

Master thesis

‘NOW I HAVE LOTS OF MONEY BUT I HAVE NO TIME TO FINISH MY DREAM’

Emotion Expression in Student’s Possible Selves

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Abstract

Feelings and emotions provide us with the facility to gain self-knowledge and display a crucial means to determine how we make sense of daily events. They derive from personal evaluations which come into existence by what we perceive as important: Aspirations, goals or concerns. Different findings suggest that the way emotions are elicited, understood and acted upon is influenced by a certain sociocultural context. The emotions we express are therefore adjusted to the cultural norms we internalized since early childhood. Possible selves display a means to visualize oneself in the future and hence impersonate our aspirations, goals and concerns. Usually imbedded in future narratives, they allow to rebuild the self in accordance with one's goals and virtues. Future narratives also allow to study personal sensemaking with reference to culture which is an important factor to consider, as 'a self can never be described without reference to those who surround it'. In context of a progressing globalization, cross-cultural interaction is promoted more than ever before and also suggests a globalization of cultures. In line with that, literature argues that this development likewise produces 'hybrid identities'. We qualitatively analyzed 33 letters from the future which have been written by international students during a summer school at the University of Twente. In order to investigate our main research question of 'How do international students express their emotions in possible selves?' we adopted an explorative approach. We detected three different patterns of emotion expression that display the student's emotional states towards their expectations. Regarding the influence of culture, we did not find differences in emotion expression on basis of national identity or cultural background. The data also did not show evidence for hybrid identities. Instead, the participant group rather displays a homogenous subculture. Those results provide insights into how international students face their future and can possibly display a useful tool to be applied in career counseling and personality development. It would be useful to conduct future research in order to gather knowledge about the student's motivations on why they wrote the letter the way they did. This can be executed by means of a focus group discussion in which the participants will be invited to comment on their motivation behind the letter.

Samenvatting

Gevoelens en emoties bieden ons de mogelijkheid om zelfkennis op te doen en zijn een cruciaal middel om te bepalen hoe we dagelijkse gebeurtenissen begrijpen. Emoties komen voort uit persoonlijke evaluaties die ontstaan door wat wij als belangrijk beschouwen: aspiraties, doelen of zorgen. Verschillende bevindingen suggereren dat de emoties die we uitdrukken beïnvloed worden door een bepaalde sociaal-culturele context. Dit is aangepast aan de culturele normen die we sinds de vroege kinderjaren hebben geïnternaliseerd. Zo genoemde 'possible selves' zijn een middel om zich in de toekomst te visualiseren en verbeelden dus onze aspiraties, doelen en zorgen. Meestal ingebed in toekomstverhalen, laten ze toe om het zelf opnieuw op te bouwen in overeenstemming met iemands doelen en deugden. Toekomstverhalen laten ook toe om persoonlijke zingeving te bestuderen met betrekking tot cultuur, wat een belangrijke factor is om te overwegen, aangezien het feit dat 'een zelf nooit beschreven kan worden zonder verwijzing naar degenen die het omringen'. In de context van een voortschrijdende globalisering wordt interculturele interactie meer dan ooit bevorderd en suggereert dus ook een globalisering van culturen. In overeenstemming hiermee stelt de literatuur dat deze ontwikkeling eveneens 'hybride identiteiten' produceert. Op een kwalitatieve manier analyseerden we 33 brieven vanuit de toekomst, geschreven door internationale studenten tijdens een zomerschool aan de Universiteit Twente. We hebben een exploratieve aanpak toegepast om een antwoord op onze hoofdonderzoeksvraag 'Hoe uiten internationale studenten hun emoties in 'possible selves' te vinden. We ontdekten drie verschillende patronen van emotie-expressie die de emotionele toestanden van de student weergeven in overeenstemming met hun verwachtingen. Wat de invloed van cultuur betreft, vonden geen verschillen in emotie-expressie op basis van nationale identiteit of culturele achtergrond. De gegevens toonden ook geen bewijs voor hybride identiteiten. In plaats daarvan vertoont de deelnemersgroep eerder een homogene subcultuur. Deze resultaten bieden inzichten in hoe internationale studenten hun toekomst tegemoetzien en kunnen mogelijk een nuttig hulpmiddel zijn voor toepassing in loopbaanbegeleiding en persoonlijkheidsontwikkeling. Het zou nuttig zijn om toekomstig onderzoek uit te voeren om kennis te verzamelen over de motivaties van de studenten, de brief op een bepaalde manier te schrijven. Dit kan worden uitgevoerd door middel van een focusgroep discussie waar studenten hun ervaringen kunnen uitwisselen die zij tijdens het schrijfproces hebben opgedaan en hun motivatie achter de brief kunnen becommentariëren.

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'Now I have lots of money but I have no time to finish my dream'

Emotion Expression in Student's Possible Selves

1. Introduction

The study at hand intends to gather insights into international student's expression of emotion in possible selves. Firstly, we give an introduction on emotions and highlight their utility. Related to that, we introduce future narration as a mean to gain insights into one's expression of emotion and present the concept of 'possible selves'. Further, we present cultural similarities as well as differences in the expression of emotion and stress why it is useful to also study culture through narratives.

Feelings and emotions determine our sense of self (Lupton, 1998). They provide us with the facility to gain self-knowledge and display a crucial mean to determine how we make sense of daily events (Denzin, 1984). For the purpose of this study we adopt the following distinction: a feeling describes an inner sensation which is caused by a certain stimulus and shaped by earlier made experiences. An emotion is the outward expression of that feeling. This expression can be genuine, but it can equally be adjusted in order to meet social standards (Ekman, 1971). Emotions build up images, together with behaviors and intentions, that we apply and refer to in certain situations for personal sense-making. Those images give rise to the unconscious, thereby representing deep-rooted concerns and issues (Whitmont, 1969), and aim to trigger actions as well as thoughts (Chodorow, 1999). Emotions are therefore caused by personal evaluations. Those evaluations come into existence by what we perceive as important: Aspirations, goals or concerns (Oatley, 1999).

Possible Selves

Future narratives allow the writer to rebuild the self in accordance with those aspirations, goals and concerns (Sools & Mooren, 2012) and represent a means which invites to occupy oneself with so called 'possible selves'. Possible selves are representations of different selves in the future which are based on a representation of the self in the past. A possible self may therefore take the shape of what we fear to become in the future, what we are likely to become in the future or what we desire to become in the future. The construct of possible selves therefore gives guidance to the present self and serves as incentive for future behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Although possible selves are said to be based on earlier made experiences, they may equally

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illustrate a self which has not been approved in social interaction, yet, but rather be a reflection of one's potential (Epstein, 1973). Markus and Nurius (1986) introduce possible selves as 'cognitive manifestation' (p.1) that visualizes our aspirations, goals and concerns. They are hence closely related to emotions. Possible selves differ from the self in the present and are separable from the state we are in at the time of writing (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Therefore, we create a timespan by constructing a possible self which reaches from past experiences over present state to future self. The emotional state in the presence might impact the way that we visualize ourselves in the future: Fredrickson (1998, 2001) argues that positive emotions have a great influence on our cognition and attention which she introduces as the broaden-and-build-model. Apart from the fact that positive emotions broaden our attention and cognition, they also seem to be related to an increase of psychological abilities, such as creativity, self-acceptance and optimism (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Applying this theory to future narratives, one can assume that a person who experiences positive emotions at the time of writing will be better able to look ahead. In contrast, a person which is distressed in the presence might be restricted in facing the future. Those findings imply that the emotions we experience in the present might have an influence on the possible self we create in future narratives.

Independent and Interdependent Selves

Different findings suggest that the way emotions are elicited, understood and acted upon is influenced by a certain sociocultural context (Ekman, Sorensen, & Friesen, 1969; Izard, 1969; Lupton, 1998). The emotions we express are accordingly adjusted to the cultural norms we internalized since early childhood (Ekman et al., 1969). Literature hereby often makes a distinction between Eastern and Western cultures. It is stressed that Western cultures commonly adopt an individualistic worldview. People deriving from those cultures are said to mainly focus on the self and to appreciate one's autonomy. It is valued to differ from others and to attend to the self. In comparison, the Eastern view of the self is said to be more collectivistic. People in these cultures strive for cohesiveness and prioritize harmony within the group. They are said to rather want to fit in than stand out (Veroff, 1983).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) introduce the just described concepts respectively as an independent and interdependent view of the self. Considering that those concepts have an influence on the nature of individual experiencing (Geertz, 1975) they suggest that the expression

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of emotions in Eastern cultures is shaped by taking into account the reactions of others: by understanding oneself as part of a whole, actions are widely determined by the perceived thoughts and feelings of fellows. In line with that, it is proposed that people rather follow other-serving motives. This is apparently reflected in the emotions that are expressed: shame, sympathy or the feeling of communion, for instance, acknowledge one's view of the self as part of a collective (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They may be summarized as 'other-focused' emotions.

People deriving from Western cultures, by contrast, strive to express one's personal characteristics in order to become independent from others. Actions are therefore widely determined by one's own thoughts and feelings and follow self-serving motives. Generally, the emotions expressed and the intenseness in which they appear as well as their prevalence apparently depend strongly on one's view of the self. Anger, frustration or pride, for instance, refer to one's internal needs, goals and abilities and serve to maintain and confirm the self as independent entity. Emotions that correspond to that may be summarized as 'ego focused' emotions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Although the above described findings are still popular today, literature questions if such a clear distinction is appropriate to be made especially in the time of progressive globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Castells 1996). Considering the fact that our generation and all those who followed grew up in a globalized context, one might assume to be shaped by a multiplicity of cultures. It no longer displays an exception to go abroad to study, learn foreign languages and travel the world or as Arnett Jensen (2003) summarizes: 'with increasing migrations, worldwide media disseminations, multinational corporations, tourism travel, and so forth, diverse peoples interact with one another more than ever' (p.1). In light of that statement, it seems to be dubious if cultures are actually 'distinct' in today's entity and if one can deduce the expression of different emotions from that. In the following we give a clarification for culture as a more fluent construct.

Culture and the Self

'A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it' (Taylor, 1989, p.35). Therefore, identity defines itself through a framework which is built up by things or groups we commit ourselves to and which again helps us to determine what is good or bad, important or unimportant (Taylor, 1989). We seem to be crucially shaped by the people we are surrounded by. One might get the impression that there is a causality between culture and behavior. It is often

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assumed that people behave in a certain way because of their culture. This is quite a simplified view on culture and does hardly live up to the dynamic construct, it actually is (van de Vijver & Hutschemaekers, 1990). Apart from that, Voestermans and Verheggen (2007) argue that culture has no motivational power and therefore cannot explain or *cause* human behavior. We rather behave according to the norms and habits within a cultural group in order to claim to be part of that group. Those norms and habits are internalized as a non-instructive kind of learning: learning from watching the behavior of peers and being implicitly or explicitly revised. It is about what makes this group different from others and what is its importance to me (Bruner, 1990). Further, one can hardly determine a cultural community by the borders of a country as it is usually more differentiated. (Voestermans & Verheggen, 2007): Beliefs and practices may still vary within communities on basis of generation, gender, social class or individual differences (Arnett Jensen, 1997; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000). Dependent on the viewpoint, there are about 160 definitions to find (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Within this paper, we shall regard culture from a psychological point of view. In cultural psychology it is focused on what influence culture has on the individual and vice versa (van de Vijver & Hutschemaekers, 1990). The just presented findings suggest that culture has never been a construct that could be easily defined. As we find ourselves in the era of globalization, it is questionable if earlier made distinctions are still applicable today. Arnett Jensen (2003) suggests that adolescents in particular witness a transition to a multicultural world. We pursue that notion in the following.

Hybrid Identities

Adolescence¹ is a crucial stage of life in which our identity is shaped to a great extent. Erikson (1968) describes the adolescent stage as determining turning point in which different worldviews need to be reconciled with the self. Among others, culture, religion and peers give guidance during this period. Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus and Miller (1998) introduced the concept of cultural identity which they describe as 'taking on worldview beliefs and engaging in behavioral practices that unite people within a community' (as cited in Arnett Jensen, 2003, p. 2). Worldview hereby refers to one's relation to other members of society, human nature and religious as well as moral norms. To form a cultural identity means to decide to which cultural

¹ Sources differ in their definition on which age range is included in the term adolescence. Therefore, some participants within this study might have already passed this stage of life. Nevertheless, we argue that the experiences made with regard to culture in that specific stage of life might have shaped them to the person they are today and will therefore still be of relevance.

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community you belong. They argue that this formation has special relevance in times of globalization as people are exposed to a variety of cultures. As a result, they state that cultural identity formation becomes a 'conscious process'. In line with that, Arnett (2002) argues that globalization entails to produce *hybrid identities*.

Globalization is said to have a special impact on adolescence (Dasen, 2000; Schlegel, 2001). The established media culture provides a fast diffusion of information and ideas. Considering that adolescents display the main stakeholders of those technologies, they may be the first to be influenced by this diffusion (Arnett Jensen, 2003). Despite the established matureness and the ability to think critically, adolescents are still responsive to new beliefs and ideas in comparison to other generations (Arnett, 2002). Apart from the diffusion of cultures through media, adolescents do increasingly experience an exchange of cultures through first-hand contact (Arnett Jensen, 2003). All in all, it is questionable what impact the 'conscious process' of cultural identity formation has on the distinction of cultures and if at all, to which cultural norms emotion expression is then adjusted. Finally, adolescents display an interesting target group to further investigate the expression of emotion in the light of culture as they represent the main stakeholders of globalization.

Narratives as a Way to Study Culture

According to Hammack (2011), culture is rather something that is talked about, either to oneself or to others, than something that is actually embedded within a person. Culture therefore arises from things we do. The 'linguistic production', as Hammack (2011) introduces, serves as a reinterpretation of the sensations we are exposed to and mediates the experiences we make. He argues that, only through narratives, one becomes a cultural being. On basis of this assumption he highlights the importance to not only investigate culture through observable rituals, manners and social practices but essentially study personal sensemaking with reference to culture by means of narratives (Hammack, 2011). Bhatia (2017) agrees upon that and states that 'narration and storytelling take us to the realm of action, imagination, and meaning-making and give us insights into why people, who are shaped by their social locations, tell particular stories to themselves, to others, or to specific audiences' (p.18). Therefore, the story that is told can never stand independently but is highly constrained by a person's socio-cultural environment (Bhatia, 2017). We hence examine cultures when examining narratives (Freeman, 1997).

Aim of the Current Study

The current study aims to gain insights into student's narrative expression of emotion in possible selves through a collection of future narratives. The main research question we hereby pursue is 'How do international students express their emotions in possible selves?' We also consider what impact globalization and the resulting exposure to a multiplicity of cultures has on the narrative expression of emotion. To find an answer to those questions we apply a qualitative analysis of the data.

2. Methods

The current study involves narrative data which will be analyzed by means of qualitative data analysis methods. We applied an explorative approach.

Data Collection

The data was collected during the international summer school 'CuriousU' in 2017 at the University of Twente. This summer school takes place every year and aims to inspire and enable students to gain insights into different fields. The duration is ten days and it is accessible for international students. All activities related to the summer school are held in English, therefore the participants are expected to speak the English language. A certificate for proof is not necessary, though. It is focused on students in their second/ third year of bachelor or first-year master students. Nevertheless, students that do not meet those requirements can participate, too. In general, the students are expected to bear the costs for participation which add up to approximately 800 Euro for housing, participation, material and food plus individual travel expenses. The students taking part in the summer school of 2017 came from the following countries: Eleven participants from China, respectively two from Russia, Greece, Germany, Colombia and Mexico and respectively one from Taiwan, Bulgaria, Czechia, India, Netherlands, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Turkey, Sweden, Italy and USA. The exact distribution of gender is not known. It can be assumed that the participant's age ranged between 18- to 30- years dependent on the progress of their studies.

The program within the 'CuriousU' summer school consists of a variety of academic courses, inspirational speakers, music, sports, as well as theatre. One of the academic courses the students could choose from in the summer school of 2017 was the track of 'Health and Happiness'. Within the scope of this course, the students were asked to write a letter from the

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future which is an instrument developed in 2012 by Sools & Mooren. The participants were instructed to write a letter which is either addressed to themselves or to another person in which they should imagine themselves in a chosen time and place in the future. It was requested that the imagined situation is perceived as positive and that the struggles they may experience today have been overcome at that point in the future. Finally, the letter was supposed to end with an advice the participant favorably gives to him-/herself. After all participants finished writing they were invited to read their letter aloud in small groups. Also, they were asked if they would release their letter for research purpose. In case of approval, they were handed an informed consent to be signed.

Data Analysis

The gathered data was qualitatively analyzed by means of a bottom up approach. While analyzing the letters with regard to the research question, we came across further aspects which seemed to enrich our research and allowed to analyze the letters in a broader picture. Therefore, we chose to extend the research question by the following sub questions: 'Can a temporal differentiation in the expression of emotion be made'. The second sub question focuses on the self in present and future and analyzes 'What is characteristic for present and future self and does this either depict an independent or interdependent self?'. The third sub question is 'What is the subjective distance between present and future self?'. The fourth sub question is 'What is the relation between the expression of emotion and the self?'. The analysis was therefore divided into five steps which all aimed to interpret the data in light of a different (sub) research question.

Firstly, we were aiming to find reappearing patterns with regard to the expression of emotion to subsequently distribute the letters into different clusters. Apart from the direct expression of emotion through the first-person perspective, we also retrieved emotions which were indirectly expressed through grammatical construction, word choice or context. We respectively give an example of all kinds in the following. A direct expression of emotion, for example, would be: 'I'm not happy now' (cluster 3, letter number 4) or 'everyone is healthy and happy, and I feel grateful to my parents' (cluster 1, letter number 4). An example for the expression of emotion through context can manifest itself as in the following example: 'You have imagined this moment thousands of times and now it will come true' (cluster 1, letter number 9). Whereas 'We freaking did it!! You finally made it out of college and you're officially a psychologist now.' (cluster 2, letter number 3) is an example for an indirect expression of

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emotion through grammatical construction. Finally, a possible example for an expression of emotion through word choice would be: 'I sat there like an empty nutshell' (letter type 3a).

In order to analyze the letters with regard to the first sub question, we particularly tried to link the emotions expressed to a time dimension to subsequently be able to make a distinction between the emotional state of present and future self. We thus analyzed the tenses used. As the letters were written from a future perspective, the use of the present tense indicates that the respective paragraph is occupied with the future self, for example 'I have just settled into my new house where an amazing thing just happened.' (cluster 2, letter number 1). Since the letter is supposed to address the present self or another person in the present, an approach in the second-person or first-person plural mode suggests that it concerns the present self, for example 'finally you could present your research presentation in front of hundreds of people from different countries' (cluster 2, letter number 4) or 'remember that we still don't give a flying fuck about xxx' (cluster 1, letter number 1). By this, we were able to make a distinction in time and to accordingly allocate the expressed emotions to either the present or future self.

We then analyzed the letters again and specifically concentrated on the characteristics of present and future self to find an answer to the second sub question. We analyzed per sentence and retrieved expressions that allowed insights into the present and future self's identity. We also considered the context, as in this example: 'People were writing, another girl with blue eyes trying to help me out and I sat there like a empty shell' (letter type 3a). This expression suggests, for example, that the present self does not feel to belong in the setting and struggles to fulfill the requirements. Apart from that, we also derived information about the self from the emotions expressed, for example 'I know that now you feel like you won't make it and you won't be able to overcome all challenges' (cluster 2, letter number 12). This expression implies that the present self is characterized by uncertainty and doubts regarding her abilities. To relate the emotion expression of future and present self to either independence or interdependence, we applied the criteria presented in the introduction and thus decided if the emotions expressed are either ego-focused or other-focused and also considered if the focus lies on the self or if others are taken into account. An expression that suggests independence would be, for example: 'as both of us know very well, in the finish line it's only us' (cluster 2, letter number 12). In contrast to that, 'you are learning together with them and get progress together' (cluster 1, letter 8) would rather suggest interdependence.

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On basis of the distribution between present and future, we analyzed the subjective distance in time (third sub question), which describes the perceived distance between present and future by the reader. To do so, we detected different patterns that either cause an extension or shrinkage of the perceived distance: it appeared that the more detailed the way from present to future is described, the longer it is perceived. Also, if present and future appear to be contrary in the emotions expressed or in the characteristics of the self, the distance may also be perceived as extended. On the other hand, if present and future are occupied with the same topic the span might instead appear to be smaller. For example, if the writer has a goal which reaches from present to future it may bridge the span in between. It is mentionable that some of the letters appear to be very intimate and personal which may again make the distance appear to be narrowed. Finally, we analyzed the relation between the self and the emotions expressed (fourth sub question) to find an answer to the fourth sub question: we considered how the emotions are expressed and what inferences one could draw from that manner about the self. For example, if someone expresses negative emotions very openly, this may suggest that the self does not mind possible others.

3. Results

To begin with, the multiplicity of letters focuses on the academic career of the writer: most participants chose for a point in time which was related to their studies, such as their graduation day, being accepted to another university or already following everyday work as a professional. The pattern of being or having been a student was therefore clearly identifiable. Some of the letters are not occupied with the academic career but focus on other situations like, for instance, a description of one's wedding day, or a situation in which the writer finds rest and peace in a familiar place. We subsequently retrieved three main patterns on basis of the expressed emotions in present and future and therefore distributed the collection into three cluster, those are:

1. Pursuing one's goals confidently and feeling relaxed
2. Finding a way to deal with high expectations by accepting one's shortcomings
3. Experiencing high expectations and fearing to not be able to fulfill those
- 3a. Being absorbed in the present and fearing to not meet the expectations

We assessed 16 letters to belong to the first type, twelve letters to be allocated to the second type and four letters to be related to the third type. The subtype of the third cluster reveals the same

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characteristics as letters of the third cluster do, but additionally presents an interesting example to highlight differences in time perspective. One letter was allocated to this cluster. An overview and analysis of all letters is to be found in the appendix. In the following, we give an explanation of what is distinctive for each letter type. Further, we present one letter per cluster which has been assessed to be representable for that type of letter and properly illustrates its characteristics. The letters will then be analyzed on basis of the established research questions. For reasons of confidentiality, we use pseudonyms in the letters presented below.

Type 1. Pursuing one's goal confidently and feeling relaxed. Distinctive for this letter type is a focus on a positive future with hardly a distinction in time. The letters within this cluster are thus mostly limited to the situation in the future. Therefore, most letters exclude information about the situation in the present and possible negative emotions. Letters of this type are also characterized by a self that appears to be confident and conveys the impression to not let oneself discourage by difficulties. In the following we give an example of this type: The letter at hand was written by a Chinese student who writes to herself from two years in the future. At that point in time, she got her bachelor's degree and received an offer from a university. The writer thus creates a possible self which may be described as the 'fortunate self'. At the time of writing, she finds herself at the beach surrounded by her family.

Dear Kim,

This is two years later from 15th August 2017. I have got a bachelor's degree and have received a great offer from an excellent university. I am laying on a beach while writing you this letter. My family are having a good time playing in the sea or just enjoying a lovely snap beneath the sun. All that I can hear is their laughter mingled with the beating sound of sea waves. The wind is mild, too. It blows through my hair and touches my face gently. Everything is just so appropriate that I don't even believe it has really happened. But you have to be aware that everything doesn't come by itself (occur suddenly). Building up a relationship, someone having a success in your carrier, or even keeping healthy needs you to make efforts.

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Emotion Expression in Future and Present

The letter at hand does not give any insights into the present emotional state of the self. The future, however, is clearly characterized by positive emotions. The writer gives the impression to be very content with the situation she finds herself in and with what she has achieved. She seems to be very happy as she writes 'Everything is just so appropriate that I don't believe it has really happened'. One can assume that the future self is feeling relieved as everything seems to have turned out the way she wanted it to. She describes the situation as very appropriate suggesting that also her family is happy and satisfied: 'My family are having a good time playing in the sea or just enjoying a lovely snap beneath the sun. All that I can hear is their laughter mingled with the beating sound of sea waves.'. This also seems to contribute to her personal happiness. Solely the fact that she reminds herself that 'everything doesn't come by itself' suggests that she has worked hard in order to achieve her goal and may have experienced a stressful time.

Future and Present Self

The writer describes a very harmonious scene in which she spends time with her family at the beach. Seemingly, everything has turned out the way she wanted it to in the past which gives the impression of the future self to be worryless and at peace with everything. As the letter is focused on the future it does hardly provide information about the present self. Nevertheless, the future self teaches the present self to not forget that everything she wants to accomplish involves her to make an effort: 'you have to be aware that everything doesn't come by itself (occur suddenly). Building up a relationship, someone having a success in your carrier, or even keeping healthy needs you to make efforts'. This expression suggests that the future self also needed to make an effort to get to the situation she finds herself in in the future (having a bachelor's degree) and therefore knows about the commitment which is needed to accomplish certain goals. One might thus assume that the peaceful and blithe situation in the future also results from a busy period that taught her about the required effort. As the letter does not give insights into the emotional state of the present self, one cannot assess whether the expression of the present self is either independent or interdependent. However, the emotion expression of the future self suggests an interdependent self. This can be seen as the writer describes herself surrounded by others (her family) which seems to be of great importance to her: The harmony within the group appears to be of priority. Although the emotions expressed do not typically suggest interdependence, they seem to be

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partly caused by the presence and also the emotional states of the people surrounding her which rather depicts her as interdependent.

Subjective Distance between Present and Future Self

The timespan created between future and present self appears to be narrowed in comparison to the objective timespan of two years: The letter does hardly allow to gain insights into the present situation but gives a detailed description of the situation the writer finds herself in in the future. The focus thus clearly lays on the future situation and makes the distance between present and future self appear to be narrowed.

Relation between self and emotions

The fact that the writer describes a peaceful setting in which she finds herself surrounded by her family in combination with the emotions expressed suggests that the writer did not want to make herself vulnerable in front of others. As the description remains superficial and vague ('I got a great offer from an excellent university'), it appears to be an innocuous topic to be presented in front of (unknown) others. One might thus assume that the self anticipated on the others in the emotions she expressed in the letter. Apart from the fact that the present self is reminded that she needs to make an effort in order to achieve something, the emotions expressed don't suggest any weakness. The self thus appears to be confident. As she writes 'Everything is just so appropriate that I don't believe it has really happened', it suggests that she is very happy about the success she achieved, and that accomplishment seems to be of importance to her. She further seems to enjoy being surrounded by her family which highlights her attachment to them, since she obviously wants to spend that special moment together with them.

Conclusion

The letter at hand properly exemplifies the characteristics of the first letter type: It features a limited time perspective as the letter is predominantly occupied with the situation in the future which is clearly positively evaluated. The letter hence excludes information about the situation in the present and possible negative emotions. The situation described reveals a very peaceful and carefree surrounding which takes place right after the future self graduated and received an offer from a University. Everything thus seems to have turned out perfectly. As the situation is restricted to that, one doesn't know if the self experienced difficulties in the present. Solely the fact that she advises her present self 'to be aware that everything doesn't come by itself' suggests that she has worked hard to achieve her goal.

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Generally, most letters within this cluster correspond to the one presented above, in the sense that they are focused on a positive future and do hardly give insights into the present. Also, there are hardly negative emotions expressed within letters of this type. The future situation is predominantly characterized by joy, satisfaction and excitement. Nevertheless, the situations presented differ in their content: Although half of it refers to the writer's academical career (e.g. day of graduation, entering working life), some letters are occupied with other topics, as for example the writer's wedding day or a description of how the writer prepares dinner. Half of the letters within this cluster illustrate an interdependent view of the self: although the achievement of a personal goal is described in most cases, the participants often picture themselves surrounded by people they are closely related to and highlight their importance to them, as for example 'It is so nice that in that special day I got to be with people who love me so we can all share the joy of my success' (cluster 1, letter number 7). Some letters also picture a self that makes an effort in order to make others achieve something, as for example 'you always try your best to make it for them' (cluster 1, letter 8). In terms of the subjective distance conveyed through the letters, it is striking that a lot of letters do not give an indication for the objective time span between present and future (eight out of 16 letters do not indicate an objective point in time). Also, most letters only focus on the future situation, therefore it is difficult to determine the subjective distance without reference point. Nevertheless, as far as there is some information about the present situation, we still tried to determine the perceived distance and assessed five letters to reveal a perceived extension of distance, whereas two letters show a perceived shrinkage. We perceived one letter to correspond to the objective distance indicated. It seems to be distinctive for this letter type, that the writer finds him-/herself in between two stages of life. As we see in the example presented above, the writer has graduated in the future and enjoys taking time out before she continues with the next stage. The information given is thus restricted to that moment in between which makes it appear worryless, since she neither looks back to regret things she did/did not do, nor does she depict what might wait for her in the future or only vaguely. The letter therefore describes a resting condition in between two stages of life and the related ease.

Type 2. Finding a way to deal with high expectations and accepting one's own

shortcomings. Decisive for the second cluster is a favorable and positive view of the self.

Although the writer may have experienced difficulties in the present, the focus does clearly lie on a positive future. As far as the letter contains information about the emotions experienced in the

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present, a shift in emotions can be seen which reaches from negative emotions experienced in the present to positive emotions experienced in the future. Also, a very caring attitude towards the present self is characteristic. Letters within this cluster mostly include a well-intentioned advice and convey forbearance with the self. We give an example in the following: The letter at hand was written by a Colombian student who writes to herself from two years in the future (2019). At that point in time she graduates in Psychology. The writer hence creates a possible self which may be described as the 'relieved self' since everything seems to have turned out fine, despite difficulties. The letter does hardly give information about the writer's surrounding but rather concentrates on the progress and growth she went through. The letter is thus clearly emotionally charged.

Dear Me (from 2 years). We freacking did it!! You finally made it out of college and you're officially a psychologist now. I know you thought you couldn't made it and I know you've been through a long and sometimes hard self-discovery journey but just keep persevering. Keep working hard and just enjoy the journey. It's not just all about what you're gonna get at the end. A diploma is just a piece of paper. It just stands for all the friends you are gonna make on this journey, for all the late nights and for never giving up. Don't mind the others and just keep going, believe you are going to make it. Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas. Thanks to those mistakes from yesterday, you are going to be a better person tomorrow. Learn from them and be kind to yourself, don't punish you too hard. You go girl!!

Anna

Emotion Expression in Future and Present

The letter at hand allows a clear distinction between present and future on basis of the emotions expressed. The present is characterized by fear and unease which becomes obvious in what the future self advises the present self to do. The following sentence is very expressional and highlights the just described: 'Don't mind the others and just keep going, believe you are going to make it.'. Also 'Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas.' Suggests that the present self experiences insecurity and anxiety. The emotions expressed in the future are in comparison to those expressed in the present throughout positive. They range from satisfaction

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and joy to relief. Further, the letter is written in a very cheerful tone which can be seen as she writes 'We freacking did it!! You finally made it out of college and you're officially a psychologist now'. Apart from that, the future self mostly encourages the present self and is less occupied with her emotional state in the future. Nevertheless, the manner in which she approaches her present self is of a very favorable and cheerful character and therefore allows to gain insights into the future self's emotional state as well. Finally, the fact that the future self conveys to be very relieved and cheerful about the achieved goal supports the idea that the way to get there has been accompanied by a lot of sorrow and difficulties.

Future and Present Self

The present self seems to be characterized by insecurity and doubts with regard to her abilities ('I know you thought you couldn't made it'). This insecurity about herself also becomes obvious as she writes 'Don't mind the others and keep going, believe you are going to make it.'. She states to find herself in a 'long and sometimes hard self-discovery journey' which can be interpreted in different ways but suggests in the context at hand that she experiences an uncertainty with regard to her attributes and performance.

The future self, instead, seems to have developed to more confidence and seems to have come to new insights ('Keep working hard and just enjoy the journey. It's not just all about what you're gonna get at the end'). She appeals to herself to not neglect the time in between (before she reaches her goal) but to also value the positive experiences stressful times may be accompanied with: 'A diploma is just a piece of paper. It just stands for all the friends you are gonna make on this journey, for all the late nights and for never giving up'. She hereby teaches her present self to not only see the negative aspects she may experience in the present. This sympathetic view towards herself also becomes visible as she writes 'Thanks to those mistakes from yesterday, you are going to be a better person tomorrow.'. Generally, the writer encourages her present self to trust in her abilities and gives guidance on how to reach her goal. The confidence she developed also becomes visible as she writes 'Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas' which implies that she has learned to rely on her abilities and to not be too skeptical with herself. The just described contrast between present and future self illustrates the growth the self has achieved in the future and conveys a very favorable and indulgent view on the present self. The emotion expression of both, present and future self,

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suggests independence. The writer focusses on herself and expresses ego-focused emotions that refer to her own goals and abilities, such as pride. This confirms the self as an independent entity.

Subjective Distance between Present and Future Self

The contrast between the emotions expressed in present and future clearly gives a distinction in time and also shapes the subjective distance: The contrary emotions expressed create a subjective distance that appears to be extended. As both times, present and future, are characterized by different emotions, the journey it took the self to get to that point in the future appears to be far ahead. Moreover, the fact that the future self advises the present self to focus on the time in between highlights the distance and gives it more importance. Finally, the cheerful tone which is distinctive for this letter suggests that a lot of difficulties lay in between present and future which have been dissolved in the meantime and again make the span appear to be extended.

Relation between self and emotions

It is striking that the emotions are openly expressed and allow the self to show weakness. They give insights into very personal details ('I know you thought you couldn't make it and I know you've been through a long and sometimes hard self-discovery journey') and thereby create an intimate atmosphere that gives the impression as if the future self approaches the present self in a private surrounding. The advice she gives to her present self seemingly also applies to the letter she writes: 'Don't mind the others and just keep going'. The self seems to concentrate on the advice she gives to her present self and doesn't mind the people around her. The way in which she approaches her present self and expresses emotions thus suggests the self to be self-assured and confident. The future self appears to be very caring and honest towards herself and appears to have trust in her abilities.

Conclusion

We chose the letter at hand to be exemplary presented, as it thoroughly illustrates the characteristics of the second letter type: The letter clearly focuses on a positive future and highlights the self's will to deal with the own shortcomings. The future self has obviously found a way to deal with the shortcomings she experiences in the present and favorably advises her present self how to overcome the difficulties in the present. The letter is thus characterized by encouragement as can be seen in the many well-intentioned advice, for example 'Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas.' Or 'Thanks to those mistakes from yesterday, you are going to be a better person tomorrow'.

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In comparison to the other letters allocated to this cluster, most of them give evidence for a present which is characterized by stress, worries and insecurity but mainly concentrate on a positive, bright future in which they have overcome the uncertainties in the present. They convey the impression, among others, to be proud, successful, relieved and content at the chosen point in the future. In all letters, the future self features a favorable and indulgent view towards its present self and tries to guide it through the difficulties he or she experiences. All letters illustrate a rather independent view of the self: as a characteristic of this letter type, the future self tries to comfort the present self, which often includes highlighting the self's abilities and achievements and in turn rather confirms the self as an independent entity. Regarding the subjective distance between future and present self, eight letters convey an extended distance between present and future. This may be caused by the fact that we found the described contrast of emotions to be a possible indicator for a perceived extension in time. Further, four letters convey a perceived shrinkage of distance. Those only give little information about the present and therefore only display a restricted contrast in emotions. The fact that they are occupied with one topic only seems to bridge the time in between and causes a perceived shrinkage of distance.

Type 3. Experiencing high expectations and fearing to not be able to fulfill those. Distinctive for this cluster is a focus on the negative in present or future. Most letters describe a bright and positive future whereas the present is characterized by fear of failure and high demand. This is among others the case in letter number two in which the present self is stressed and concerned to not meet the expectations. Two letters show this tendency. We also found this shift in emotions to be the other way around: those start from a positive present and focus on a negative future. We found this to be the case in two letters. Both letters refer to working conditions: letter one describes a stressful future as a PhD candidate with a lot of work and only low salary. As the present self wishes for this position and is very ambitious and motivated about it, this progression from present to future might be perceived as a 'cautionary tale' letter. Also letter three focuses on a negative future and will be analyzed in detail: The letter presented below was written by a Chinese student who writes to himself from five years in the future. He narrates about the circumstances he finds himself in with regard to his work and teaches his present self to be careful what to wish for. He thus creates a self which may be perceived as the 'disillusioned self'.

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Dear John,

I want to start from my situation now I'm sit in the room to write a letter. There are people in the room from other countries. It was because I made a choice 2 month ago and I was the lucky one who gets the opportunity.

So if I want to talk to myself from future 5 years later I'll talk to myself like that.

"Hi Frank. How is it going?" You know? I'm not happy now. After the summer vacation I come home back China and I know I have to work hard and make a lot of money so that I can finish my dream. Now I have lots of money but I have no time to finish my dream.

I'm too important to leave my company. Money is useless. You know only you pay for it, it does work. So I hope you work hard and sometimes you can give you a little bit time to think about why you make money and use it so something really useful. Keep going. This is what I want to take to you from 5 years later.

Hop you can have a happy and meaningful life.

Emotion Expression in Future and Present

The writer seems to be very content in the present for getting the opportunity to join the summer school ('I was the lucky one who gets the opportunity'). The direct information about the present self's emotions is further limited to that. The future instead is clearly characterized by negative emotions. The writer expresses to be dissatisfied with the situation he finds himself in ('I'm not happy now'). He claims to work hard and to earn a lot of money but to have no time to spend it. Although he states that he does so in order to finish his dream ('I know I have to work hard and make a lot of money so that I can finish my dream') it conveys the impression for him to be very frustrated and disappointed as his life does not seem to be the way he expected it to be. The frustration and also disillusion also becomes obvious as he writes 'Money is useless. You know only you pay for it, it does work.' Which suggests that he has come to new insights. The writer ends the letter by writing 'Hop you can have a happy and meaningful life' which implies that he experiences regret in the future as he does not seem to have achieved to lead the life he wanted to.

Future and Present Self

Although the letter does hardly give insights into the present self, one can derive some characteristics on the basis of what the future self describes. The letter gives the impression of the present self to be very ambitious and motivated. He seems to strive to accomplish a dream he holds through a powerful job in the future. This can be seen as he writes 'I know I have to work hard and make a lot of money so that I can finish my dream'. The future self thus finds himself in the situation the present self had wished for but clearly evaluates it in a negative way: 'I'm too important to leave my company. Money is useless. You know only you pay for it, it does work'. It appears that the future self finds himself in some kind of stagnation as he conveys the impression to be unable to escape the situation he finds himself in. He thus advises the present self to be careful what to wish for since he depicts his life to be very busy and stressed. The fact that the future self does not try to escape the situation in order to accomplish his dream, although he clearly evaluates the situation to be negative, also reflects the high expectations the self experiences. He seems to work very hard but does not seem to be able to accomplish that dream 'Now I have no time to finish my dream'. The work he does obviously displays the means to an end but simultaneously prevents him from fulfilling that end. The future self therefore appears to be disillusioned about the dream he once had since it did not come out the way he imagined it to ('Money is useless. You know you only pay for it, it does work'). He seems to have come to new insights about what matters to him as he writes to his present self 'hope you can have a happy and meaningful life'. It appears that this is what he misses in the future. Those insights he has come to also make the future self appear more mature than the present self. The way in which both, future and present self, express their emotions suggests independence: The focus clearly lies on the self in present and future which is presented as an independent entity. This can be seen as the self only refers to his own needs and goals as in the following: 'Now I have lots of money but I have no time to finish my dream'. Also, the emotions expressed refer to an independent self as they are throughout ego-focused, referring to the self's needs and goals: the letter seems to be characterized by a certain frustration which is caused by the fact that the self's goals have not been met.

Subjective Distance between Present and Future Self

The subjective distance between present and future self appears to be extended in comparison to the objective time indicated. The letter conveys the impression of the future self to be much more

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mature and experienced than the present self. Although both selves seem to be connected by the dream which reaches from the present to the future state there seems to be a breach between both times: The present and future self seem to have contrary views on this dream since the future self has meanwhile come to new insights and appears to be more mature. With the experiences made, the future self teaches the present self to be careful what to wish for. This opposing view on the dream which connects both selves makes the distance between them appear to be extended.

Relation between self and emotions

The expression of emotion in the current letter describes a resigned and disappointed self. It suggests that the self has been ambitious and motivated in the past which has faded away in the future. His disappointment and frustration is clearly visible. He expresses his negative emotions very openly and clarifies that everything he once used to strive for has not turned out the way he imagined it to ('Money is useless. You know only you pay for it, it does work.'). He thus admits having failed in finishing his dream: 'now I have lots of money but I have no time to finish my dream'. This open expression appears as if he has nothing to lose since he doesn't make an effort to keep appearances. The way he expresses his emotions therefore additionally highlights his hopelessness and discouragement and gives insights into a depressed self. The way he expresses his emotions suggests that he is torn with regard to his future plans. On the one hand, he obviously strives for the career he describes in the letter. On the other hand, he does not seem to be sure if he should choose that path as he seems to know that it is very time consuming and engrossing. By means of the emotions he expresses in the letter, he seems to caution himself against his future plans and make himself rethink. The letter hence also sheds light on an undecided self.

Conclusion

The letter presented above illustrates the characteristics of cluster one as the letter is clearly focused on a negative future. The high expectations experienced by the self become visible in the dream that the self pursues but apparently does not reach, despite the effort he makes. The future self seems to be very dissatisfied with the situation he finds himself in and conveys the inability to escape it. Although there is only little information to find about the present self, a shift in emotion, from a positive present to a negative future is still to see.

Taking a look at the other letters allocated to this cluster, they all reveal a span in the emotions respectively experienced in present and future. As earlier described, this span reaches

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from positive emotions in the present to negative emotions in the future, as in the letter at hand, or vice versa. Regarding the future and present selves, they are all related to a moment in the writer's studies. Those letters which describe a positive future all convey a future self which has accomplished something, for example, finishing the master or bachelor thesis or being accepted to one's favorite university. The other letter that also illustrates a negative future can be classified as a 'cautionary tale' letter, as the one presented above: The future self thus advises the present self to be careful what to wish for as the future situation might not turn out the way they wished it would. All letters within this cluster feature an independent view of the self. Regarding the subjective time span of the other letters, it appeared that one letter displays a perceived shrinkage of distance whereas the letter at hand displays a perceived extension. Apart from that, two letters suggest that the subjective distance matches with the objective distance indicated.

Type 3a. Being absorbed in the present and fearing to not meet the expectations. As already mentioned above, the following letter was not suitable to be allocated to one of the earlier presented clusters as it displays an exceptional example with regard to time perspective. The letter presented was written by an Indian student writing to him-/herself from three years in the future. At that point in time he/she looks back to the moment he/she found him-/herself in while writing the letter and narrates about the experiences he/she made while doing so. The self which is created may be categorized as the 'incompetent self' or 'uncreative self'.

Dear Myself,

It has been 3 yrs since I graduated my master now.

And I still remember doing a course in dutch summer school when I was asked to write a letter from future and be creative about it and predict what would happen 3 yrs from now and when I think about that day it a bit & quite funny. Because I still remember feeling awkward not able to start with what I want. How could I? I am hyper-actie and still on my mind a constant racing from one thing to another. Getting to focus on something is difficult & it was also the barrier within me to express myself in front of others. I mean how could I? The first option was to write a letter to my mam about now happily married

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and settled & on from future. But the thought of reading it out in front of others (random people) drove me completely insane. How can I? It is a personal thing after all.

Then I thought about writing something I might have achieved academically- a successful xxxxxx perhaps. The very thought sounded nudcere and extremely ridiculous. So I dropped it. People were writing, another girl with blue eyes trying to help me out and I sat there like a empty shell. Being brought up in such a fast place, life in a practical manner, facing reality each day, I suppose a person like me couldn't be creative. I wouldn't call my culture difference a bad thing. It is who I am that's why I can probably not help the people much but maybe their dream.

So here I am a boring biomedical engineer writing a very poetical letter – trying to be creative.

Emotion Expression in Future and Present

Most of the emotions expressed by the writer refer to the situation in which he/she was writing the letter and are therefore experienced in the present. The emotions expressed are predominantly negative. He/she expresses fear to not be able to live up to the requirements of the exercise which seems to be mainly caused by the fear of being evaluated by others ('thought of reading it out in front of others (random people) drove me completely insane'). Related to the transmitted inability to accomplish the task properly, the writer expresses to be disappointed by him-/herself ('I sat there like a empty shell'). Further, he/she seems to experience difficulties to concentrate and focus on one thing only as he/she states: 'constant racing from one thing to another. Getting focus on something is difficult' which again may be caused by the fear to not fulfill the requirements of the task and to subsequently be negatively evaluated by others. The writer is very critical about him-/herself and therefore denies all ideas which can be seen as he/she writes: 'The first option was to write a letter to my mam (...). But the thought of reading it out in front of others (random people) drove me completely insane'; 'Then I thought about writing something I might have achieved academically (...). The very thought sounded nudcere and extremely ridiculous. So I dropped it.').

Future and Present Self

Apart from the statement 'It has been 3 yrs since I graduated my master now', the letter does only give insights into the present situation and therefore only allows to gain knowledge about the

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present self. The writer conveys the impression to be very self-critical which can be found in several parts of the letter and is also demonstrated in the following section: 'Then I thought about writing something I might have achieved academically – a successful xxx perhaps. The very thought sounded nudere and extremely ridiculous. So I dropped it.'

It becomes clear that the writer aims to be academically successful and is therefore very stressed. It seems as if the writer is too occupied with the task that he/she could not reflect on what his/her future would look like. Generally, the writer gives the impression to be very insecure about his/her abilities with regard to the exercise at hand ('I suppose a person like me couldn't be creative'). Also the fact that he/she discounts all ideas as inadequate for the scope of the task and finally denies them serves as another indication. This uncertainty also becomes visible by three times posing a rhetorical question ('How could I?; I mean how could I?; How can I?').

Further, the writer mentions that he/she comes from a different cultural background and states that he/she identifies him-/herself with it ('I wouldn't call my culture difference a bad thing. It is who I am'). Although the writer evaluates his/her cultural background as positive, he/she points out that it is different from those of others. He/she regards creativity as a sophisticated skill and takes it as explanation for the difficulties he/she experiences while conducting the task. This is to be seen as he/she writes the following: 'Being brought up in such a fast place, life in a practical manner, facing reality each day, I suppose a person like me couldn't be creative.'. Starting from the assumption that the writer's description refers to the socially deprived context he/she grew up in, it conveys the impression of a context that makes it difficult to make a living. The description of 'Facing reality each day' suggests that the life seems to have been tough those days. He/she seems to have been occupied with challenging daily struggles so that there has rarely been time to discover one's creativity. Finally, the writer clearly puts the letter into a cultural context and highlights the circumstances he/she grew up in. Regarding present and future self in light of independence and interdependence, an ambiguous picture is featured. On the one hand, the writer does greatly focus on the self and highlights his/her (un)abilities. On the other hand, the writer seems to strongly compare him-/herself to the people surrounding him/her which results in the feeling of shame. As an other-focused emotion, it suggests that the writer is rather interdependent. Apart from that, also the fact that he/she takes into account the other participants so much, suggests that he/she strives for cohesiveness and doesn't want to stand out.

Subjective Distance between Present and Future Self

The letter at hand does hardly create a timespan between present and future self. Although the chosen point in the future does objectively create a moderate timespan between present and future self ('It has been 3 yrs since I graduated my master now'), the subjective timespan appears smaller as the letter concentrates on the present time ('And I still remember doing a course in dutch summer school when I was asked to write a letter from future'). The writer thus creates only a small subjective distance between present and future self which gives the occurrence of writing the letter a great importance. It is therefore hard to comprehend a development the writer may have gone through from the time of writing up to the indicated point in the future.

Relation between self and emotions

Although the writer conveys the impression of being unconfident about him-/herself through the emotions expressed, the fact that he/she expresses emotions so openly might be an indication for confidence instead. The writer expresses his feelings in a very open and honest way which is even more appreciable as the emotions expressed are primarily negative. One can assume that the writer does allow him-/herself to show weakness which would accordingly make him/her vulnerable. It seems to be contradictory that, on the one hand, the writer tries to avoid making him-/herself vulnerable by reading out loud in front of others and denying all ideas which allow a closer look on his/her aspirations, goals and concerns. On the other hand, he/she openly presents his/her inner feelings which all the more makes him/her vulnerable. The way in which emotions are expressed is thus contradictory to the impression the writer conveys.

Conclusion

The letter at hand is predominantly occupied with the present time and therefore doesn't allow to gain insights into the future situation. The present situation is also negatively evaluated. Those characteristics make the letter at hand an interesting exception compared to the letter types presented above. On basis of the emotions expressed one might assume that the fear to not fulfill his/her expectations (which is in this example presented as the expectation of others) might have restricted him/ her from escaping the present situation and made the writer stay with his/her story in the present. Apart from that, also the mentioned socioeconomic status illustrates an exception in comparison to the other letters, as no other letter elaborates this topic so openly.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The main research question we pursued within this study is 'How do international students express their emotions in possible selves?'. Within the collection of letters from the future, we found three types of emotion expression. The first type is described as 'Pursuing one's goal confidently and feeling relaxed'. The second type is 'Finding a way to deal with high expectations by accepting one's shortcomings'. The third type is described as 'Experiencing high expectations and fearing to not be able to fulfill those'. We also found a sub type of the third cluster which is exceptional in time dimension and reveals a restricted future perspective. This letter type is referred to as 'Being absorbed in the present and fearing to not meet the expectations'. All clusters are related to specific emotions expressed in either present and/or future and thereby describe how the writer deals with his/her expectations. In the following, the three letter types will be described in more detail.

Type 1: Pursuing one's goal confidently and feeling relaxed

This type predominantly focusses on a positive future and does hardly give insights into the situation in the present. There is thus hardly a distinction in time. Also, it is striking that there are barely negative emotions expressed: this letter type is characterized by an expressed ease and relaxation since it usually describes a situation in which the self has achieved a certain goal (e.g. having graduated) and subsequently finds him-/herself between two stages of life. Since this letter type is mainly positive and possible difficulties and negative emotions are kept from the reader, the self appears to be at peace with him-/herself and to not experience high expectations. This again implies the self to be light-hearted and confident.

Type 2: Finding a way to deal with high expectations by accepting one's shortcomings

The second type is also characterized by a focus on a positive future. Nevertheless, most letters allocated to this cluster reveal difficulties experienced in the present which have been solved in the future. In comparison to the first letter type, there is also a distinction in time which displays negative emotions experienced in the present. It is distinctive that the future self has developed more confidence and gives the present self guidance to overcome the struggles in the present. This type usually conveys relief and acceptance in the future as the difficulties have been overcome and a goal has typically been met. Most of the letters also convey self-love, since the future self has a forbearing and understanding attitude towards the present self. In line with that,

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this letter type is usually written in a very intimate manner and addressed to the present self or to a closely related person. Finally, the writers allow themselves to be vulnerable by accepting their shortcomings and owning one's mistakes.

Type 3: Experiencing high expectations and fearing to not be able to fulfill those

Distinctive for the third type is a focus on negative emotions. Those are either expressed in the present or in the future. Also, a shift in emotions is displayed over time: It ranges from negative emotions experienced in the present to positive emotions experienced in the future or vice versa. In comparison to the first and second letter type, this type is characterized by a high demand of the self, accompanied by fear of failure and an uncertainty with regard to one's abilities. If negative emotions are expressed in the future, the letter may be described as 'cautionary tale': the self seems to have a goal he/she strives to achieve but is simultaneously torn about it since he/she seems to be aware that the goal also has a downside. The future self therefore seems to teach the present self to be careful what to wish for.

Type 3a: Being absorbed in the present and fearing to not meet the expectations

The high demand and uncertainty described in letter type three are experienced to the utmost in this subtype and subsequently cause the writer to be restricted from escaping the present situation. It is thus distinctive for this type to be focused on a negative present with a restricted future perspective. It is suggested that there is a breach between the desired self and the task he or she has to fulfill as he/she seems to feel to not be able to live up to the requirements. This self-critical approach seems to cause the writer to only focus on the present situation.

Those results can partly be explained by letters from the future as a research tool: the instruction is to write a letter to a person in the present from a positively evaluated situation in the future (Sools & Mooren, 2012). The letter is supposed to include a well-intentioned advice in order to enhance motivation and optimism and to serve as incentive for future behavior (Bohlmeijer, Bolier, Westerhof, & Walburg, 2013). The first and second letter type do, in line with that, display a focus on a positive future. Whereas the second type illustrates difficulties experienced in the present and a positively evaluated future, the first type rather concentrates on a positive future and does hardly give insights into difficulties. Although both letter types differ in the degree of intimacy and weakness they reveal, the emotion expression can possibly be explained by the fact that the participants were following the instruction of writing a letter from the future. Considering that 29 out of 33 letters illustrate that feature, it seems to be likely that those results

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are caused by the given instruction. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain why some of the letters deviate from the given instruction and rather reveal a restricted future perspective or focus on a negatively evaluated present or future.

Generally, all three letter types display a different way of facing the future. It is striking that all types differ in the writer's perspective taking and the ability to look ahead. The first letter type reveals a self which seems to be good at depicting the future and looks ahead rather confidently, whereas the second letter type is rather retrospectively occupied with the present self, comforts and encourages in order to give guidance. The third letter type, in contrast, reveals distance taking and uncertainty about the future. As introduced earlier, the broaden-and-build-model states that positive emotions broaden our attention and cognition (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) and are further related to an increase of psychological abilities, such as creativity, self-acceptance and optimism (Fredrickson, et al., 2003; Cohn et al., 2009). Negative emotions, according to that model, reduce our cognitive- and behavioral repertoire and narrow our attention, as they request an immediate action. This model can possibly give an explanation to the just described findings and especially explicate the results that can hardly be ascribed to letters from the future as a research tool : applying the broaden-and-build-model to the third letter type, one can assume that the participants experienced negative emotions at the time of writing which narrowed their ability to face their future and made them look ahead rather indecisively. In contrast, the writers of the first and second letter type might have experienced positive emotions at the time of writing as both types entail a positive future. Furthermore, positive emotions are said to enhance optimism, creativity and self-acceptance (Fredrickson et al., 2003; Cohn et al., 2009) which can also be applied to the second letter type, as it is characterized by acceptance and a caring attitude towards the present self.

Further, this study aimed to investigate a possible influence of globalization on student's emotion expression in possible selves. We assessed if the letters rather promote an independent or interdependent view of the self and moreover explored if those can be ascribed to the participants' background. As argued by Markus and Kitayama (1991), different emotions foster either an independent or interdependent view of the self. They state that an independent view of the self is exemplary for American and western European cultures. The interdependent view of the self, by contrast, is attributed to Asian cultures and African, Latin-American and southern European cultures. However, we did not find differences in emotion expression that suggest to be

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evoked by the participants' national identity or cultural background. This made us discard a distinction between emotion expression on basis of either Western or Eastern backgrounds. Those results are hence in favor of culture as a more dynamic construct and suggest that differences in emotion expression cannot be determined on basis of national borders and can neither be considered as cultural possessions. This is in line with the earlier introduced consideration of Voestermans and Verheggen (2007) who argue that culture is nothing to be determined within country borders and rather approach the concept of culture as a psychological phenomenon instead of analyzing the mind in the light of a certain culture. Nevertheless, it is striking that most letters rather promote an independent view of the self. This can possibly be ascribed to the scope of this research, as letters from the future and the creation of possible selves invite to occupy oneself with one's goals and concerns (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and virtually provoke to create awareness on that behalf.

Additionally, we examined the emergence of 'hybrid identities' which Arnett (2002) argues to be a byproduct of globalization. The data did not acknowledge the phenomenon of hybrid identities but instead suggests the participant group to rather display a homogenous subculture. In this context, globalization rather entails homogeneity than hybridity: A lot of letters suggest that their writer strives to work or study in an international surrounding, live in a country different from his or her home country or learn foreign languages. This implies that there is, indeed, a globalization of cultures taking place: the displayed goals and intentions highlight an aspiration for cross-cultural contact in most participants. Nevertheless, all participants seem to witness this transition and are simultaneously united in having corresponding aspirations and experiencing high demands. Globalization thus rather means homogeneity than hybridity in this context. Referring to Bhatia (2017), as presented earlier, who states that 'narration and storytelling take us to the realm of action, imagination, and meaning-making and give us insights into why people, who are shaped by their social locations, tell particular stories to themselves, to others, or to specific audiences' (p.18). Instead of culture as a construct which is difficult to define, he argues that the stories we tell are shaped by our social locations and therefore provide insights in why we tell particular stories to whom. This supports the idea of homogeneity: Bhatia refers to our social locations instead of culture as an environment we are influenced by. The participant group represents an own subculture in which one is supposed to find his or her way around. We behave according to the norms and habits within that 'cultural' group in order to

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claim to be part of that group. This subculture of international students also has certain norms in the context of the summer school as would be for example 'what do I disclose in order to meet the standard?'.

Implications

To summarize, the study at hand enabled us to explore international student's expression of emotion in possible selves and to also gain knowledge about the influence of culture on emotion expression. Nevertheless, this research has limitations which need to be taken into consideration by evaluating the results. Further, they may be helpful to be taken into account in future research.

We found that the participant group displays some kind of subculture. Apart from the features presented above, the participants of this study are all united in having the same attributes: The fact that they all took part in the summer school at the University of Twente suggests that they have a similar education level, are willing to put themselves into an international surrounding and speak English. As far as they were not supported by a scholarship, they have a good financial background to afford participation and can probably rely on the (at least financial) support of their families. As the variety of this sample is restricted with regard to those preconditions, it suggests that also the knowledge gained through this sample is more or less restricted to participants that fulfill the mentioned requirements. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct future research in which participants from different education levels and different socioeconomic status are considered. This would create the possibility to broaden the perspective on the expression of emotion in possible selves and provide the opportunity to gain further insights into how international youth face their future and the effect of globalization on other social strata.

As mentioned above, emotions build up images, that we apply and refer to for personal sense-making. They give rise to the unconscious and represent deep-rooted concerns and issues (Whitmont, 1969). Emotions are hence caused by personal evaluations (Oatley, 1999). Considering the narrative expression of emotion, Abrams (1953) suggests that the reader has a series of mental schemata which may partially be either recalled or challenged when reading a text. He argues that the literary world consists of four parts: Writer-text-real world-reader, suggesting that the mental schemata of the reader influence how the text is perceived. Those mental schemata may be compared to the images we apply for personal sense-making. Applying this theory to the current research, one might assume that also my personal mental schemata

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might have influenced the way in which the letters were perceived. Therefore, it is possible that the results might have differed from those presented above, if someone else had analyzed the narratives on basis of his or her mental schemata. Generally speaking, the results may be biased by the images I, personally, use for sense-making. It would be of interest to have the results independently analyzed by another researcher in order to assess the interrater reliability.

We ascertained that the participants found themselves in different emotional states which may have broadened their ability to face their future and take perspective or virtually narrowed it. It would be of interest to gather more information in that regard and find out why the participants wrote the letter the way they did. A focus group discussion would display a useful approach to get to know the participants' personal backgrounds and their intrinsic motivation to look ahead the way they did. Participants of the 'Health and Happiness' course of 2017 will be invited to exchange their thoughts and motives about the process of writing but also about the final outcome. This would shed light on the participants' purpose to write their letter the way they did.

Despite the limitations, the gathered results allow to gain insights into what the subculture of international students is occupied with and how they face their future. Letters from the future display a means that creates awareness of one's goals and concerns and clarify what might not have been distinct, yet. They thus shed light on where the students find themselves in the present and what they want to become in the future. On basis of that knowledge one can possibly elaborate on the discrepancy between present and future self and provide target-oriented assistance and support in order to reach that individual goal. The information gathered can therefore display a meaningful tool for career counseling and personality development. This can further be specified by assessing the participant's strengths and weaknesses and to subsequently compare those to the requirements their desired future brings with it.

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Appendix

Table 1

Pursuing one's goal confidently and feeling relaxed

	Nr.1, Bulgaria 1-2 years	Nr.2, China	Nr.3, Taiwan 8 hours	Nr.4, Russia	Nr.5, China 2 years	Nr.6, China 1 month	Nr.7 Greece	Nr.8 China
Emotion expression in future and present	Present: 'I haven't heard from you in a while. You are offline and I think you changed your number.' Lovesick? Future: 'As normal, I continue discovering the irony in life' (resigned?), content about phd and with living situation (city, furniture,..)	Present: 'your warm smile and intimate words really touched me' Future: 'despite the long distance, you are still my spiritual mentor as before' 'you put your heart love into education' self-love	Present: happy, satisfied, grateful, proud ('great for everyone, everything. I finally can eat not only just bread'; 'thanks for everything and thanks for hearing') Future: no distinction in time	Present: homesick, sad? Future: 'I really missed them' (parents) 'everyone is healthy and happy, and I feel grateful to my parents' grateful for opportunity, enjoyed the stay (?) but glad to be back home	Present: Future: Content, satisfied, joyful, grateful ('Everything is just so appropriate that I don't even believe it has really happened')	Present: Future: 'I have got some good rest and feel energetic and positive.'	Present: Future: 'really nice that we all gather together' content, joyful, proud, 'ceremony was so beautiful', motivational speeches from professors ('they even talked about never giving up'), 'everyone was so happy'	Present: Future: 'sometimes they may troubles you a lot. However, you really love them from the bottom of heart.'; 'you always try your best to make it for them', eager, content, shows commitment 'you keep patient with them'; enjoys/loves job, sometimes too much work that she cannot handle it
Future and present self	Present: Future: got phd,	Present: playing games	Present: Cooks dinner he also	Present: 'this story is about	Present: Future:	Present: Future: 1 st	Present: Future: Day of	Present: Future: 2 years

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

(+actions, events)	<p>sits in bedroom, furnished as she wants it to be, fun colleagues (and one asshole who makes fun)</p> <p>Independence → focus on self, also statements that suggest interdependence (reference to others)</p>	<p>one year ago Future: dreamed that they met after one year separation, pays visit in the kindergarten where 'you' works</p> <p>Independence</p>	<p>had in his home country, detailed description Future: No visible differentiation between present and future</p> <p>Independence</p>	<p>what really wish (...). So it's about coming back home'</p> <p>Future: day she arrives back in Russia 'I come back to my native city, and meet my dear parents.' Tells parents about her trip</p> <p>Interdependence(?)</p>	<p>bachelor's degree and offer from excellent university, is laying on the beach with family, aware of the effort that is necessary</p> <p>Interdependence; in the end independent (?)</p>	<p>working day of 2017 fall semester, after 10 days back from the Netherlands; sharing exchange experiences with others 'I just listened and doubted as always actually'</p> <p>Interdependence</p>	<p>her graduation ceremony, family came (from Greece)</p> <p>Interdependence</p>	<p>after graduation, English teacher in SHS now, 'The lessons are always well prepared and designed'; 'they may have problems in their life and ask you for help.'</p> <p>Interdependence</p>
Subjective Distance present-future self	<p>Extended time span (very personal, seems to be an 'old' friend from back then)</p>	<p>Perceived extension of distance (she seems to desire to meet 'again', dreams about it), also because it was only a dream the span appears to be extended</p>	<p>No distinction in time → in line with the objective time of 8 hours?</p>	<p>No objective distance known, but makes the impression that it is quite far away (because she wants to go home so urgently?)</p>	<p>Distance appears to be shrunk (more like a leap in time)</p>	<p>Perceived shrinkage of distance (also no information about present self & almost no personal information; tells about other's experiences</p>	<p>Information restricted to that day only (no information about present)</p>	<p>No information about present situation, also no information about objective distance in time</p>
Relation between selves and emotions	<p>Miss our evenings of constructive cynicism →</p>				<p>'you have to be aware that everything doesn't come</p>	<p>'I just listened and doubted as always actually'</p>		<p>Seems to be committed to her job, but it also</p>

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

	very close, very intimate, has things straightened out with himself? (self-love?) 'I wish to see you soon'				by itself (occur suddenly). Building up a relationship, someone having a success in your career, or even keeping healthy needs you to make efforts.'		overwhelms her sometimes	
Cultural context	'I could not wait to come back to Groningen. I love this place!'	Dreamed that they met after one year of separation in hongkong (wants to go back? Has at least good memories)	'I have prepared to cook my dinner by myself' 'Cause here is a little bit difficult to find the vegetarian food (...). It is a culture different from us. But don't be worry. It is not so difficult to survive. The people here are all very nice and help me a lot to conquer my problems to prepare the	'this story is about what really wish (...). So it's about coming back home'; 'I compare our cold nights at Netherland and admire UT, its huge campus and beautiful views'	No cultural context visible (no places mentioned, etc.) but happy to be with family (in some place)	'I have got some exchange summer experiences and share interesting stories happened to them or their families.'	'even my aunt came from Thessaloniki with my twin cousins. I haven't seen them for a while so it was really nice that we gather altogether.' 'It was so nice that in that special say I got to be with people who love me so we can all share the joy of my success'	English teacher in the future (although Chinese) → wants to teach foreign language (to be more connected to other countries, cultures?)

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

food.'

Table notes

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Table 2

Pursuing one's goal confidently and feeling relaxed

	Nr.9, China	Nr.10, Mexico	Nr.11, China 2 years	Nr.12, Japan 10 years	Nr.13, Singapore	Nr.14, Colombia	Nr.15, Sweden 10 years	Nr.16, Germany 3 years
Emotion expression in future and present	Present: Future: joyful, happy, excited, nervous, loved ('You have imagined this moment thousands of times and now it will come true'; 'No matter what happens, you two will stay together forever. That's the most wonderful thing in the world')	Present: 'I know you will love it' Future: Excited, content, sad(?) 'we have cool thing'; 'today I bought one it's amazing. Everything is connecting in this great thing'	Present: 'wonderful exciting one' (visit on psychology and basic courses) Future: excited, determined, grateful, curious	Present: Future: 'I spend busy days but, have fun every day.'; 'I'm so happy doing what I really like'; 'I couldn't be happier, I think', appreciates that his mother lets him do whatever he wants to, grateful, happy, content, hard-working	Present: sad, depressed(?) 'I know that you are looking forward to this day' Future: 'today is the happiest day at my life'; 'I feel so blessed'; 'I love you' happy, joyful, grateful, self-love	Present: Future: 'doing what makes you happy-helping others to improve their lifestyles')	Present: Future: Proud, content, happy	Present: Future: stressed?, happy, excited Future: happy, excited, sad
Future and present self (+actions, events)	Present: Future: Wedding day Interdependence	Present: Future: 'I'm writing to you to make you aware of the actions you do. Later on you	Present: Future: end of undergraduate college education in Beijing, offer from Uni	Present: Future: 30 years old, English teacher at high school, married, has children (wants	Present: wants to die?? Future: Last day of his life, sits with all his loved ones	Present: Future: about to graduate from master, gonna start new job tomorrow (+ 'juicy salary')	Present: Future: Found her own company, hired co-workers; confident and determined self	Present: lot of work to apply and hard work for project (but all paid out) Future: Time in SA is over

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

		will see the consequences of it and definitely is not nice all of them.'	Sydney for Master (about to start 'new academic journey')	to give them same freedom of choice as his mother did to him)	Independence	and provides her with security); travels to south America in December	Independence	(stayed there 3 years), goes back to Europe, got scholarship
		describes changes in the future (pos and neg)	Independence	Interdependence		Independence		Independence
Subjective distance present-future self	Detailed description of wedding day (only) no further information about other happenings or past	Independence Perceived extension of distance (no information about present though)	Perceived shrinkage of time span (?)	Perceived extension of time span (also information about what he used to do)	Perceived extension of distance (hardly/vague information about present, though)	No information about present situation or objective time span	subjectively corresponds to the distance objectively created; chronologically narrates key points she passed: one can comprehend the development she went through.	Perceived extension of time span (very detailed but mostly focused on future)
Relation between selves and emotions			'Just enjoy your time right now. Everything get paid.'	'All things I did including fun time and hard time grow me.'	'Do not worry about it. While you are waiting, just remember: Be nice to the people around you, and most	'Cheers from the futures your biggest fan'		'So, enjoy the 2,5 years ahead of you (...). I can tell you that many adventures lie ahead of you'; 'Take care,

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Cultural context	Not identifiable, but seems to strive to have a family (seems to be most present desire)	'Everything is connecting in this great thing, you can take a look of the world and it. It's like 4D google maps. I know you will love it' Enjoys to be more connected to the world (excited about it)	'I got the offer from the University of Sydney for a master's program (...)' I'm strongly interested'; 'I'm going to start a new academic journey.'	Excited about studying abroad	Grateful that he gets those opportunities ,going to university which is far from my hometown, travelling a lot, and studying abroad '	of all be happy.'	No information about cultural context	'The weather is cold as always, but you know that's just the way it is. So just don't forget your jacket as the day is going to be great!' Likes to be abroad (is she?); gonna start job in Sligo (Ireland),	everything will be fine!' Stayed 3 years in South Africa 'I am sad to leave our new friends (...) but I also look forward to go back to Europe and be closely by my friends and family'; Goodbye Africa, we will be back. I feel both sad and happy at the same time, but the anticipation and excitement wins.'
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Table notes

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Table 3

Finding a way to deal with high expectations by accepting one's shortcomings

	Nr.1, Netherlands 8 years	Nr.2, China 3 years	Nr.3, Colombia 2 years	Nr.4, Indonesia 5 years	Nr.5, Russia 10 years	Nr.6, China 1 year
Emotion expression in future and present	Present: hectic, stress Future: happy (‘amazing thing just happened’), proud, realized importance of relaxation. Puppies help relax	Present: ? ‘So try hard and never give up’ Future: successful, outgoing, brave, much more time for study (PE test big problem?)	Present: thought that she couldn’t make it, long & hard self-discovery journey Future: relief, ‘don’t mind the others and just keep going, believe you are going to make it’ ‘Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas’ ‘thanks to those mistakes from yesterday, you are going to be a better person tomorrow’	Present: ‘you are lucky to have best friends like them’ ‘You’ve been going out of your comfort zone several times’ (proof that she can do anything) Future: motivated and ambitious, content about what she has reached already/ the development she went through	Present: Unsure about physical form (abilities) Future: Makes her dream (elbrus) come true, content with life (own business, family, house, dog) ‘everything is perfect’	Present: concerned of other’s opinion, afraid to do what she likes Future: (‘go out from your comfortable region and challenge yourself’)

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Future and present self (+actions, events)	Present: 'Things have been hectic' Future: New house, new job, help dog deliver puppies, help her relax Independence	Present: Opposite of what he has in the future? Future: Healthier lifestyle, applies for unis for master, learning 2 nd language, passed toefl exam, made more friends Independence	Present: Future: grafuated (is a psychologist now) Independence	Present: No information Future: Her birthday 'I hope you would not ever give up' (motivational speech) Independence (but values support from family and friends)	Present: worries about family? Future: Finished university, got good place to work, found own business, travels a lot with family 'preparing to climb Elbrus, as I always dream' whole family happy Interdependence	Direct comparison on what she achieved since ('now I'm better than you') Present: unconfident Future: confident, determined (better English, organizes better, good position in society about to graduate, go to 2 nd summer school)
Subjective distance present – future self	Perceived shrinkage of distance (no info about present, occupied with small time span in the future)	Extended timespan (describes everything reached ever since)	Perceived extension of distance 'enjoy the journey. It's not just all about what you're gonna get at the end.'	Perceived extension of distance	Perceived shrinkage of distance (mostly occupied with future; presents it as a matter of fact?)	Independence Perceived extension of distance (matches objective distance?) → detailed description of what she has achieved
Relation between selves and emotions	'Your biggest fan' 'Relaxation is so important. Heide don't ever forget.'	'don't become ordinary! Just keep changing all the time!' 'Love, From 2020'		'You might not be the smartest person, you might not be the richest, but you are the most patient and persistent person'	'I can say that of course sometimes I have some problems, but everything is perfect'	

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Cultural context	No cultural context visible	'now learning second language besides English'; 'if you thirstily want something and with consistent efforts, you will it and it'll become a precious time for you.'	No cultural context visible	'open a clinic that focus on children and teenager in Yogyakarta'	No cultural context visible	'Don't mind so much about what others think about you' concerned what others think interdependent context? Wants to challenge that!
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Table notes

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Table 4

Finding a way to deal with high expectations by accepting one's shortcomings

	Nr.7, SA(USA) 3 years	Nr.8, Turkey 2 years	Nr.9, Italy 20 years	Nr.10, Mexico 13 years	Nr.11, Greece/ Netherlands (3 years?)	Nr.12, Czechia 1 year
Emotion expression in future and present	Present: Struggles, feels confused and lost (bc of curiosity) regret (wishes to go back in time and change things sometimes), 'short term discomfort of trying' Future: 'bright future' fulfill curiosity is reason he became man that he is today	Present: unconfident, (inferior) Future: Relief, satisfaction, pride, excitement, feels loved	Present: stressed, busy, restless Future: peaceful, relaxed, also sentimental (about changes?)	Present: worried about future Future: Work is exciting (sometimes stressful or boring), proud about doing research 'life has been great these years'	Present: unconfident, scared Future: happy about decision to choose that master, excited	Present: fear of failure Overwhelmed Stressed out, self-love Future: motivated, encourages herself, gives impression that everything will be fine (lucky t-shirt)

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Future and present self (+actions, events)	Future: Fulfilled to try new things, very memorable friendships, advices to take advantage of summer school	Present: compares herself to others? (sees herself as inferior) → understand that she shouldn't Future: (her birthday) acceptance uni Berlin for master, put lots of effort in it, scholarship (financial independence), was research assistant, friend from Erasmus also in GE	Present: busy (full time), stressed, travelling a lot Future: DROPOUT? Is at his grandpa's house in the alps (childhood memories) → bought the place, spends the summer there, village has changed a lot, though. Escapes daily pressure Independence	Present: Future: graduates, masters in dancing now (different field), working in research and dance company, continues to learn languages, still time for social life (and being lazy) Independence	Present: bachelor at University of Utrecht Future: Accepted at UT, interesting classes, conducting an exciting research (may have an impact), more communicative, gained more experience ('goal has changed my in a better way') Independence	Present: in bachelor (writing thesis? Or about to) Future: Holidays in South France Support from people around (advices to also approach them) Advice: make plans, organize well Independence
Subjective distance present – future self	Perceived shrinkage of distance (only one topic 'I'm sure you have many questions of your bright future')	Independence Perceived extension of time span (finally understood that she shouldn't compare ... seems to have been a long way)	Perceived extension of time span (because of contrasts?)	Perceived extension of time span (happened a lot in between)	Perceived extension of distance (only small excerpt, but seems to be far away (unreachable?))	Perceived shrinkage of distance (very personal/intimate) 'in the finish line it's only us'; 'we never easily give up remember?'

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Relation between selves and emotions			(writes to mum) 'With love'	'Just keep doing what you love and love what you do. Never give up.'	'Don't be scared to try. Follow your goals. It will just make you a happier person'	
Cultural context	'curiosity and drive to understand and experience new concepts and ideas'	'I am pretty sure living in Berlin won't be so easy for me in the beginning' 'maybe I will live there rest of my life' friend from Erasmus (&helpful friends in Berlin)	Childhood memories in home country (?) (finds peace there)	Wants to go back to her home country (Mexico) → describes progress (traffic, obesity, separate garbage, water) obviously cares about it; indigenous people now have access to services (still have traditions)	'Although it is far away from home I am really happy about my decision to choose this master' (does still live in his home country?)	Concentrated on personal experience, no cultural context visible

Table notes

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Table 5

	Nr.1, China 5 years	Nr.2, Germany 1 year	Nr.3, China 5 years	Nr.4, China 1 month
Emotion expression in future and present	Present: Self-love Unsure Indecisive Future: stressed 'enjoys life' but: low salary, lots of work ('life is busy and stressed') negative in the future →not what he expected it to be?	Present: stressed, expectations on thesis, fear of failure Future: balanced , content (stress at the beginning was worth it)	Present: lucky (to get opportunity for summer school), unsure about dream? Future: Not happy, stressed 'hope you can have a happy and meaningful life'	Present: No further information about emotional state, but: 'I know I'm not excellent enough to be confident of success' Future: first nervous, happy (about acceptance) despite shortcomings
Future and present self (+actions, events)	Present: about to graduate (bachelor?) →what to do afterwards? Ambitious, motivated, confident Future: 2 nd year of phd Independence	Present: Starting with thesis Future: writing last words of master thesis, advises herself how to continue Independence	Present: 'Lucky one who gets opportunity' to attend summer school Future: works hard (no time to finish dream) 'too important to leave my company 'lots of money but no time to spend it' Independence (?)	Present: ? Future: Interview Peking University, dream comes true to study there Independence
Subjective distance present – future self	Matches with objective distance (detailed story)	Perceived shrinkage of distance → very detailed description of the present, visible timespan through paragraphs	Perceived extension of distance (dream connects both times, but views of the selves is contrary)	Span between before and after the interview? → matches objective distance?

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES

Relation between selves and emotions	Self-love? Thoughtful			
Cultural context	improve education in home country with his knowledge	No indication for cultural context; focuses on own goal	'There are people in the room from other countries' 'after the summer vacation I come home back china and I know I have to work hard' outward pressure?	'to learn in PKU is our childhood dream' →deeply connected to his home country?

Table notes

EMOTION EXPRESSION IN STUDENT'S POSSIBLE SELVES