a module, Studio 5, where we went to the mountain together. The purpose of this trip was for sharpening our thesis practices and learning more about writing. In our writing class, we got a chance to do a writing exercise and this was the piece I wrote that reflects my thoughts during that time.

"Growing up wondering myself why I can't eat spicy food like others, why I don't feel like fitting in to the culture that I am in. Am I too confident? Am I too straightforward? I remember myself heading to the canteen during the lunch break in my middle school ordering green curry in order to practice eating spicy or ordering papaya salad or "Somtam" so that I can maybe fit in one day. I, in fact, was able to eat spicy food better. But not long after, I decided to do a one year exchange in Argentina when I was 16 years old. "It's already 6pm, why is no one thinking of having dinner yet?" I thought to myself while I was there. In Argentina, the eating hour is like Italian but more of beef and BBQ or they are called "Asado". I loved their food and culture so much. During that time, I was so immersed that I once thought I was an Argentinian. It took me around three months to really adjust with their customs. I feel like Asian culture and Latin culture



Figure 2. Remember me, Argentina. [Photo taken by the author, 2019]



Figure 3. Hitchhiking around Patagonia, searching for the meaning of life. [Photo taken by the author, 2019]

is just another end of each other from not touching each other when greeting to touching cheek to cheek, from almost every food is spicy to none, from speaking quietly to each other to almost feel like shouting to each other. After one year there, I went back to my home country and had a reverse culture shock. Oftentimes I thought, who am I actually? Where do I belong in this world? Yes, I am Thai but not that Thai. I feel like I am an Argentinian but I am actually not. I don't even spend that much time there. Who am I? Where do I belong?" (Pin, personal communication, April 03, 2024)

This early experience in my life broadened my perspective and reshaped my understanding of the world, what it means to belong and to migrate somewhere. It taught me the beauty of being in a different culture and the value of human connection, lessons that have continued to influence me until these days. The cultural immersion in Argentina not only enriched my life but also made me more adaptable and appreciative of the diverse ways in which people live and connect around the world.

Moreover, with my initial exposure to cultural displacement and a persistent sense of not belonging anywhere, I define myself as a global citizen. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, I struggled to fit into the cultural norms of my na-



tive Thai. My year-long stay in Argentina gave me a unique sense of belonging. I embraced the way of life but yet, deep down, I was not an Argentinian. This realization was both enlightening and unsettling, as it highlighted the fluidity of my identity. Accepting that I do not belong in one culture gave me a peace of mind and embraced the concept of being a global citizen. This perspective led me to travel extensively, be an open-minded person, be able to adapt easily in the new environment and eventually move to Switzerland for my study.

## 1.2 Embracing a New Chapter: Moving to Switzerland

My diary notes on the day before I flew to Switzerland, expressing gratitude for embarking on a new journey with the mentally support from friends and family. I recall that I flew to Switzerland one week after university started already due to my visa issue.

"I'm flying out today. So proud of myself. I did it all by myself and got support from family and friends. Now I am all by myself again with all my freedom. I don't know what to expect at all. I mean I don't know what will happen but I mean I am just going to be positive and I think things will turn out well and I will enjoy every single thing/ moment of it. Don't be afraid...just jump in and enjoy. This month is really tough but I have been through it all. I am happy now." (Pin, personal communication, February 27, 2022)

During my flight EY73 from Abu Dhabi to Zurich, I wrote my thoughts in my diary to embrace the new chapter in life with optimism and courage, despite the uncertainty ahead.

"Alright Pin...your new chapter is about to start. Don't be afraid of the unknown. Pretty excited but also don't know what to expect as well. I will just do my best every single day and make it to its fullest. Believe me ... it's going to be awesome and one of the best years in life. Be happy and love yourself first. Enjoy your new journey in Switzerland, live to its fullest." (Pin, personal communication, February 28, 2022)

I first arrived in Switzerland late February, 2022. It was in late winter, a season for which I was not prepared. Coming from a tropical country, nothing could really prepare me for winter in Switzerland. I remember vividly, the first night was -3 degrees Celsius, and despite wearing everything I

had, I still felt cold. Obviously, I did not have the proper clothes and needed to buy multiple items over the first few days. Learning how to wear proper outfits for the right weather was challenging for me. It was the skill I never thought I needed to have. Fortunately, my classmates, Jola and Riva, were kind enough to patiently explain to me how to dress and the differences between each type of textile material. As the years went by, I learned how to dress appropriately for the constantly changing weather.

One of the constant challenges for me is dealing with the Swiss bureaucracy as an international student from a third country, Thailand. I arrived in Switzerland one week late due to the delay of my visa and had to constantly call the immigration office in Zurich from Thailand to follow up. Every year in February, I need to renew my permit B, and there are always new regulations that I wasn't aware of before, but I have gradually learned during my time here. For example, I wanted to work during my first summer break, but I learned that I could not work within the first six months of my stay in Switzerland. After that, I wanted to get a part-time job, but it was quite difficult to find one because employers often doubted whether I was actually allowed to work until I provided the website with the regulations from the migration office. I quickly realized that there are many things I cannot do here due to my permit, but there are also things that I can do. Therefore, I try to search for and inform myself about what I can and cannot do as an international student from Thailand. I wish there was a crash course on Swiss regulations for international students from non-EU countries. After almost two and a half years of living here, I have learned that no matter the problem, there is always a way to find a solution, and things will be fine.

The cultural differences between Thailand and Switzerland are significant. Coming here without knowing much about how people live, how they separate garbage, how to search for an apartment, or how the city actually functions was challenging. I learned new things almost every single day in the beginning. I learned how to submit an application for an apartment and interview for a shared flat. I learned to separate garbage from scratch because in Thailand we do not have this system and to buy Zurich garbage bags in the supermarket. I learned to count zones and be aware of where I am in the city and which zone I am in while on the tram, train, or bus so I would not get fined. Moreover, learning German in Switzerland is not the easiest, even though the language barrier is not extremely high. Understanding the local dialects, particularly Swiss



Figure 4. On the way back to Zurich, after going back to visit my family and friends. [Photo taken by author, 2023]

German, can be challenging. Many people here speak English; however, being proficient in German is essential for deeper integration.

## 1.3 Food, culture and connection

Another cultural difference is the approach to food. In Thailand, eating out is a common activity. It is affordable and convenient. However, in Switzerland, dining out is much more expensive. This has encouraged me to learn how to cook at home. While this shift has been a bit challenging, it has also given me the chance to explore new recipes and improve my cooking skills. I grew up not liking Thai food, but since I have been here, I feel I appreciate and embrace my own culture more. I cook Thai food more often. There is one thing that I am always excited about: Thai desserts, from Nam Tau Hu (silky smooth tofu served with additional toppings like tapioca pearls, red beans, or sesame seeds) to Bua Loy (small, colorful rice flour dumplings served in a warm, sweet coconut milk broth). Every time I go to a Thai supermarket or Thai secret market here, I feel excited, and I have found joy in sharing these sweet treats with others.

The more I talked to my friends who are

Figure 5. Experimenting Thai-dessert workshop in Ticino with my classmates. [Photo taken by Duy Bui, 2024]

non-Swiss, the more I discovered that there are similar experiences we have been through. Obviously, everyone has their own unique stories. For me, it is a great start for people to share their own migrant experiences and to feel accepted, understood, and validated. I chose the Thai dessert workshop format because I would like to introduce desserts from my own culture for people to explore, and it is an effective tool to integrate the principles of interaction design with an exploration of cultural identity. This creates a platform to encourage meaningful conversations on the topics of cultural identity, migration, and self-reflection.

Choosing Thai desserts like Bua Loy for my workshop allows me to introduce Thai desserts to people. Not only is it a way to represent my culture, but it is also delicious and fun to make. Bua Loy is a traditional Thai dessert made from small, colorful glutinous rice flour dumplings in warm coconut milk. The name "Bua" means "Lotus" in Thai and Loy means "Floating". People would know the small glutinous rice balls are cooked when they float to the surface of the boiling water. Making Bua Loy also allows conversation to flow during the preparation process because it takes quite a while to make. Choosing Bua Loy for my workshop not only introduces participants to Thai desserts

but also provides a unique opportunity for creating an engaging, interactive experience that facilitates meaningful conversation and cultural exchange.

The "Bite Abroad" project is able to provide insights into the experiences of migrants in Switzerland through the lens of culinary practices. By doing Thai Dessert workshops, this study emphasizes the profound connection between dessert, cultural identity, and community building. The key findings emphasize the complexity of identity discovery, the challenges to cultural adaptation in Switzerland, the significance of dessert in evoking nostalgia, and the importance of shared experiences in promoting cultural exchange and social support.

## 1.4 Positioning Culinary Workshops within the Interaction Design Discipline

Thai-dessert making workshops align with the interaction design discipline, emphasizes participation and inclusivity. In addition, the workshop is exploring cultural identity, sharing personal stories about migration and engaging in self-reflection through Thai dessert-making activity, Interaction design strives to create meaningful relationships between people and systems of interaction, and often through the lens of human-centered design (Rogers, Sharp, & Preece, 2011). In the context of Thai dessert workshops serve as a medium for interaction, where design principles are applied to create a comfortable and inclusive environment that foster cultural identity, sharing migration experience and engaging self-reflection. Zimmerman, Forlizzi and Evenson (2007) stated that interaction design research strives to address 'complex social issues through innovative design solutions'. Using dessert as a cultural artifact, the workshop's task has these participants engage with rich interactions and dialogues. The workshops were deliberately designed to be inclusive and supportive to the participants. This approach not only enhances the user experience but can add to the broader discourse on how design can reframe preservation of cultural identity and social integration, especially in Switzerland.

## 1.5 Background

Basing a cultural identity, migration and self-reflection practice on Thai dessert workshops aligns well with the principles of interaction design. Interaction design promotes meaningful human interaction and engagement with systems, often

Figure 6. Drying hands after having fun making Bua Loy together.
[Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

focusing on human-centered design in order to enhance user experiences (Rogers, Sharp, Preece, 2011). By interacting through making Thai dessert together, the practice aims to adopt and reflect these principles by engaging users to share their cultural identity and migration journeys towards an inclusive and comfortable atmosphere

Today's globalized world commonly increases the number of people who move and live abroad as migrants in order to study or work. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2023 states that there are around 281 million international migrants worldwide, representing 3.6% of the global population (OECD, 2023). Given the richly varied cultural nature, Switzerland offers a unique setting for studying how individuals from different cultural backgrounds navigate their identities in a new country and environment. This study allows an intriguing exploration of how dessert can serve as a cultural bridge, helping people share their cultural identity, migrant journey and engage self-reflection.

The fact that I, myself, am a Thai student in Switzerland pursuing a master's degree in Interaction Design, and having experienced cultural adaptation as well as trying to find one's own iden-

tity through this cultural adaptation process, provide another layer of personal significance in this study. The workshops not only become a means of academic research but also a reflective practice that relates to my own experience of trying to find 'home' and having to 'fit in' with a new culture.

By grounding this study in an interaction design approach, the research builds upon an approach that is human-centered and aims at enabling participants to share their cultural identity and individual migrant journey, as well as, engaging in self-reflection. The field of interaction design focuses on creating meaningful and engaging experiences for users within the border context of people and their environments (Kolko ,2010). In the context of Thai dessert workshops, this approach is able to enhance cultural understanding, making the participants feel supported and promoting community building.

In conclusion, the design goes to show the power of Thai dessert workshops that is able to help participants fostering cultural identity, migration understanding, and self-reflection through the lens of interaction design.

## 1.6 Knowledge gap

Existing research in this area recognizes the role of food in maintaining cultural identity and assisting in cultural integration. Current literature tends to focus more on the broader effects of food on cultural identity and memory (Holtzman, 2006; Sutton, 2001) rather than what it means to participants to experience these workshops. There is also a lack of research on how meaningful discussion is anchored by shared preparation work, and how these moments of interactive thinking and dialogue can help participants create multicultural support, introspection among a local group of individuals with diverse backgrounds and create a sense of community.

This study focuses on a Thai dessert workshop – Bua Loy. Bua Loy is a traditional dessert from Thailand, made of tiny (about 1-2 cm in diameter) colorful glutinous rice dumplings floating in warm coconut milk. This hands-on process of cooking and sharing Bua Loy serves as a mode for communal practice with an invitation to share stories about past migration experiences and cultural identities. Adopting an approach and principles of human-centered as a method to create an environment where participants feel comfortable and welcome, not only addresses the identified gaps in knowledge but also contributes to the broader discourse on the role of interactive and inclusive culinary activities in cultural integration and the preservation of cultural heritage (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012).

## 1.7 Research motivation

A research motivation is based on my own experience with transitioning and adapting to different cultures while living abroad. Given the important functions of food in maintaining traditions and providing a sense of homely connectedness, the current research shall explore how desserts served as strong media for stories while enabling cultural communication that often goes beyond general appreciation. In the end, this study, Bite Abroad will be able to demonstrate the importance of designing dessert workshops that create a comfortable and inclusive environment for participants in order to enhance a sense of cultural identity, helping to share migration experience and engaging self-reflection.

## 1.8 Objective and Scope

The purpose of this study is to design and implement workshops that create a comfortable and inclusive environment for participants, share their cultural identity and migrants journey. As a result of the workshop, participants feel validated, foster a sense of community, and enhance curiosity to other cultures. More specifically, this study will seek to:

- Investigate how participation in the dessert workshop series, Bite Abroad, encourages to share participants' sense of cultural identity, to describe the challenges and strategies participants use for their process of cultural adaptation and integration, especially in Switzerland
- To examine the importance of dessert to participants in the construction and preservation of cultural memories.
- To design exercises to engage self-reflection so that participants can reflect on their identity within a safe space.

Using qualitative methods, such as participant observation, interviews and thematic analysis, helps this study capture the richness and complexity of participants' experiences. A series of workshops will be undertaken with participants from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, where the focus will be on their experiences in Switzerland.

## 1.9 Research questions

How can designing the Thai dessert workshops, Bite Abroad, create a comfortable and inclusive environment for participants in order to engage in self-reflection, share their cultural identities, and migration experiences, especially in Switzerland ? As a result, would participants feel validated, foster a sense of community, and enhance their curiosity about other cultures?

Figure 7. Adding glutinous rice flour. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 8. Workshop 8 at Viaduktraum, ZHdK. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

# Chapter 2 : Literature

## Theoretical Framework

The culinary practices, Thai-dessert making, into cultural identity, migration and self-reflection, requires a robust theoretical framework. This research is transdisciplinary with theories of embodiment, acculturation, cultural identity, commensality and interaction design. These disciplines, in particular, allow us to position and frame the research, helping us look at how sensorial engagement, cultural adaptation, social interaction and user-centered design mutually afford adding value to a critical approach that strengthens cultural exchange and community building. Each of these frameworks brings perspective to the act of navigating, expressing and reflecting on identity and its processes and tensions in a new cultural context through shared culinary experience.

## 2.1 Embodiment Theory

Embodiment theory is cognitive processes that are deeply rooted in the body's interactions with its movement and environment. By physically making, cooking and eating traditional Thai desserts together, participants are able to connect with their cultural identity on a sensory level, facilitating deeper self-reflection and cultural understanding (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). The theory is connected to this study because it emphasized how sensory experiences are central to participants' engagement in their personal past and the cultural memory of their home country. The sensory experiences in this study include touch, taste, smell and sight.

Sensory experience is a core aspect of embodiment theory. It is the idea that sensory experiences are essential to cognitive processes. This perspective highlights the significance of the body's sensory interactions with the environment in shaping cognition. In the study of Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence (2014), the study examines how sensory experiences, including taste, smell, and touch, contribute to the development of culinary expertise. The research emphasizes how expert chefs utilize their sensory perceptions to enhance the flavor and presentation of dishes. It is an important role that sensory interactions play in culinary creativity and mastery. Moreover, Classen (1997) provides the groundwork for understanding how sense plays

a crucial role in anthropological research. The research argues for the importance of understanding how different cultures perceive and prioritize various senses. By looking at how different cultures interpret sensory experiences, they discovered symbolics of meanings. For example, sight might be related with logic or magic, taste can distinguish between sacred and ordinary things, and smell can determine social distinctions (Classens, 1997, p.403).

Cultural memories are preserved and shared through bodily experiences, as highlighted by embodiment theory. Food, rituals, and daily practices serve as powerful mediums for cultural traditions. Food and memory? Why would anyone want to remember anything they had eaten?" (Sutton, 2001). Sutton (2008) studies how food connects to cultural and social memory on the Greek island of Kalymnos. He explains specifically about the preparation of Easter lamb and added that these specific cooking practices are deeply tied to the community's memories and traditions. These memories are embedded in the stories of individuals and families through smells and tastes of food. The influence of these memories can shift between flavor and social connections, and this completeness enables them to symbolize and vividly bring to mind – "the good old days," "childhood years" – and capture individual biographies and collective identities.

In conclusion, embodiment theory shows that our cognition is embodied and conditioned by the way we interact with the world through the body. For instance, smell and taste can greatly influence the way we think and identify with a given environment and group of people. As we meet culture and experience identity through smell, taste, touch and sight, these experiences can conserve cultural memories and traditions. As a result, it can sustain them over time, especially in relation to cooking and eating. Embodiment theory underlines these bonds and their connections to what we perceive with our senses, culture, identity and society. Moreover, embodiment theory emphasizes the strong connections between our senses, as well as for our bodies, to taste the world and to maintain our unique identity (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1991).

## 2.2 Acculturation Theory

Acculturation theory takes into consideration the ways which people adapt to new cultural surroundings while simultaneously remaining attached to their cultural origins. This theory is able to frame the challenges and strategies participants cope up with as they navigate cultural integration in Switzerland, while maintaining their origin identity. For this study, acculturation theory is essential in realising how the participants' experiences are intricate and allow them to integrate into Swiss society, while maintaining connections to their heritage.

Acculturation has been referred to groups of individuals experiencing different cultures first-hand continuously. As a result, these groups tend to change in original cultural practices, norms, and values (Redfield et al.,1936). It is significant to take it in consideration that the definition is for two groups, dominant and non-dominant. However, the group that changes most is the non-dominant one or the group that migrates to another country. There are six changes that may occur at group level. First is physical changes, such as new countries, new living situations, less population, more suburban. Second is biological changes, such as the type of food that people eat or the common illness that people may get. Third one is political changes, it is common that the non-dominant one is under control of the dominant country and may be able to lose some of their autonomy. The Fourth one is the altar of economics. They may change their career or what they would do in their countries to the new forms of employment. Fifth is cultural changes. This point is the main definition of acculturation, including changes of languages, spiritual ritual and education. The last one is social relationship, both between-group and personal relation (Berry, 1992)

The study of Berry (2005), he examined the concept of acculturation which includes the process of cultural and psychological change. With

Figure 9. Colorful Bua Loy in progress. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]
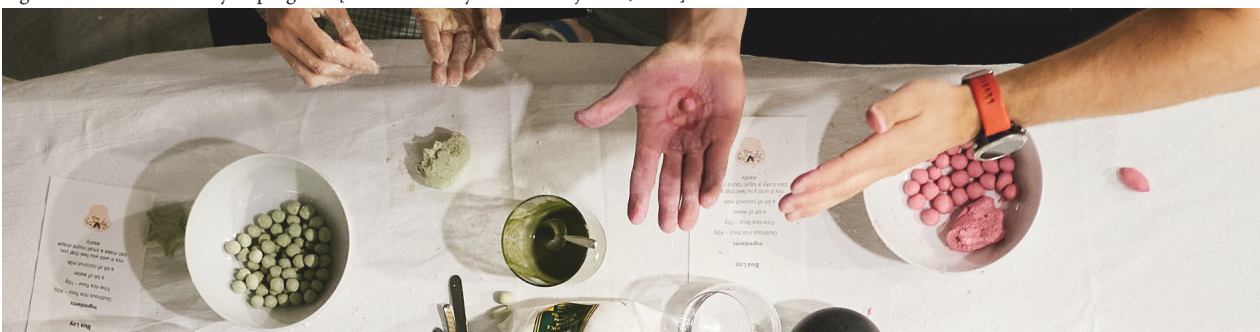
changes of acculturations, individuals or groups may achieve long-term adaptation. Adaptation implies the stable changes that people respond to external expectations. However, the adaptation might or might not enhance the "fit" between individual and new cultures. It does not mean the longer the individual is in the country, the better the fit in one's new culture. It might mean that as time passes by, the individual that attempts to change may engage in opposition and not succeed. As a result, they separate from the new culture. Long-term adjustment to acculturation ranges from well to poorly adapted. It depends on situation to situation where a person is able to maintain and manage their lives in a new environment to a person that is not able to adapt into the new environment. Acculturation can happen at individual and collective levels. Acculturation in the individual level generates behavioural changes. At the group level, transformation at the broader scope including social system, organisations and culture may alter. The findings in research indicate that acculturation cannot be universally applied to individuals.

Acculturation theory aims to implement a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals adapt to new cultural environments while maintaining their cultural origins. This theory emphasises the simultaneous cultural and psychological shifts that occur through interactions and transformation in behaviour, society, and culture. As a result, this theory will be able to make us understand how participants at the workshop integrate themselves into Swiss society while retaining their own culture.

## 2.2.1 Domains of acculturation

In the study of Berry (1976), the process of acculturation includes multiple changes. Behavioural changes on a personal level, such as dressing, the way people eat, what they like to eat and language that they communicate. The longer term of adaptation may be established , like social interaction and cultural identity.

### 2.2.1.1 Food

In the study of Bundy (2017), the researcher examined the adaptation of their food shopping behaviour as a part of a wider process of acculturation. The sample of this research is British expatriates in Toulouse. There are three aspects that are the result of this study. First aspect is maintenance, the participants that eat British food abroad. Second aspect is hybridity, subjects that feel like they



Figure 10. What do you define yourself as?. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson,, 2024]

eat more "french". Third aspect is hyperculture, people that consume British food in order to feel British in an important event. As a result of this study, it shows that dietary acculturation has an intricate process. It demonstrates how food is important in showing the identity of migration.

### 2.2.1.2 Language

Language is an important aspect in the acculturation. It is a tool for communicating and integrating with other people. It is a tool that one can reach others, learn, adapt and take part in one's new cultural environment. Sam and Berry (2016) stated that not only language acquisition is important to immigrants or expatriates who want to enter into the workforce but learning the dominant culture's language also benefits as a symbolic marker in order to move towards the culture. This is particularly because language-use reflective of a country's culture is closely linked to the group's identity and sense of self-worth. The authors mentioned that language use and its acquisition are intimately connected to identity because the language we use and become accustomed to are central to the ways in which we communicate and share everyday experiences. Therefore, it becomes a market for our identities and culture. Learning an accultura-

tion language facilitates an immigrant's or expat's access to employment, education and social networks. It increases their chances for survival once they have the host language skill and are able to navigate daily life. While new language is usually expected by the host country, maintaining one's native language is also key to maintaining culture and identity. In this study, it is stated that psychologies disagree on the rate in which immigrants and expats lose their native tongue, being able to communicate in two or more languages is a common result. Moreover the host-society feelings or attitudes towards the immigrants' language is also important. More multicultural settings that support language diversity are more likely to support, and modern understanding of, bilingualism, and therefore help facilitate acculturation and reduce acculturative stress. All in all, language adaptation is important for acculturation

### 2.2.1.3 Social interaction

Social integration is especially important in acculturation because one must have direct social-cultural contacts with each other. Yang and Yue (2019) focus on exploring the common shared experiences and the resilience of the cultural heritage of Chinese students in how they interact with non-host nationals in the United States. The authors study the acculturation of Chinese students in the United states. They found that the three basic characteristics of Chinese students in the United States are very strong cultural pride and patriotism, the limited knowledge of American culture, and a sense of isolation. The Chinese students choose to communicate with the Chinese or international students for emotional help staying in America, which is hard to integrate with American society and communicate with Americans effectively. Therefore, the research shows that the Chinese students in our study did not learn any American cultural information at all.

These domains of acculturation: food, language and social interaction display various aspects of acculturation and immigration's adoption during the acculturation process. Even though all the studies have utilized different domains to study acculturation, it gives the focus of how these domains reflect the cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation in the life of immigrants. By focusing on these domains of acculturation will be an important part of theory in Thai-dessert workshops because in the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to discuss their migration journeys and experiences, reflect on their identities, cultural differences and form community.



Figure 11. Love is my top strength. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

## 2.3 Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural identity theory investigates how identities are shaped and reshaped in a cultural environment. The exploration of cultural identity is highly relevant to my thesis project as it investigates how culinary workshops can facilitate self-reflection and cultural exchange among participants.

Identity plays a significant part in one's psychosocial well-being. Identity includes the perceptions individuals have of themselves and serves as a predictor for numerous significant psychosocial and relational outcomes (Côté & Levine, 2002). Different aspects of identity originate from various theories and sources, each inspiring its own distinct line of academic literature.

The separateness is a division between personal identity and cultural identity. There is a large literature from Erikson (1950) that is related to the individual-focus, psychological personal identity. Personal identity represents one's set of goals, values, and beliefs. What is most important is the extent to which this set of goals, values, and beliefs are internally consistent and, taken together, form a coherent sense of self. As a result, personal iden-

tity is defined in terms of an individual's goals, values, and beliefs in areas such a political preference, religious ideology, occupational choice, family and friendship styles, and gender role (Waterman, 1999)

From an Eriksonian perspective, personal identity reflects the goals, values and beliefs that a person has developed or internalized. Personal identity provides a response to the questions "Who am I?" Cultural identity refers to values that individuals internalize from cultural groups of which they are members (Jensen, 2003). It reflects an answer to the questions "Who am I as a member of my group- or in relation to other groups?" Importantly both personal and cultural identity are seen as reflecting values (Hitlin, 2003). Cultural identity is a part of the broader construct of personal identity and, ethnicity and culture should be considered a domain of personal identity development, for both majority and minority populations (Schwartz, 2001)

Cultural identity specifically relates to cultural groups and, in the context of immigrants, it refers to both the heritage and the societies they join (Segall, 1986). The cultural influences of both heritage and receiving communities are significant for first-,second-, and later-generation immigrants (Ponterotto et al., 2001). The emphasis on multiculturalism in many contemporary Western societies, along with the significant number of immigrants arriving, can encourage later-generation immigrants to reflect on their cultural heritage. However, this phenomenon is particularly evident in "nations of immigrants"like the United States, Canada, and Australia (Côté, 2006).

"Cultural identity" is defined as both an aspect of self and a referent for a group to which one belongs (Dien, 2000). Cultural identity is a multifaceted construct that includes both individual-level and group-level components (Matsumoto, 2003).

Hall's article (Hall, n.d.) suggested that there are two ways of thinking about "cultural identity". The first perspective defined "cultural identity" as a unified culture. A sort of collective "true self", residing inside the many other, more superficial or externally imposed identities, shared by people with a common history and ancestry. The second perspective of cultural identity is less familiar and more unsettling. If identity does not follow a straightforward, continuous path from a fixed origin, how can we understand its formation? Hall suggested that cultural identities are formed and reformed through memory, narrative, and rep-

resentation, rather than being immutable essences. He mentioned the influence of colonialism in Caribbean culture and pointed out how dominant cultural narratives have defined and constrained the black identities.

All in all, the development of a person's sense of self and belonging within their community is greatly impacted by the complex and constant evolving concept of cultural identity. It connects personal identity, which centers on individual objectives, principles, and collective identity, which is based on common cultural and historical encounters. Hall emphasizes the constantly evolving nature of cultural identity, influenced by memory, narrative, and representation. This perspective competes with the idea of a fixed identity. It highlights the fluid and hybrid characteristics of cultural identity, particularly within the contexts of migration and multicultural societies. Understanding how these influences, like colonial histories and acculturation, interact gives us better insight into how cultural identity helps people navigate their heritage and find their place in diverse societies.

## 2.4 Commensality

Commensality, the practice of eating together, provides a crucial framework for highlighting the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of shared meals. Through the Thai dessert workshops, participants engage in making and sharing the dessert. It will foster cultural transmission, strengthen social bonds, and promote self-reflection.

Fischler (2011) defined commensality as "to eat together", namely to eat at the same table . In such circumstances, eating with and sharing food with others is part and parcel of the experience of belonging. Gardner (2002) explains the commensal activities with the living family after the funeral of the deceased relative in Bangladesh. It provides with the social value gained of needing to complete their duty towards the funeral. Fog Olwig (2002) investigates a wedding, on the Caribbean Island of Nevis, where family members come together and cook together, as well as share this food during the wedding party. This act of cooking and sharing showcases the unity of a family spread out across the world. In the study on Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands (Visser et al., 2015), There was a gendered relation to food by women in this study who compared the migrants that left behind Ghana and less lucky, who were able to receive hot males from them. For men, the food and cooking became a medium for interaction. Food and cooking, together with faith and

some interconnections with the community as perceived, became an important contribution for their social wellbeing. Int this particular research study done by Meijering and van Hoven (2003), they have suggested potential how highly -skilled Indians in Germany used cooking Indian food as a medium to live in harmony, and maintain the connection they have had with their home land. Finally, in the study conducted by Bailey, Channakki, and Hutter (2009), the process of place-making that Karnataka migrants in Goa had undergone was discussed. They used communication, commensality, planning as a group, and building temples. It helped migrants to become empowered as a migrant, and secured and made them feel that they are "at home" in the migrant settlement.

By using the commensality into the framework of my project emphasizes the significance in supporting cultural integration, cultural identity, and promoting psychological well-being. The Thai dessert workshops have the power to share meals to create an inclusive and supportive environment. This will be able to make the participants' sense of belonging and provide a space for sharing and for individuals to reflect on their personal and cultural identities.

Figure 12. Commensality, the art of eating together. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 13. Bite Abroad workshop's atmosphere. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

# Chapter 3 : Methodology

## 3.1 Research Design : Bite Abroad workshop

### 3.1.1 Purpose of the workshop

To design workshop methods that create a comfortable and inclusive environment that enable participants to engage self-reflection and share their cultural identities and migration experiences, especially in Switzerland. These methods aim to enhance curiosity about other cultures, foster community building and ensure participants feel understood, confirmed and accepted.

### 3.1.2 Embodied Rhythms and Gestures in Facilitating Dialogue

The rhythm and embodied gestures of the workshop help to set a pace that makes the exchange of information and conversation. The physical rhythm of making Bua Loy is itself a process and pace-holders that set a breathable and natural rhythm for questions and conversations. As participants knead the dough and shape the small ball, their hands-on involvement creates a relaxed and informal atmosphere and encourages participants to share and tell stories. People reflected on their cultural backgrounds and migration process through sharing memories and stories with others. The embodies gestures, such as mixing, making a small ball, and cooking together, break down social barriers and foster a sense of unity and collective participation. It enhances the overall depth and quality of the discussions.

### 3.1.3 Workshop Structure

When each participant arrived at the workshop location, I usually greeted them and made them feel comfortable. After that when everyone arrived, we all introduced each other. I asked them to wash their hands before we started since we will use our hands to make the dessert. Soon after, I invited them to sit at the table.



Figure 14. Making dough and choosing the color for the dough. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

#### 3.1.3.1 Introduction

Before we started doing a workshop, I introduced the workshop's objective and explained about the Thai dessert that we were about to make, cook and eat together. I tried to explain in general and not so specific so that participants were able to experience themselves. After that I started to introduce myself, where I am from, sharing my migrant's journey and the length of my stay in Switzerland.

Questions: Where are you from? And How long are you living in Switzerland? (if she/he is Swiss, have you ever been living in other countries? For how long?)

I usually started to introduce myself first to break the ice and integrated the questions without asking the questions itself. I chose to demonstrate how I introduced myself because it was more natural and easier to follow. With the introduction round, we all were able to acknowledge each other's background and gave us a context for the upcoming discussions.

#### 3.1.3.2 Making dough

After we finished introducing ourselves, I started to explain in detail how we were about to do the dough together. By adding 40 grams of glu-

tinous rice flour and 10 grams of finest rice flour, participants started to weigh and put them in their bowls. After that, they could choose natural colors of choice to add color to the dough. The choices were sweet potatoes or carrots for orange color, beetroot juice for pink color, concentrated pandan ( a tropical plant that is widely used in Southeast Asian cuisine) for green color and taro ( a starchy root vegetable commonly used in Asian cuisine) for white color. Afterwards, we mixed everything together in the bowl with our hands until it became a nice rounded dough. While they were doing that, I informed them about how we, South East Asian, often use glutinous rice flour as the main ingredient for desserts and started to ask questions that were related to identity and migration.

There were 3 sub-steps in making dough for cooking Thai dessert, Bua Loy and I asked one question per step so that we all have enough time to share our stories

### 3.1.3.2.1 Mixing dough

As I mentioned above, we mixed two different rice flours together with our hands. While we were doing that I asked a question that is related to cultural identity.

Question: How do you define your identity?

Usually, when I asked, I did it in a natural way. It depends on each workshop and what we talked about but I tried to ask the questions at the right moment and did not interrupt the conversation flow. I often started first and described my answer. By asking this question, it encourages participants to engage in self-reflection, which is

the key goal of the workshop. Participants can gain deeper insights into themselves and their own cultural background by contemplating and articulating their sense of identity. Moreover, these questions facilitate meaningful discussions among participants, fostering an environment with mutual understanding and respect. When everyone shares their own personal definitions of identity, participants are able to listen not only to diverse definitions of identity but also the various ways identity can be constructed and understood. It facilitates cross-cultural exchange and appreciation.

### 3.1.3.2.2 Dough extraction

After we finished mixing and had nice rounded dough, the next step is to take out a small part from the big dough in order to create the shape that represents ourselves. Since it is a dough, participants are able to shape it in any form.

Question: How would you shape this part of the dough to represent yourself as a person?

This process of dessert making was not in the original traditional process. It  is an additional process that I added in this workshop because it can encourage self-reflection and personal expression in a creative and tangible form. This question is able to prompt participants to think deeply about their identities and how they can create a dough to represent themselves symbolically. Moreover, this process created a form of unique and personal storytelling. Participants are able to convey their cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and individual characteristics.

Figure 15. Discussing about each other's migrant journey. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

### 3.1.3.2.3 Making a small rounded dough

Following this step, we started to take a small part of the main dough in order to make a small ball with a diameter of approximately 1 cm. This step would take the longest time out of these three steps and it was the most important one because it is a traditional way to make Bua Loy. By making a lot of small rounded dough, it was a fairly simple process to do while sharing and listening to each other's stories.

Question: Would you mind sharing any challenges you face while living in Switzerland? (if the participant is Swiss, it can be any places abroad)

With this question, participants are able to open up a conversation that is related to the difficulties and obstacles that they face, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and bureaucracy. Moreover, this question is able to motivate participants to reflect on their experiences and express their struggles, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding among the group. By sharing these challenges, it is able to help participants to feel that they are not alone and promote a supportive community atmosphere. With addressing these topics, The workshop aims to create a safe space where participants feel understood and validated, enhancing their sense of community.

### 3.1.3.3 Cooking

When participants finished making small rounded dough, the next step was to mix all the colors together in one bowl in order to make it colorful like when we boil them. I started to put 750 milliliters of coconut milk and 2 spoons of palm sugar in the pot and heated them. Once coconut milk was boiled, each participant put the amount of small rounded dough that they would like to eat in the pot one by one because the pot is not so big. Once the small rounded dough was cooked, it would float up and they could take it out of the pot. Once everyone was done, I added warm coconut milk to their bowls. While doing that, the question was asked.

Question: Are there any challenges you face with food and dining in Switzerland?



Figure 16. Represting my life that my identity is a circle in different colors that will never be blended. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]



Figure 17. Small rounded dough we made [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 18. Putting small glutinous rice dough into the pot. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

This question was a transitional question in order to transit to the topic of dessert. It made the whole conversation feel smoother and more natural. It provided an opportunity for participants to share their personal experiences and difficulties in adapting to the local culinary culture. The conversion was able to enhance the cultural exchange aspect by sharing the differences and similarities in food practices between Switzerland and their home countries.

### 3.1.3.4 Eating

The most favorite time for everyone, eating, was a rewarding moment because participants had done Bua Loy by themselves and it was time to taste the dessert they worked hard for. During the eating period, I asked them about their home dessert and culture.

Question 1: Is there any dessert that reminds you of home or loved one? What memories bring you back?

Question 2 : Which dessert brings back the memories of holidays or celebrations in your family traditions or your culture?

These two questions had the purpose to tap into the emotional and nostalgic aspects of desert, which can bring strong memories and feelings back. Asking these questions for participants to share, the workshop creates an opportunity for them to connect deeply with their past and chance to share their personal stories. Such cultural exchange could therefore provide a sense of community.

### 3.1.3.5 Feedback

After the 5th workshop, I started to actively gather the feedback and contact every participant 2-3 days after the workshop by scheduling a call. If they did not feel comfortable or not available, I sent them a link to do the survey. There were 5 different questions including

Question 1: How do you feel about the workshop in general?

This question is important to gather the feedback on their overall experience and be able to help assess the effectiveness of the workshop.

Question 2: Did you learn something about Thai dessert?



Figure 19. It is time to try what we made. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

This question is able to help assess the educational part of the workshop. I would like to make sure that not only participants come and share their experience but also gain new experiences so that they can learn new things and skills.

Question 3: Does this workshop offer you more than just a cooking class? If so, why?

This question is able to make sure that they are able to gain something that is deeper than just a cooking class.

Question 4: During the Bite Abroad workshop, did you feel understood, confirmed, accepted or supported?

This question serves to evaluate the emotional and social impact of the session. It is able to assess whether or not Thai-dessert workshop can create an inclusive and empathetic environment. These questions allow me, as the facilitator, to understand if the workshop successfully created a sense of belonging and community among participants.

Question 5: Is there any room for improvement with this workshop?

This question is able to encourage participants to give constructive feedback in order to improve the better workshop in the future. It demonstrates to participants that their opinions and experiences are values, fostering an engagement in the process and being able to understand the aspects of the workshop that may not fully meet participants' needs or expectations.

All in all, collecting and reflecting on feedback from all of the participants that participated in the workshop is essential. In this way, the workshop continues to develop as responsive to people's input, and constructive or critical responses can be as important as positive ones. It can encourage participants to feel that their input matters. Through getting feedback and keeping iterating the workshop, Bit Abroad can continue to serve as a meaningful and impactful space for cultural interaction and self-reflective practice.

### 3.1.4 Creating a supportive and inclusive workshop environment

During the Bite Abroad workshop, I made sure that participants felt understood, confirmed, accepted, and supported by encouraging open di-

alogue and validating their experiences. Additionally, I promoted inclusivity and provided support through active listening, empathetic engagement, and encouraging feedback. By concentrating on these details, not only it encourages cultural exchange and personal reflection but also strengthens social bonds for all participants.

The workshop aims to ensure participants feel validated. Participants are able to express themselves freely and feel validated in their cultural expressions and personal stories, through open dialogue and shared experiences. Participants are able to have a practical understanding of Thai culture and deepening cultural understanding. They are able to foster a sense of community and strengthen bonds among participants from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, the workshop promotes an appreciation of cultural diversity.

## 3.2 Data Collection Methods

### 3.2.1 Participant Observation

In this approach, I ,as a researcher, observe during the workshop to capture the interactions, behaviors and body language of the participants. By actively participating and observing, I can gain insights into the group dynamics, engagement levels, and cultural exchanges that occur naturally during the workshop. Moreover, in every workshop, I had an assistant in order to capture activity and moments

### 3.2.2 Audio recording: During the workshop sessions

During the workshop session, audio recordings were made in order to capture the entire process from preparing to cooking, tasting, and discussions. It allows participants to express themselves freely and without judgment compared to recording a video. These recordings provide full conversations and interactions that took place. After audio recording, I transcribed every workshop. It allows me to have a thorough analysis of the dialogue, participant engagement, and helping to identify recurring themes. Recordings with the audio serves as a valuable reference for validating observations and analyzing data after.

### 3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews : the post-workshop for feedback

After the workshop, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gather in-depth feedback from participants with five different questions that were mentioned above. The interview allows participants to independently share their thoughts and feelings, and to express their opinions about each part of the workshop. This method helps in understanding the personal impact and the significance of the cultural exchanges. By interviewing, it will be able to provide qualitative data that highlight individual participant perspectives and the overall effectiveness of the workshop.

### 3.2.4 Surveys : Post-workshop Surveys

For this study, I used this method when participants were not available for follow-up calls and it is the secondary way to gather the feedback from participants. The survey allows participants to do so at their convenience. It is designed to capture detailed reflections on the workshop experience and gather their feedback in order to assess the effectiveness of the workshops, identifying areas for enhancement, and ensuring that the objectives of fostering cultural exchange, self-reflection, and community building are met.

Each of these methods contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the workshop's effectiveness and its role in fostering cultural identity, community building, and self-reflection among participants.

## 3.3 Ethical Considerations

### 3.3.1 Informed Consent

Before starting the workshop, I made sure that all participants provided informed consent, understanding the purpose of research and their rights as participants. Participants are given detailed information about what to expect during the workshop, how the conversion will be used as data, and asking for consent in order to use their pictures that show their face for thesis purposes.

### 3.3.2 Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality, by anonymising the data and securing all research materials is key. In this study, all interviews and survey answers are anonymised in their data sets, and participants are identified in the published products using pseudonyms.

### 3.3.3 Cultural Sensitivity

The workshop is designed with a deep respect for cultural diversity. I make sure that all activities and discussions are conducted in a manner that acknowledges and celebrates their cultural heritage. This involves being mindful of cultural norms and values, avoiding any actions or language that could be perceived as disrespectful or insensitive. I explicitly encourage activity and discussion among participants about their cultural traditions and lived experiences. I attempt to create a space that values and respects the participants and their differences. This striving makes the research stronger and creates a space that is positive and respectful for all participants.

## 3.4 Participants Recruitment

### 3.4.1 Starting with friends and acquaintances

The first five workshops, I invited participants that I knew personally to participate, friends and acquaintances that were willing to help me out to experiment and refine the way I was approaching the workshop. Only the third workshop was held at Ticino while me and my classmate were attending Studio 5, the rest of the first five workshops were held in the kitchen at my own place. By having friends and acquaintances participating in the kitchen at my place, the familiarity with people and setting helped me to be more relaxed and able to test new ideas, iterate and receive critical feedback in order to develop the new one.

### 3.4.2 Posting on Social Media

Once I had a well-defined structure and gained confidence in the workshop process, I started sharing on social media, Instagram specifically which helped to attract a bigger audience and a wider range of participants. I posted on my Insta-

gram account and through the slack channel at my work. I held five further workshops at the Zurich University of the Arts which had a more formal and professional setting.

### 3.4.3 Diversifying the group

After the first two workshops that I experimented with only Thai and another group, only locals, I made a commitment to diversify the group for each workshop by reaching out to people who had diverse kinds of experiences, professions and perspectives so that the conversations would have a dynamic and multifaceted flavor. It is essential to have such different viewpoints, perceptions and perspectives. The varied backgrounds of the participants not only enriched the dialogue but also provided valuable insights and learning opportunities for everyone involved, including myself.



Figure 21. Diversify group culturally. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]



Figure 20. Example of Bite Abroad Workshop flyer for inviting participants publicly . [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

### 3.4.4 Participant Diversity Across Workshops

Across the 10 workshops and 33 participants in total, the diversity of the participants enriched the discussions and learning experiences. The participants included two Russians, two Swiss, four Thais, eight Germans, as well as individuals from various background: Chinese, Swiss-Vietnamese, Korean, half German-half Spanish, half Moroccan-half Austria, half American-half German, Hungarian, French, half Japanese-half Swiss, half French-half Ivorian, Filipina, Colombian, Swedish, Vietnamese, Swiss-Egyptian, Swiss-Indian, Indonesian.

Through these methods, I was able to recruit participants to participate in 10 different workshops in total that were not only informative and engaging but also inclusive and reflective of the diverse community. The variety in participant backgrounds significantly contributed to the richness of the conversations, enhancing the overall value of the research.

Figure 22. Intentional table setting. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

# Chapter 4 : Prototype, iterating and Implementation the workshop

In the span of two months, there were ten workshops I conducted in total.

## 4.1 Experimentation:Workshop 1 & 2

It was the first two workshops that I wanted to experiment whether which group I should focus on for my workshop, either Thai or non-Thai. I got stuck and did not know how to start, what to start or what to ask. It was my first time making Thai dessert, Bua Loy and also the first time in a long time that I did something outside of my comfort zone. It was a great experiment and feedback I got from participants.

From workshop 1 with Thai participants, I realized that with only one ethnic group, the conversation may not be rich. Even though we come from the same country, we have different journeys but yet facing similar challenges. In workshop 2, I invited non-Thai participants. There are my friends from University that I could do the experiment with. The conversation of the workshop 2 was richer and able to have deeper conversation and participants started to share their unique personal story.



Figure 23. The very first workshop with my Thai friends. [Photo taken by Marvin, 2024]

Feedback to implement :

• Diversify participants : What I did not realize before in workshop 2 was that all of the participants are all Asian. From that workshop, I tended to diversify participants from different backgrounds and wouldn't separate the group.

• Make conversation longer : These two workshops, we had convewrsations only during the making process. When we were about to cook, the conversation naturally stopped because we all stood up and focused on cooking Bua Loy instead. After that, it was hard to come back and focus on the conversation that related to migration and identity again.



Figure 24. Workshop 2: Experimenting the workshop with friends. [Photo taken by Riva Pinto, 2024]

## 4.2 Prototyping & Iteration : Workshop 3 - 5

### 4.2.1 Workshop 3

It was in an interdisciplinary residence in a disused chocolate factory in the Ticino Alps. It was during Studio 5 and I decided to have a workshop there. I brought all of the ingredients there. With the previous workshops, there were 2-3 participants and I thought that it was the right amount in the workshop so that we all have time to share our own story and listen to others. However, with workshop 3, I decided to experiment with 7 participants. The group was too big and harder to moderate. Participants were able to share their story but not so deep.

Moreover, I decided not to tell them how much exactly they should put the glutinous flour and finest rice flour in. As a result, some participants had the dough smaller, therefore, they finished faster and needed to wait for others.

Feedback to implement from workshop 3:

- Having 3 - 4 participants : It is ideal to have 3-4 participants in order to have a rich conversation, however, with 2 participants, the workshop could happen but if more than that, it is harder for everyone to share their own experience and listen to others.
- An ingredient card : Having an ingredient card aside allows participants to have certainty in making Bua Loy. They would know exactly how many grams they should put in. In addition, there would not be an interruption between the conversation regarding the ingredients.
- Expanding the workshop audience: It was nice and I felt like I was in the safe zone when doing workshops with friends and people that I know. However, in order to test out whether the Bite Abroad workshop serves my objectives, I would step outside of my comfort zone and invite people I am not quite familiar with.
- Cooking in the middle: Often the conversation stopped after participants stood up in order to boil Bua Loy and it was difficult to bring them back to the same conversation due to the change of action.

### 4.2.2 Workshop 4

This time I personally invited a friend in Trends and Identity, a colleague from work and a friend of my boyfriend. Moreover, this time I intentionally set the table up by putting the pot in the middle and having printed ingredient cards out, as well as, having a better flow of asking questions, such as asking about migrant and identity while making Bua Loy together and asking about eating or food-related while boiling and eating together. From workshop 4, there was no feedback that related to the implementation of the workshop.

### 4.2.3 Workshop 5

It was prominent that the flow from workshop 4 was good, so did workshop 5.

Feedback to implement from workshop 5 :
- Having more personal questions related to dessert: While participants were boiling Bua

Loy, I asked "Is there any dessert in your culture that you celebrate?". One of the feedback I got was that the question is too broad and it would be better to ask a personal question related to dessert. Therefore, I changed to the current one which is "Is there any dessert that reminds you of home or loved one? What memories bring you back? and "Which dessert brings back the memories of holidays or celebrations in your family traditions or your culture?"
- Asking questions for the feedback: I learnt from this workshop that I should be able to ask for feedback not just wait for the feedback. After this workshop, I had a clear objective and knew what I would like to ask for feedback in order to assess my workshop's objective.

## 4.3 Implementation:Workshop 6 - 10

Workshop 6-10 took place at Zurich University of the Arts. I posted on my Instagram story and slack message at work in order to search for participants. Participants who contacted were genuinely interested in the topic and making Thai dessert. It felt like I organized a mini event every time I hosted at school.  Even though the flow of the workshop was developed, new challenges arose but rather external factors. I needed to communicate with every participant, photographer, as well as, reserve the room. I needed to ensure that there were snacks and drinks for participants. Sometimes participants canceled at the last minute, so I needed to be able to decide, take actions and change plans immediately.



Figure 25. Ingredients card [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 26. What makes us who we are? [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 27. Result of the Bua Loy [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

# Chapter 5 : Results

This section represents the results of the "Bite Abroad" workshops, including data analysis and key findings. It focuses on the various dimensions of cultural identity, migration, and personal reflection. The data analysis is organized into key themes, beginning with identity exploration, where participants reflect on their evolving cultural identities in the context of migration. The following part is the challenges participants faced while adapting to life in Switzerland, including issues related to social integration, food, career, and visa regulations. In the last part of data analysis, the theme is childhood memories which are related to desserts in preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sense of belonging. In addition to the results section, the key findings are summarized. It emphasizes the complexity of identity discovery, the significance of food in cultural engagement, and the importance of shared experiences in promoting cultural exchange and social support. Through these results, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' journeys and the impact of the workshops on their cultural and personal development.

## 5.1 Data Analysis

### 5.1.1 Identity exploration

Within "Bite Abroad" workshops, identity exploration gives participants an awareness of the meaning and expression of cultural and personal identities in the context of migration. These sessions also prompt participants to reflect on their unique lived experiences and how their identities have changed in response to living in another cultural setting. This section draws on the rich and complex narrative of "who we are", and aims to capture participants' process of struggle and adaptation as they negotiate their identity in multicultural contexts. It also focuses on the notion of cultural identity, and highlights the process where participants actively claim and maintain links with their heritage, yet also integrate into the host's reality through the adoption and adaptation of various elements of their host-culture. In this regard, cultural identity is fluid and dynamic in the context of global migration.

One of the participants who is Vietnamese identifies strongly with Finnish culture due to formative years spent in Finland, despite lacking citizenship, and feels disconnected from Swiss culture after four years of living in Switzerland.

"I think I struggle with this a lot. Since I was in Vietnam before I moved here. I don't feel like traditional eastern and I moved to Finland. I had been living there for 6 years. I identify myself as a Fin even though I don't have citizenship or anything. I had been living there for so long and I grew up personally...personality wise I grew up there. I have been living here for 4 years. I don't really feel like a Swiss. I don't feel like Switzerland is home. Not right now and not anytime soon. Personally, I feel like I am a Fin at heart. I feel like I care for people but do it silently. If I'm in the elevator and someone comes in, I feel weird. This little things that made me feel like a Fin" - Participant from workshop 8

Another participant navigates a complex identity shaped by mixed French and Ivorian heritage. She experiences varied perception in different countries and ultimately embracing a fluid and hybrid identity, rather than confining herself to a single national identity.

"I think about my identity a lot. I'm mixed: my mom is French, and my dad is Ivorian. I grew up in Ivory Coast, where most people are Black, and they perceived me as a white girl. So, I was always a

white girl. When I was in France, I was a Black girl. It's this thing where people perceive you differently depending on where you are. At the end of the day, you're just you. It was a bit hard for me to adjust when I was in France because I really didn't understand the way people were acting. For me, everything was so new, even little things, and I was really lost. But when I came to Switzerland, I was more used to it, all the little different behaviors and stuff. Today, I don't really like to say that I'm French because it feels like it's a colonizer, but I'm definitely partly French. I'm a mix of both Ivorian and French. I really want to travel again to another country, maybe live in Australia or Singapore. I think both places are really nice. So yeah, if someone asks me, I will say Ivorian, but I'm definitely French and Ivorian. And maybe more. I love it." - Participant from workshop 6

The participant from workshop 7 reflects on their identity beyond nationality, viewing themselves as a composite of personal characteristics and often using mind maps to understand their sense of self, especially after becoming a mother.

"I like what you asked me about... No, like.. Because I ask myself too about... I ask myself all the time after I become a mom. I feel like I feel lost. Like, who am I? And what I said is interesting how you define you because I never identify myself in that way, like nationality. Yeah, me neither. Because I am more like a whole, more like a character than national art. And there's like, you know, time that I just sit down and like have a notebook and I make a mind map of who I am." - Participant from workshop 7

The narratives from the "Bite Abroad" workshop show the fluidity and multifaceted nature of cultural identity in the context of global migration. The participant is Vietnamese by birth but identifies herself as Finnish shows how formative experiences in a particular culture setting can deeply influence one's sense of self, highlighting the ever-changing nature of cultural identity (Côté & Levine, 2002). In the similar way, the mixed-heritage participant navigates a complex identity reflecting the hybrid and fluid characteristics of cultural identity (Hall, 1990). While the participant making identity mind maps to better grasp who she is, specifically after becoming a mother, emphasizes the personal and internal process involved in identity formation, emphasizing personal characteristics over nationality (Schwartz, 2001). These stories collectively emphasize that cultural identity is an ongoing, living and dynamic process influenced by personal experiences, cultural inter-



Figure 28. Journey of Flavors. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

actions, and the context of migration. These narratives align with the theoretical framework, which views cultural identity as shaped by individual and collective experiences in a multicultural world. This framework is able to help us understand how participants in the "Brite Abroad" workshops maintain connections with their heritage while integrating elements of their host culture, reflecting the ongoing evolution of their identities.

## 5.1.2 Challenges of living and adapting life in Switzerland

Participants in the "Bite Abroad" workshops showed many challenges in adapting to life in Switzerland, which align with themes in acculturation theory. Social integration was often difficult due to tight local social networks and language barriers, particularly with Swiss German. The high cost of living and the bland, expensive dining options limited their engagement with local food culture. Moreover, career opportunities were limited and bureaucratic complexities in getting residency permits added stress. Together, these experiences speak to a complex process of acculturation where migrants attempt to adapt to a new culture while managing their heritage.

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### 5.1.2.1 Social integration

In the Thai Dessert workshop, Bite Abroad, participants pinpointed significant challenges in social integration within Switzerland.

One participant in workshop 9 who is Swiss-Egyptian mentioned a two-step challenge in adapting life in Lausanne. She expected it would be easy to visit her family and already felt familiar with the French-speaking region. However, she experienced a huge culture shock and uncertainty about her academic and personal direction when she moved there for her university.

"I mean, yes, I think I've had more of a two-step challenge because when I first moved to Lausanne, in my head, it was going to be easy. I mean, we used to visit all the time here with my family, and yeah, I was like, okay, it should be fine. I spoke to my family from the French side of Switzerland, so it felt okay, but it was like a big culture shock. I mean, I think part of it was also, you know, you're in uni, you're not sure if this is what you want to do." - Participant from workshop 9

A participant from workshop 8 struggled to find friends after moving to Visp in December 2019. Because of the tightly-knit Swiss German-speaking community and suspicions about their marriage. This challenge was unlike her previous experiences living abroad, therefore she needed to travel to other cities like Bern or Zurich in order to network with other people like in expat group meetups.

"I think the thing I struggle with the most is finding friends, actually. When I moved here, the first two years were during Covid. I moved here in December 2019, and then Covid hit. We were living in this tiny town, Visp. Everyone who goes to Zermatt needs to stop there. It's very tiny. There is a big pharmaceutical company there that already takes up half of the town. Not many people there speak English; they don't even speak High German. They mostly speak Swiss-German.I struggled to find friends because most of them were my ex's friends. They are Swiss, and they have such a close community. It's really hard to connect. Even though we could hang out, they would never include me in. They have such a closed circle. Most of the time, they just speak Swiss-German. It's really difficult. Also, because of my marriage, a lot of people think that I have different motives, so they don't get too close to me. They think that I didn't marry for love, so many of his friends don't want to get too close to me.It was really difficult for me for the first two years. I always needed to find the expat group or

something like that. There was none in Visp, so I needed to travel to Bern and Zurich to go to small meet-ups to find friends. That had never happened to me before. When I moved to Finland, I went there to study. I met people and hit it off really fast. Also, when I moved to Korea for an exchange, it was the same. But it's really difficult here in Switzerland." - Participant from workshop 8

These narratives suggest the complexities of social integration for migrants in Switzerland, where tight-knit communities, language barriers, and cultural misunderstanding presents many obstacles. These challenges align with acculturation theory, particularly in the domain of social interaction. It highlights both cultural adaptation and the preservation of heritage in navigating new social landscapes (Berry, 2005; Schwartz, 2001).

### 5.1.2.2 Food

Participants highlighted challenges related to food in Switzerland, finding the local cuisine bland and expensive. This lack of culinary diversity and authenticity limited their cultural engagement and impacted their cultural engagement.

One of the participants from workshop 3 expressed his disappointment with the expensive but poor-quality food in Swiss restaurants, leading him to lose interest in dining out and precooking at home

"Like you know, when you go eat out here to the restaurant, you are like, oh my god, this is so going to be good but I don't know why...even though you pay so much for the food, it's like so bad and I always feel like I paid so much, I will cook it better than this. When I realized this, I stop caring about the food here" Participant from workshop 3

A participant from workshop 5 reported that she couldn't find the creativity and authenticity of food in Zurich. The local international cuisine is bland and couldn't be representative of its origin, unlike their experiences in cities like Paris.

"I think for me, I was never attached to a particular style of cooking, but what I miss here, which I don't find in Zurich, is this creativity with food. I feel like if I go to a Thai place, or a Spanish place, or a Mexican place, or French, it's kind of bland. It's not really super authentic. If I go to Paris and visit the Japanese district or Chinatown, I'm pretty sure I will have an exceptional experience. But here, I can't think of a place I would recom-

mend to someone. There's maybe one or two Thai places." Participant from workshop 5

The experiences of participants emphasize the significant role of food in the acculturation process. They always feel disappointed that Switzerland's bland and expensive cuisine limited their cultural engagement and sense of belonging. According to Berry (2005), food is crucial in acculturation., where the migrants move between culture and heritage. The lack of authentic food options can lead to dependence on home-cooking, which may be able to bring the sense of isolation.

### 5.1.2.3 Career

One of the participants in the workshops stated significant career challenges, particularly for young foreign professional women, in Switzerland. She faced conservative attitudes, hierarchies at work, and gender inequality, making her professional integration more difficult.

"I think my biggest struggle in this country is that it's really conservative here compared to Sweden. Both in terms of gender and hierarchy, it's challenging. I also worked in Munich, and I really struggle with that. Especially for us, young foreign professional women, we are not in a power position here. We are the lowest of the low, and I struggle with that. I think it showed me a bit of life and privilege because I am educated, smart, and well-connected in Sweden. It's an equal culture there. Coming here to Switzerland, I got treated differently compared to what I'm used to. It's really hard. Sometimes, I think it's so hard that I wonder what I am doing here. That's my struggle, but otherwise, I think it's nice. I love going outdoors. In Sweden, we joke with each other easily, but not here in Switzerland. A lot of things are quite different from Sweden." - Participant from workshop 6

These career challenges highlight one of the struggles of adapting to Switzerland's professional environment. Migrants have to confront more conservative workplace norms and gender biases that act as barriers to their careers and feelings of belonging. This forms part of the acculturation framework and highlights the difficulties in balancing the adaptation to new cultural setting while maintaining one's professional identity and values (Berry, 2005).

### 5.1.2.4 Visa

Participants in the "Bite Abroad" highlighted significant challenges related to visa issues in Switzerland. Getting and renewing residency as well as work permits turned out to be a bureaucratic process. These challenges may impact their sense of stability and ability to fully integrate and plan their future in Switzerland.

A participant expressed frustration with the complexities of obtaining a work permit in Switzerland. As a result, the participant is considering looking for an opportunity from other European countries.

"Sometimes, I have a hard time in Switzerland. It's like why they are not choosing me. Why is everything so complicated? I now shifted my focus on moving to other European countries because I don't see that I will get a working permit anytime soon. " - Participant from workshop 7

An international student from a third country described the difficulty of navigating Switzerland's complex visa laws and regulations, facing unexpected issues with each permit renewal. Ultimately, this participant learn that there is always a solution.

"My life is pretty difficult here as an international student from a third country. There are so many laws and regulations that I only know as I go along with it. It drives me crazy every time I need to renew my permit because there is always something unexpected happening or I didn't know something that I needed to prepare. What I learned from the past two years was that, there is always a solution" - Participant workshop 10

All in all, The bureaucratic complexities of getting and renewing residency, as well as, work permits makes participants feel instability and hider full integration and future planning. These problems that occur are in the broader difficulties that migrants always encounter. They need to adapt to new life in a new country, as outlined in the framework of acculturation. The frustration and uncertainty made participants reflect the need for more supportive visa processes to makes smoother cultural adaptation and integration.

### 5.1.3 Childhood memories related to dessert

In the "Bite Abroad" workshops, one of the last activities was eating together and sharing par-

ticipants' childhood memories. These sweet treats were not as food but as bridges to culture, heritage and family traditions. Dessert is fondly connected to memories of happiness, moments of chatting with family, and cultural celebrations from their past. This exploration highlights the powerful role of food in preserving cultural identity and fostering a sense of belonging across different stages of life.

A participant recalled her childhood memory of feeling sick during a car trip with her grandmother in the Philippines. Her grandmother gave her homemade mint candy, an early moment related to dessert that has fondly stayed with her ever since.

"I remember when I was younger, my grandma and I went to another province in the Philippines and I didn't feel well in the car. She gave me the mint candy that she made by herself. I still remember till these days. That's my childhood memories that related to dessert" - Participant from workshop 7

A participant shared a cherished memory of his mom's chocolate mousse. He described that it is so delicious and it is his comfort food ever since

"Chocolate mousse for me. My mom always cooks it. It is so delicious that my cousin needs to call my mom and ask her when she will do it again. It's that yummy. It's also my comfort food." - Participant from workshop 10

A participant fondly remembered having vanilla pudding every time when he was with his grandmother.

"omg, for me I really thought of the vanilla pudding. We did it a lot and baked with my grandma like both sides. It's like Griss pudding. It needs to be like the right pudding powder. It's more solid. When I was in Germany, I usually brought it back to Switzerland." - Participant from workshop 8

The participants' recollections show that desserts from childhood are connected to heritage and memories. These sweet treats serve more than just food; they are embodiments of cultural memory and a connection to their families. Cultural memory is an important tool for maintaining a group's identity and fostering a sense of belonging. Sutton (2001) emphasizes that sensory experiences, such as the taste and smell of food, play an important role in provoking deep emotions and memories, thus embodying cultural heritage and personal history.
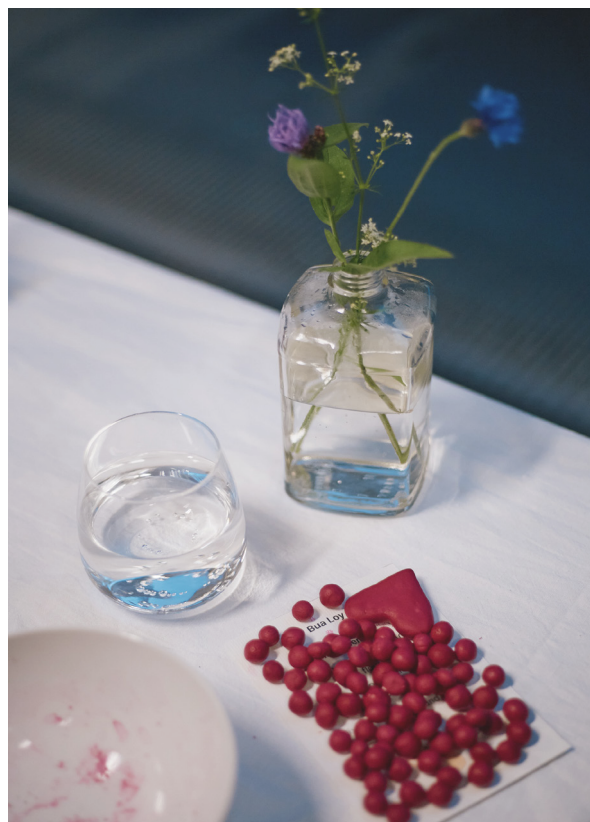


Figure 29. Flower, heart and small rounded ball. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

## 5.2 Key findings

The "Bite Abroad" project reveals important insights into the experiences of migrants in Switzerland through the lens of culinary practices. By doing Thai Dessert workshops, this study emphasizes the profound connection between dessert, cultural identity, and community building. The key findings emphasize the complexity of identity discovery, the challenges to cultural adaptation in Switzerland, the significance of dessert in evoking nostalgia, and the importance of shared experiences in promoting cultural exchange and social support.

### 5.2.1 Cultural identity

The "Bite Abroad" workshops provided a unique platform for participants from diverse cultural backgrounds to share their personal stories while making Thai dessert, Bua Loy, together. This sharing was important in exploring and understanding their cultural identities. For example, a participant with a mixed French and Ivorian heritage navigated complex identities shaped by varied cultural contexts. As she shared, "When I was in France, I was a Black girl. It's this thing where people per-

ceive you differently depending on where you are. At the end of the day, you are just you" . This aligns with Hall's (1990) notion of cultural identity as a fluid and hybrid construct, constantly being reshaped through memory, narrative, and representation.

### 5.2.2 Identity exploration and self-discovery

The workshops facilitated deep self-exploration and discovery among participants. The interactive nature of the Thai dessert-making process prompted participants to reflect on their identities and cultural backgrounds. One participant expressed, "I feel like I care for people but do it silently...This little thing made me feel like a Finn". This process is supported by Erikson's theory, where personal identity is defined by a coherent sense of self derived from personal goals, values, and beliefs. The workshops enabled participants to articulate and reflect on their cultural identities, which is a critical aspect of personal growth and self discovery.

### 5.2.3 Challenges of cultural adaptation in Switzerland

Participants addressed several common challenges in adapting to life in Switzerland, such as visa issues, food, career and establishing a social life. One participant shared, "It drives me crazy every time I need to renew my permit because there is always something unexpected happening or I didn't know something that I needed to prepare." With this, it aligns with acculturation theory, which examines the mutually constitutive nature of cultural- and self-change as individuals adjust to a new cultural context. Participants' experiences illustrate the wider dynamics of cultural adaptation and integration.

### 5.2.4 Self-reflection

Participants encouraged self-reflection among participants. Participants could explore and articulate their identities. Through the process of making and sharing Thai desserts, Bua Loy, participants engaged deeply with their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. One participant gave feedback saying during the workshop when they needed to create something that represented themselves from dough. They gave feedback that it was a moment to actually think about what it is that represents them as a person. Moreover, one of

the participants reported that she had a moment of reflection when she arrived home and thought about the workshop.

### 5.2.5 Significance of food in cultural identity

Food offered a way for participants to connect with their ethnic and heritage identities. By participating in the workshop and going through questions, it evoked strong memories and a sense of belonging among participants. This aligns with Sutton's (2001) perspective on food and memory, where sensory experiences of food evoke cultural and social memories, reinforcing identity and heritage.

### 5.2.6 Sharing experience and cultural exchange

The workshops facilitated rich cultural exchange. Participants are able to gain insights into each other's cultural backgrounds. This exchange was not only just about sharing food but also about sharing life experiences and cultural practices. For example, talking about greetings in different countries highlighted the diversity in cultural practices and fostered mutual respect and understanding. This reflects the importance of cultural identity theory, where sharing and understanding cultural narratives play a crucial role in personal and collective identity formation.

### 5.2.7 Community building and social support

Bite Abroad workshops were able to successfully foster a sense of community and social support among participants. They felt understood, confirmed, and accepted during and after the workshop. One participant gave feedback saying, "I felt supported and understood during the workshop, which made me feel more connected to others and people's stories as well". This sense of community is essential for social integration and psychological well-being., as highlighted by the theory of commensality, where sharing meals strengthens social bonds and promotes cultural transmission confirmed.

Figure 30. Thai dessert across borders. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 31. Hammerhead shark, a symbol of bravery. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

perspective that cultural identities are not fixed but are constantly being formed and reformed through memory, narrative and representation.

The Thai-dessert workshops facilitate a deeper exploration of cultural identity. Participants were able to engage in making and discussing Thai desserts. Schwartz (2001) suggested that identity involves the internalization of values and beliefs from multiple contexts. Thai dessert, Bua Loy, became the medium for the participants to express these values and beliefs, thus enhancing and exploring their cultural identities in a supportive environment.

## 6.2 Migrant experience

At the workshops, participants shared their migrant experiences, offering insights on their challenges and strategies in terms of "cultural adaptation" or "integration". One of the approaches to migration is acculturation theory. Berry (2005) provides a useful framework for understanding these experiences. On the other hand, participants reported that it is difficult to socially integrate to Swiss culture due to language barriers and the tightly-knit Swiss people. For example, one participant told us in the workshop that she struggled to integrate into Swiss society despite living here for five years.

## 6.3 Engaging self-reflection

Engaging participants in self-reflection was another important goal of the 'Bite Abroad' workshop. By asking questions to define their identity, personal story, and discussing symbolic representation of their identity through dough's shapes. This process is in line with embodiment theory. Participants are able to connect with their cultural identity on a sensory level and able to facilitate deeper self-reflection and cultural understanding (Varela, Thompson, & Roach, 1991)

The making and sharing Thai desserts offered participants a material way to engage with their food memory on sensory levels. The hands-on approach to exploring identity through food highlights the significance of sensory experiences in the formation and expression of cultural memories (Sutton, 2001).

## 6.4 Fostering a sense of community

The Bite Abroad workshop was designed to foster a sense of community among participants.

# Chapter 6 : Discussions

The "Bite Abroad" thesis has the purpose to design and implement Thai-dessert workshops that foster a comfortable and inclusive environment where participants could engage in self-reflection, share their cultural identities and migrant stories. Evidence indicates that the workshops met these objectives as suggested by the higher levels of curiosity for other cultures, the validation they felt as migrants, and the sense of community that was generated in the workshops.

## 6.1 Sharing cultural identity

One of the core objectives of the "Bite Abroad" workshops was to create a space for participants who are migrants in Switzerland to share their cultural identities. Qualitative data from participant observation and semi-structured interviews suggest that the workshops successfully encouraged participants to reflect and express their cultural backgrounds. For example, participants of mixed heritage ('I am French and Ivorian') described how their identity was transformed in different cultural settings. This aligns with Hall's (1990)

The practice of commensality, or eating together, played an important role in this process. Commensality theory describes how shared meals with others strengthen social relationships and foster a sense of belonging to a particular group (Fischler, 2011)

Over the course of the workshops, participants shared not only the Thai dessert they made but also their personal stories and cultural experiences. By sharing their food with others, they were taking part in a communal practice that cut across their diverse cultural backgrounds, allowing for respectful and mutually understanding relationships to form. Their communal act of eating allowed them to cultivate the kind of supportive community that allows for an individual to feel understood, confirmed and accepted.

## 6.5 Feeling validated

One of the aims of this workshop is to make the participants feel validated, including to feel understood, accepted and confirmed. Participants often remarked on how sharing their personal and cross-cultural narratives provided them with a sense of validation and acknowledgment. One of the participants mentioned during the feedback session "It is nice that we are talking about it. I feel like I can share my story without any judgment". This recognition is especially valuable for migrants, who can easily feel like outsiders when they are in their host country. In the workshops, their experiences were heard, respected and even cherished.

For instance, speakers described how adapting their life in Switzerland was difficult and speaking about the pressure aloud in the workshop made them feel less alone, an acknowledgment of their experience. Berry's (2005) discussion of successful acculturation, which promises migrants sense of belonging to, and being accepted by, the cultural context wherein they are adapting to. Within the workshop environment, the participants can express freely, in the atmosphere that is multural and respected.

## 6.6 Curiosity about other cultures

Lastly, from these workshops participants were curious to learn about another culture. The diverse and multicultural composition of the participants in the workshops, together with the interactive and interesting nature of these small events, encouraged cross-cultural learning and sparked off cross-cultural dialogue. One of the participants mentioned "I love that it's like more than just a cooking class but it's cultural insights and made me more curious about other cultures too". The experience of cooking a dessert that is not Swiss, but from different countries, was also beneficial in making participants feel the freedom to exchange ideas and stories. It has served as a neutral culinary, providing a space that fostered greater inter cultural dialogue. Participants were able to feel less constrained by local norms of behavior. They were freer to share and learn from each other about their different cultural traditions. As a result, participants became increasingly curious to study and experience other cultures after having participated in these workshops.

In conclusion, the "Bite Abroad" workshops effectively met their goals of creating a supportive environment for cultural exchange, self-reflection, and community building. Thai dessert served as an excellent medium for the participants. It is able to break down cultural barriers and begin building bonds. The findings support theoretical perspectives on cultural identity, acculturation, embodiment and commensality and indicate the potential for interactive culinary workshops to facilitate cultural integration and understanding in multicultural settings.

Figure 32. Joyful cooking moment. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]



Figure 33. Cultural Conversations. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

Figure 34. Bite Abroad in the Garden. [Photo taken by Helena Börjesson, 2024]

# Chapter 7 : Conclusions

## 7.1 Summary of findings

The "Bite Abroad" workshops have demonstrated that there is a strong impact of culinary practices on the exploration and expression of cultural identity among migrants who live in Switzerland. People who attended the workshops were able to engage in deep self-reflection and cultural exchange through the making and sharing of Thai dessert, Bua Loy. The complexities of identity and the difficulties of cultural adjustment are emphasized.

The workshops reveal how food can help participant relive memories, build communities around one another, providing a safe place for people to share their migration stories and cultural background.

## 7.2 Future work

For future research, it could be a series of Thai-dessert workshops that is a longitudinal study. It may be able to provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of such workshops on cultural adaptation and identity formation. Moreover, this workshop can incorporate digital tools and virtual workshops in order to extend the reach and accessibility of these cultural integration programs. In addition, future work could also explore collaborating with the Zurich Migration office or a refugee camp in Zurich. It will help in terms of further support migrants and refugees in their cultural adaptation process. The potential collaboration will be able to provide direct benefits to migrants communities through integration programs and workshops.

## 7.3 Final thoughts

The "Bite Abroad" workshops have provided both the participants and myself with invaluable insights and experiences. For the participants, these workshops offered a safe and inclusive space for them to share their unique stories, reflect on their cultural identities, and be able to connect with others who have similar experiences. The making and sharing of the Thai desserts provided an opportunity for sharing personal memories and a sense of belonging. They have also created a community of mutual support and understanding.

For me, facilitating these workshops has sparked my curiosity in the power dynamics of cultural adaptation and the formation of identity, the capacity of empathy, listening and inclusive design to create human-centric interactions, and the centrality of the superpower that is dessert to cross-cultural exchange and find common ground between people from different cultures. Moreover, facilitating workshops allows me to be able to step outside of my comfort zone on many levels from starting to design the workshop and developing it to inviting participants publicly and organizing the event on my own.

All in all, the "Bite Abroad" workshops reveal how interactive and participatory approaches promote cultural integration and understanding. They have demonstrated that through welcoming and honoring our varied cultural heritages, we can establish more resilient, compassionate communities that benefit from other distinct experiences and viewpoints of each individual.

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