Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

EXPLORING MULTICULTURAL BELONGING

Individuals Across Cultures, Languages and Places

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TURUN YLIOPISTON JULKAISUJA – ANNALES UNIVERSITATIS TURKUENSIS
Sarja - ser. B osa - tom. 411 | Humaniora | Turku 2015

University of Turku

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JUNO doctoral program

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ISBN 978-951-29-6334-8 (PRINT)
ISBN 978- 951-29-6335-5 (PDF)
ISSN 0082-6987
Painosalama Oy - Turku, Finland 2015

ABSTRACT

University of Turku
Faculty of Humanities
School of History, Culture and Arts Studies
Cultural Heritage Studies
ČEGINSKAS, VIKTORIJA L.A.: Multicultural Belonging. Individuals across cultures, languages and places
Article-based Doctoral Dissertation, 149 pages, 12 appendix pages, 4 articles (78 pages)
Juno Doctoral Programme
January 2016

The article-based doctoral dissertation deals with adult individuals in Western societies who were born into multilingual and multicultural families and have parents of different nationalities. The study's participants grew up outside their parents' countries of origin and relate to a multitude of bonds that link them across various cultures, languages and places. The study explores the social dimension of cultural belonging and examines diverse approaches that enable the participants to create notions of belonging and identification despite possessing at times contradictory transnational allegiances. The works offers new perspectives on transnational belonging and makes a timely contribution to discussions in the fields of cultural heritage studies, ethnology and transnational studies.

The dissertation combines qualitative research methods with an insider perspective. The empirical material is based on semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants, among which are also the author's siblings. The study addresses the relevance of the author's personal situatedness and her multi-faceted roles as well as ethical concerns related to the methodological approach of insider research.

The social dimension of cultural identities affect both the participants' identification with their multiple attachments and language use in everyday life. The key research findings present interrelated discussions of the participants' notion of being a mixture, the importance of family bonds and multilingualism, a specific mixed family lifestyle, the notion of non-belonging and the study participants' sense of otherness as a means of creating communality with others. The study discusses the participants' various life strategies of flexible relativising, juggling with multiple affiliations, the approach of "blending in" and their sense of ironic nation-ness for constructing a coherent sense of belonging. The author argues that multicultural belonging is inextricably connected to an association with multiple languages, cultures and places. Multicultural belonging is relational and depends on the context, social relationships and locations. The study proposes that multicultural belonging creates a tolerant understanding of membership and enables experiences of cosmopolitanism and selected notions of allegiance.

Keywords: multi-sited belonging, multicultural families, multilingualism, transnationalism, identity, cosmopolitanism, otherness, cultural borderland, insider research

TIIVISTELMÄ

Turun Yliopisto
Humanistinen tiedekunta
Historian kulttuurin ja taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos
Kulttuuriperinnön tutkimus
Ceginskas, Viktorija L.A.: Monikulttuurinen elämäntapa. Osallisuudentunne kulttuurisilla, kielellisillä ja alueellisilla rajapinnoilla.
Artikkeliväitöskirja, 149 sivua, 12 liitettä, 4 artikkelia (78 sivua)
Tohtoriohjelma Juno
Tammikuu 2016

Artikkeliväitöskirja käsittelee länsimaisissa kulttuureissa eläviä aikuisia, jotka ovat syntyneet sellaiseen monikieliseen ja monikulttuuriseen perheeseen, jossa vanhemmat edustavat eri kansallisuuksia. Perhe on asunut maassa, joka ei ole kummankaan vanhemman synnyinmaa. Lasten monikulttuurinen kasvualusta liittää heidät monin sitein eri kulttuureihin, kieliin, maihin ja paikkoihin. Tutkimuksessa poraudutaan monikulttuurisen elämäntavan sosiaaliseen ulottuvuuteen tarkastelemalla niitä keinoja, joilla tutkimukseen osallistuneet henkilöt luovat osallisuuden- ja yhteenkuuluvaisuudentunnetta ajoittain ristiriitaisistakin monikulttuurisista yhteyksistään huolimatta. Kyse on arjen yksilötason ylirajaisista suhteista, joten tutkimus tarjoaa ajankohtaisen näkökulman erityisesti kulttuuriperinnön, etnologian ja kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän aloille.

Empiirinen tutkimusaineisto koostuu eri puolilla läntistä maailmaa asuvan 15 monikulttuurisen aikuisen haastattelusta. Mukana ovat myös kirjoittajan sisarukset. Koska kirjoittaja itse lukeutuu tutkimaansa kohderyhmään, pohditaan sisäpiiritutkijan monia rooleja ja asemaa osana tutkimusta.

Monikulttuurisessa elämäntavassa korostuvat perhesuhteiden ja monikielisyyden tärkeys, useista kulttuurielementeistä koostuvan perheen arjen erityispiirteet sekä tunne olla erilainen. Henkilöt käyttävät toiseutta välineenään luodessaan yhteisöllisyyttä muiden kanssa. He luovat arjen strategioita, joitten ytimenä on joustava suhteellistaminen, tasapainottelu eri kytkösten välillä, joukkoon sulautuminen ja kansallistunteen ironisoiminen. Monikulttuurinen osallisuudentunne syntyy useiden kielten, paikkojen ja kulttuurien välisestä suhteesta ja sen voimakkuus riippuu aina kulloisestakin kontekstista ja asioiden välisistä suhteista. Monikulttuurinen osallisuudentunne lisää suvaitsevaisuutta ja sisältää sekä kosmopoliittisia aineksia että valikoivaa kansallistunnetta.

Avainsanat: ylirajainen osallisuus, monikulttuuriset perheet, monikielisyys, transnationalismi identiteetti, maailmankansalaisuus, toiseus, kulttuurinen raja-alue, sisäpiiritutkimus

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(2) Čeginskas, Viktorija (2011). Experienced Multiculturalism - Experienced Cosmopolitanism? *Ethnologia fennica*, 38, 7-24.

(3) Čeginskas, Viktorija (2012). Belonging, Home, and Identity of Multicultural and Multilingual Adults. *Lähde* 8, 233-252.

(4) Čeginskas, Viktorija (2013). Mitä kulttuuriperintö merkitsee monikulttuuriseesa ympäristössa kasvaneelle? (- What is the meaning of cultural heritage for individuals with a mixed background?). In Tuomi-Nikula, Outi, Haanpää, Riina and Aura Kivilaakso (eds) *Mitä on kulttuuriperintö?*, pp. 106-130. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki.

PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In her memoirs, Madeleine Albright (2003: 53) wrote about her problems combining intellectual ambitions, work, family life and motherhood, a dilemma I certainly encountered as well when struggling with my doctoral thesis. It is difficult to set priorities without having a constant feeling of guilt and a bad conscience towards family, friends, work and study alike. I frequently blamed myself for not spending more time with my family and, at other times, for not progressing more rapidly with my doctoral thesis. When I decided to write the dissertation, I did not expect that the geographic distance from my department and the lack of regular academic exchange would affect my work to such an extent. I often felt a little forlorn working from home and regretted the absence of a wider and regular circle with whom to share my research concerns and interests. Consequently, I spent uncountable hours editing and reediting my dissertation. It took me very long to finish this PhD thesis but I am very proud that I eventually managed to be (marginally) quicker than Mrs. Albright!

Writing my doctoral dissertation reminded me of an exceedingly long pregnancy, which ended in a very exhausting labour. Being a mother of three, I know what I'm talking about, and I assure you that the actual act of giving birth to a child was really smooth and easy compared with the "birth" of my doctoral thesis. This work lasted for years and took me much more time and efforts to produce and push. Now it is fortunately done, and I promise I will no longer complain.

I would like to thank several people for their comments, for suggestions of improvement and in particular for their words of encouragement. I am very indebted to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Outi Tuomi-Nikula who had full understanding for unexpected delays and the fact that a growing family might slow down my work process. Thank you also for the impossible task to help me controlling the size of my work. I would also like to thank Dr. Johanna Leinonen who was ready to act as an insightful second supervisor. At my Department of Cultural Heritage Studies, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Anna Sivula and Dr. Riina Haanpää as well as Dr. Kirsi Tuohela at the Faculty of Humanities for sharing advice and readily assisting with many tedious and organisational issues around my thesis. I am very grateful to Professors Laura Assmuth and Laura Huttunen for their very valuable comments and supportive criticism in their reviews of my work. One person deserves a lot of thanking, and that is Dr. Martina Kleinert who proved to be a real friend in difficult times. Du bist wirklich ein Schatz, Martina! Vielen Dank für Deine nützlichen Kommentare, und dass Du Dir dafür Zeit genommen hast!

In addition, my thanks go to the following people: Dr. Adele Kohanyi, Pihla Siim (PhD by now), Dr. Susanna Österlund-Pötzsch, Prof. Dr. Kerstin Kazzazi, Dr. Anna-Liisa Kuczynski, Lisa, Maria P., Daniel Gardner, Anna-Maija I., Erik Hieta, Marlène, Mimmi, Drs. Christine & Daniel, Susanne S. (PhD) and Tėtė (PhD), and and and... thanks a million!

I would like to thank the board of Juno at the University of Turku for granting me an allowance on language checking costs for two articles in 2014. In addition, the university's faculty of humanities supported me with a language revision grant in spring 2015. I really appreciated your financial support - thank you very much.

A capital, particular and very affective THANK YOU goes to Seb who had to stand me during all those years when I was writing my thesis and who was forced to read, reread and comment on my work although he has a completely different academic background. Thank you for consoling me when things did not evolve the way they were supposed to, and thanks in believing and telling me on numerous occasions that it was just a matter of time. Thank you, my children, for not taking it to your heart that I was occasionally, and in particular lately, a rather grumpy and tensed mum ...

Finally, a wholehearted and multilingual "Thank you" to Paula, Christine, Sergio, Céline, John, Raphael, Fiona, William, Jalmar, Mina, Peter, Anė, Augustinas, Ivaras and Laurytė who shared their experiences and thus contributed to the making of this thesis, and also to all the other multilingual & multicultural families who originally participated in my research but whose data I did not use for various reasons in my thesis. What you told me was definitely not wasted and had an impact on my analysis. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any errors and mistakes that have occurred in this work.

This work is written by a multilingual & multicultural person for other multilingual & multicultural people, in loving memory of Dr. K. J. Čeginskas and dedicated to C, T & M who are truly multilingual, multicultural & even multinational.

Potius sero quam numquam, vale!

Neubiberg, April 2015/ January 2016 Viktorija Linda Aldona Čeginskas

1. INTRODUCTION

My mother was Estonian, my father Lithuanian. I was born in Sweden but I essentially grew up in Germany. My parents spoke French with each other and Estonian and Lithuanian with us children. Swedish is the common language of my siblings, but with me they speak a mixture of Estonian-German-Swedish. It was a pretty normal experience to use up to four, five or six different languages at our family dining table, both with and without guests. We did not have a single common family language; we had our private Babylon at home. Even as a child I noticed that my family was different to my peers' families: we used more languages at home, we had more countries that mattered to us and we merged many different cultural traditions into one family tradition.

My research sets out to examine the ways that assist multicultural individuals to create a sense of belonging, despite possessing multiple and at times exclusive bonds that transcend the boundaries of various languages, cultures and societies. Ever since I was small I have looked out for people like me, to figure out whether my difficulties of giving a straight-forward answer to questions like "where do you come from?" or "in which language do you dream?" was just a personal dilemma of mine and connected with my very specific family background, or whether I might share this experience with others who had a similar *vita* to me. The problem was that I did not meet anyone with such a complex background. They only became visible and audible in public discourse and in everyday life when I was a young adult, and all of them were families with small children. It is only through my research that I met some adults who shared a similar background but it was not easy locating them. Talking to them, I have realised that they, too, relate to matters of belonging in a slightly different manner than people who have grown up with a less complex background and with fewer bonds that extend in many different directions. Nevertheless, our attitudes differ. I found it intriguing to notice that even my elder siblings and I have diverging ideas regarding the issue of being an individual with a multicultural and multilingual background, despite our same family origin.

►Sites of multicultural diversity

There are manifold classical examples of multilingual and multicultural societies across the world. Take for example India, where multiple languages are used side by side in everyday situations as well as in regular instruction in school systems and where multiple cultures have co-existed as a result of local neighbourhood interaction (Edwards, 2007: 447). According to renowned linguists, the majority of the world population is bilingual and to a certain degree even multilingual (Edwards, 1994:1; Grosjean, 1982: vii, 2). In a more recent definition, multilingualism is understood as "the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives" (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 6). Indi-

vidual multilingual competence in a given language other than the mother tongue remains controversial within research on multilingualism (Kazzazi, 2009: 81), and definitions of competence range from partial skill to full literacy (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 6); however globally speaking individual and societal multilingualism is a norm rather than an exception.

Europe also offers numerous examples of multicultural interconnection and exchange. For instance, during the times of the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian empires, members of distinct ethnic communities started mixed families and used multiple languages in their regular everyday interactions (Applebaum, 2015 [1994]: xvii). European aristocratic dynasties frequently intermarried in order to both refresh their bloodlines and maintain their alleged purity of noble origins as well as to establish transnational alliances (Johnson et al., 2011:62). More recently, the creation of the European Union (EU) and its enlargement has facilitated procedures regarding the free movement of workers, persons and goods (Europa - Summaries of EU Legislation [online]) and this has led to extensive cultural interaction and mobility across all age groups and strata of population. In addition, the creation of the Eurozone with a single currency (January 1, 1999) has contributed to extend cultural contact from strictly economic and political areas to very personal spheres across and within its regions and borders (Europa - Summaries of EU Legislation). European states, both currently and in their historic past, are public sites of exchange between diverse cultural, ethnic and language entities, brought together by peaceful trade and cross-border contact as well as by violence, persecution and terrorism, poverty and environmental catastrophes (Auer & Wei, 2007: 3; Bartov & Weitz, 2013:1).

Evidently, there are various types of people who engage in multicultural relationships and integrate multiple languages into their everyday lives. They cross cultural boundaries by belonging to linguistic, cultural, religious, political and/or ethnic minority groups other than the dominant society. Or, they are engaged in transnational processes because they live in bicultural relations and have moved for academic, professional, or other reasons. Not every cultural contact and cultural exchange, however, will result in individuals who identify early with a mixed heritage and who use multiple languages when interacting with their immediate and extended surroundings.

The existence of multilingual and multicultural individuals is not a modern phenomenon but it is a continuous and dynamic process that involves progressively more and more people from birth. In contemporary times, interaction between people from distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds has increased as a result of more varied opportunities of individual mobility and new levels of transnational economic exchange and political cooperation worldwide (Beck, 2015: 70, 89). Mobili-

ty has become a mass phenomenon as more and more people travel or move for various reasons, including leisure, tourism and love (Urry, 2007: 200). Today, mobility is increasingly non-unilinear. People do not necessarily leave their countries for good but have the possibility to "shuttle back and forth" between their countries of residence and other places (Correia-Labay, 2005: 13).

Compared with the great migration waves of the 19th and 20th century, the nature of migration has changed in contemporary times (Block, 2006:7). Instead of mass migration we rather face an increased individual mobility. In 2009, it was estimated that less than ten percent of migrants worldwide move due to political persecution and war and, with the exception of tourism, worldwide migration and movement chiefly take place within regions and not across them (UNDP Report 2009: 1-2; The Economist, 2009 [online]). Certainly, mass migration also consists of countless individual decisions and overlapping trajectories but in our times of global interconnectedness, study, work and living experience abroad is considered to be a greater asset than in previous times, in particular with regard to economic independence and intercultural competence (The Independent, 2013 [online]; World Education News and Reviews, 2007: 1 [online]). In his study on immigration to the UK, the anthropologist Stephen Vertovec observes that present-day migrants originate from a multitude of locations and are driven by a variety of motives as opposed to earlier migration patterns from readily comprehensive countries after the Second World War (Vertovec, 2007:1029).

The "new" migrants are far more transnationally oriented and also more effectively able to remain in contact with their home countries and various diasporas as opposed to earlier transnational migration (Levitt, 2004 [online]; Bozkurt, 2009:52-3). Modern technology and advanced communication tools have contributed to change conceptions of distance and proximity in recent times (Urry, 2000: 74). New opportunities of intercultural exchange and virtual social network platforms allow people to keep up to date as concerns particular events and places. Consequently the individual's personal mobility through time and space has expanded and allows them to establish and maintain close contact with people across any distance (Urry, 2000: 129; Eriksen, 2007b: 36). We are thus faced with what Vertovec terms "super-diversity" (Vertovec, 2007: 1025), which challenges previous experiences of embedded cultural diversity by displaying mixed ethnic networks and complex relations to wider systems of market and state structures.

As a result of the increasing interaction between nationals of diverse cultures within state borders, a new socio-political approach has emerged that challenges the ideology of nation-states and previous policies of assimilation as major driving forces in the mutual relations between different communi-

ties (Jaago, 2011: 98). Notably in Europe, North America and Australia since the 1980s, the idea of multiculturalism has increasingly become politicised with public debates focusing on issues such as immigration policies, social cohesion and public policy as well as aspects of integral society, political philosophy, human rights and nation-building (citizenship and government) (Heywood, 2000: 226-7). Despite the fact that three major European politicians, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, former French President Nicholas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron declared in rather quick succession between autumn 2010 and February 2011 that the concept of multiculturalism had failed in their respective countries (see Der Spiegel; BBC News 2011, TF1 (10.02.2011); Bloemraad, 2011 [online]), the increased awareness of diversity has also had an impact on European government policies.

EU member states gradually sustain the cultural and linguistic diversity within their borders instead of continuing to administer policies of linguistic and cultural homogenisation in adherence to Western models of nation-states (Conseil de l'Europe, 2007: 36; Kazzazi, 2009: 86). Within the educational context, various programmes have been introduced to raise even greater understanding of cultural diversity and to enhance intercultural competence in various contexts such as the management of multilingualism, second and third generation speakers, languages mediation, language identity and political power (Gogolin, 1994: 9, 2002: 124-5; Breidbach, 2003:21). Most efforts within Europe are directed towards preserving a variety of languages and to promote linguistic and cultural competence in society with different levels of proficiency (Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 6) that contribute to the development of a new attitude, or *multilingual habitus* (Kramsch**,** 2003: 120), that acknowledges diversity. In 2007, the Commission of the European Communities introduced a broader perspective into the ways of possessing a multilingual habitus and for the first time explicitly stated that it may be acquired either during a life time or equally bestowed at birth by speaking "an autochthon regional or minority language in addition to the (major) national language", "a migrant language in addition to the language of the host language" and by growing up "in mixed-language families or other multilingual environments" (Commission of the European Communities, 2007:12).

►Multicultural individuals

Today, there is a higher probability that two people from two distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic entities will meet and start multilingual and multicultural families with kin relations across multiple regions (Eriksen, 2007b: 5, 13-14; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 7). I have a particular interest in the

multicultural offspring, one of the reasons for this being that I am one myself.

My thesis deals with adult individuals in various Western societal contexts who were born into multicultural families, whose parents originate from two different countries and who grew up in a third one. The study's participants are the result of at least one of their parents' individual mobility. Their parents do not share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and, consequently, family members use two or more languages in their everyday interaction with relatives, friends and others at home and outside their home settings. In some of the participants' cases, not all members of the same family speak the same set of languages. As an immediate result of their mixed origins and disperse family ties, as well as their extended repertoire of languages and different ways of socialisation these multicultural individuals experience multiple bonds, which allow them to construct significant emotional relations with their various cultures, languages and places in question.

My work explicitly focuses on the particular group of individuals who were born into mixed-language and multicultural families and who did not eventually become multilingual and multicultural in later life through education and migration. Being multicultural from birth was not a conscious decision or an individual lifestyle choice which the participants of my study made. Rather, their particular situation was "imposed" on them. I am particularly interested in how their sense of belonging is constructed, what effect the fact of growing up in a multicultural family may have on their individual self-representation and their relations with others.

Being a multicultural individual implies the conception of identity, which implicates "psychological processes involved in the construction of self with regard to group membership" (Hamers & Blanc, 2000: 200). "Identity" is neither static nor given but a dynamic process of the formation of different dimensions of identity that relate to the individual's interrelated and plural representations in their social, cultural and political context as well as in relations with others (Friedman, 1992: 853; Stier, 2003: 22, 67). Being a multicultural individual extends therefore to different domains of belonging that include positive and negative associations of self, nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender, lifestyle, class and place.

When speaking of multicultural and multilingual individuals, although there are many related terms that refer to slightly different concepts, coherent concepts tend to be lacking. The Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]:15) stated that it is "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses." The obvious problem for defining multicultural indi-

viduals is that neither a suitable counterpart exists in the guise of a rigidly monocultural and monolingual being, although this idea is sometimes evoked, nor is there a social group of "multiculturals".

My work defines multicultural individuals only in relation to the participants of my study. The main characteristic of the study's participants is that they possess many, very complex and emotionally significant bonds across different languages, cultures and places, to which they attach great importance. They share commitment to extended family members that are highly dispersed across various nation states, and in part across continents. The use of multiple languages has been, and still is, part of their everyday lives and memories since early childhood. As children, they have heard and spoken several languages both at and outside their home on a regular basis as a result of their particular mixed family situation, and still as adults they frequently use multiple languages. Language is a significant factor in their self-representation.

The individuals under investigation are multicultural in that they have been exposed to the cultural traits, practices and components of their parents' different cultural backgrounds as well as to those of the countries in which they were primarily socialised during their childhood. They possess personal experiences of diverse cultural practices and have gained insights into different ways of cultural behaviour through direct contact and interaction. A multitude of various, including global, influences affect the participants and allow them to acquire an extended overview of cultural differences and similarities.

Finally, the study's participants are multicultural in that they are connected to different ethnicities and experience multiple and varied forms of national allegiance within their immediate family. Frequently, there is (at least) one close family member who has a different nationality and passport than the other members of the same family. In the case of the participants, while some have only one "official" nationality, most are dual citizens, with one of them holding even four different passports.

In the following, I will continue to refer to the study's participants as multicultural individuals. Interchangeably, I will use other related terms such as multicultural participants, multicultural adults, or individuals from multicultural families.

►The fundamental need to belong

The multicultural individuals under investigation do not live on the margins of social acceptance. They are well-educated, middle-class citizens of Western nation states, that include various EU member states as well as North and South American states. Yet their alleged privileged social and political position, the question of belonging is a matter of great interest for them.

Belonging is commonly defined as an experience of personal involvement in a system or environment which enables an individual to feel and be an integral part of that system or environment (Hagerty et al., 1992: 173). It determines the individual's social relationships with family, cultural groups and communities (Kestenberg & Kestenberg, 1988: 536) on the one hand and with institutions and social systems (Anant, 1966: 21) on the other. Belonging indicates the individual's perception that their attachments conform to and complement a network of interpersonal and reciprocal relationships. It allows a sense of membership of a particular social, political, cultural, religious and economic group and enables the formation of identity (Hagerty et al., 1992: 172; Baumeister & Leary, 1995: 498). Belonging is a fundamental human need (Medved, 2000: 76), and, at the same time, an important psychological concept and a cultural aspect of an individual's group conformity and identification (Goulbourne et al., 2010: 69).

The notion of belonging is based on socio-cultural ties and associations of family relations that are expressed through language and cultural practice, continuously constructed in multiple discourse and interaction (Puri, 2004:174; Ricoeur, 1986: 246-7; Goulbourne et al. 2010:25; Phinney, 1990: 505; Fiske, 2004: 438; Berry et al., 2002: 358). Contrasting situations of cultural contact develop notions of foreigness, difference and otherness. At the same time, they strengthen the development of exclusive social identities in relation to other group identities and outsiders alike (Fuchs et al., 1988[2]: 175; Eriksen, 1995: 427; Puri, 2004: 174). The binaries of similarity and difference create frameworks of boundaries and borders that play a crucial role in the formation of exclusive group and individual identities, as well as in their potential to create conflicts (Barth, 1998 [1969]: 14-5; Fiske & Fiske, 2010: 289).

Several scholars have criticised the blurred and over-use of the term "identity" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 2; Kendall & Wickham, 2001: 156). Considering that most people perceive the different dimensions of their identities as integral to their selves and their self-representations, I have decided to use different terms interchangeably. I understand identity, self, self-representation, identities, identifications and dimensions of identity not as rigid states but as processes that include the partic-

ipants' vital, emotional and integrative bonds. These bonds may change as to their dominance and extent. They may equally include new aspects of identifications and different combinations, but the various dimensions of identity all together never decrease in their significance and are central to the participants' efforts of constructing belonging.

►Research approach and organisation of the introductory paper

I believe that the researchers' own life and experiences always have an influence on their research interests and choices as well as on the ways that they approach, analyse, interpret and finally understand their results. In my work I will use vignettes such as the one at the beginning of this introduction to illustrate my personal background. These offer the reader an insight into a specific notion of being multicultural and form a link to the group under study who are "multi" in terms of their languages, their cultural practices, family background and heritage as well as other dimensions of attachments across nation states.

My article-based dissertation is supported by emic and qualitative research and focuses predominantly on data from interview material with multicultural individuals. In addition, I draw upon my own experiences as an insider to the field because I share an understanding of certain situations with my interviewees. Moreover, I have interviewed my siblings and included their data in my research. Thus, I am simultaneously a researcher, a research subject and the siblings of certain participants, qualifying my work as "extreme insider research" (Seymour, 2011:92).

It was not a pre-meditated methodological choice to make my siblings' and my personal contributions become such a substantial part of my data as it is now the case. Rather, this relates to the evolution of my research process and the fact that my objective and questions changed over the course of time. My focus shifted from the original interest in multicultural families to multicultural adults, who offered fascinating answers. While I tried to make sense of the similarities and differences that I detected, I began to compare the participants' responses with my siblings' experiences, which I then again contrasted with my own personal situation. As a consequence, I included my siblings in my research, and my personal contributions to the process of data comparison and analysis increased. Although I am not an interviewee or participant in the usual sense, I included myself among the participants so as to acquire and provide a better understanding of my background. I will address the complex methodological and ethical issues related to this approach in greater detail in Section 4.1.

Long before actually beginning my research I already became interested in understanding the issue of belonging for multicultural individuals. My interest related to the question whether this was just a personal, family related dilemma or whether in fact there was more to it. Despite the methodological and ethical issues related to my research approach, I believe that only by collecting, contrasting and analysing the complete data material of unrelated participants, my siblings and myself, will I manage to extricate interesting results that shed light on some specific strategies of conceiving belonging. I therefore hope that my research contributes to gaining generally a greater understanding of the relationship between individuals and the possession of many multidimensional attachments and affiliations for conceiving a coherent notion of belonging.

This general introduction to the topic is followed by a formulation of my research objectives and the relevant questions that have guided my work as to how belonging is conceived by a specific group of adult individuals who have multiple bonds across different cultures, languages and places (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, I attempt to situate my work within a theoretical framework in relation to issues of belonging. I thereby give an overview of related theories that connect with conceptions of Western nationhood, transnationalism, transnational families, movement, hybridity, Third Space and cultural borderlands. The next chapter (Chapter 4) deals with my methodology and data. I explain my research design by discussing my multiple and overlapping roles of being an extreme insider researcher and the choice of various other methodological approaches. I then turn to the data gathered, which also includes a more detailed description of my research criteria and the participants themselves. In Chapter 5, I summarise the research results and relate them to my published articles. In addition, I provide an overview on the articles' main objectives and their relevance to my complete dissertation work. My results relate to the participants' processes of constructing belonging which connect to a number of various aspects, such as their notion of being a mixture, the importance of family bonds, the disposition for a mixed-family life style as well as their notion of non-belonging and how a sense of otherness may contribute to create communality. In addition I explore various life strategies which the participants use for their processes of constructing belonging, such as flexible relativising, juggling with their multiple affiliations and "blending in". This chapter also discusses the participants' feelings of proximity and distance as well as their sense of ironic nationness. Finally, my introductory paper concludes by summarising my research questions and the results of my work (Chapter 6) and by listing the used sources and reference literature. My thesis then closes with an appendix, which provides the questionnaire in its final form.

The introductory paper is followed by my four articles, of which three have been published in journals and one as a book chapter in an edited collection. The first article discusses the social dimension of multilingual identities and their continuous negotiations in everyday practices of the study's participants. The second article introduces some of the participants' specific life strategies, which I discuss in relation to the concept of cosmopolitanism. In the third article, and the only one that has not been peer-reviewed, I try to answer how the experience of multiple attachments affects the participants' in their efforts to construct a coherent sense of belonging and notion of home. Here I suggest that home is an entirely emotional conception. The final article connects my material with cultural heritage studies and proposes that the participants' cultural heritage goes beyond material objects and known expressions of intangible culture.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND QUESTIONS

As a child, the question of belonging was unambiguous for me as far as my family, our homes, my languages, my ethnic background, my cultural connections and my citizenship were concerned. There was no doubt, only certainty. Yet the older I became, the more my sense of having multiple ties was confronted with rigid interpretations of membership in language and social groups. To "real" Estonians and Lithuanians alike I was someone who was born and had spent her life outside the country. Neither could I fully claim to be Swedish on account of my comparatively weaker language and cultural skills. In addition, while I had always been proud of not being German I nevertheless possessed native-speaker skills and cultural insider knowledge. As a result I struggled with the plural dimensions of my identity, wondering more particularly about where I belonged. I felt both included and excluded with regard to each and every one of my affiliations. I was a foreigner, insider and outsider at the same time.

2.1 Research objective and relevance

My research initially focused on multicultural families with children but I quickly became intrigued by the responses of some adults who participated in this early research and who had grown up in precisely such multicultural families. In contrast to other respondents who had grown up with less complex ties and who frequently referred to the challenges of needing to adjust to life in a new country and of being in a bicultural relationship, the multicultural adults were more reflective about a variety of other aspects connected to the issue of belonging. A comparison of the responses from multicultural adults and children showed that growing up with a multitude of close and transnational bonds are taken for granted as part of a normal and everyday experience during childhood. The major difference is that age and growing experience allow adults to discuss the extended influences to which they have been subjected since early childhood in more detail and to reflect on notions of doubt associated with their sense of belonging. It was these insights specifically that led me to change the focus of my research.

My present work offers an emic perspective and examines the ways in which a specific group of multicultural individuals conceive a sense of belonging, while at the same time possessing multiple bonds that transcend the boundaries of various languages, cultures and societies. The process of understanding is a means to comprehend both the interpretation and meaning people give to their actions in particular situations (Gläser & Laudel, 2010: 32-3). My research analyses the participants' perception of belonging in their specific contexts and what significance they attach to sharing linguistic and cultural bonds with various groups. I thereby hope to assist progress in a field still char-

acterised by lacking sufficient empirical knowledge about how individuals experience their multiple attachments and how this affects their relationship with their multicultural bonds and their sense of belonging.

I also explore the possible impact which the individual experience of growing up in multicultural families has on the participants' processes of constructing belonging. I am equally interested in understanding the multi-dimensional and dynamic process of producing notions of otherness and sameness for creating belonging, and the ways in which individuals with multiple and potentially antagonistic bonds reposition themselves within these boundaries. My work identifies factors that are decisive for the participants' choices with regard to the ways in which they deal with their plural allegiances and constructions of belonging. By analysing possible strategies, I attempt to generate new ideas about the interrelated issues of belonging and self.

►Contested experience of multiple identities

Mobility across nation states has become a more common practice for a broader population that is defined neither as explicitly working class nor elite. In the case of Australia, the linguist Ingrid Piller has noted that these changes have resulted in a rising middle class that is culturally and linguistically diverse, a phenomenon that may also be observed in other states (Piller, 2012: 1 [online]). In our recent times, intermarriage, defined as an exogamous practice (Thode-Arora, 1999: 28), has become more self-evident than in the past (Piller, 2007: 343; Language on the move [online]). Indeed, this is no longer reserved for a privileged class and now constitutes a socially accepted norm beyond areas with increased interaction between different cultural groups, such as in border regions. Modern cases of intermarriage occur more frequently than previously due to the high mixing of different nationalities. They are strongly guided by romantic ideals and relate to the shifting relationship between gender roles and female empowerment in society over the past few decades (Piller, 2001b: 214; Lanza, 2007: 45, 49; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007: 283).

In our times, language skills are viewed as an enrichment in the sense of creating individual cultural and social capital (Jessner, 2006: 39). Accordingly, family multilingualism, which is conditioned by the development of multicultural families in which children are raised with multiple languages, is increasingly perceived as a great personal advantage (Mackey, 2008:1489; Kazazzi, 2009:95). Subsequently, bicultural couples are confirmed, rather than frustrated in their attempts, to raise their children with more than one language, as long as the language is deemed "useful" or "prestigious"

(Engin & Olsen, 2009: 2). Currently, a huge selection of parenting guide literature, internet sites and access to forums about bi- and multilingual families is easily and ready available for interested couples (see for instance De Houwer, 2009; Harding & Riley, 2003; Barron-Hauwaert, 2010). With more and more people personally affected by the experience of mobility and transculturalism, it has become more relevant to study how multicultural individuals conceive their sense of belonging.

It is clearly less surprising nowadays, than, for instance, twenty or more years ago, to meet families that raise their children with two or more languages and who intend to pass on the parents' different cultures in addition to the culture of the country of residence. This new appreciation of multicultural and multilingual families contrasts with the conditions under which the study's participants were raised, who experienced limited possibilities of keeping in touch with relatives, languages and cultures. Previously, multiple identities were contested and more negative attitudes towards multilingualism prevailed in societies.

Many societies were previously perceived as being more homogeneous than they are today as it was generally assumed that newcomers would quickly assimilate into society. Thus in the past, foreigners and multicultural individuals were rather invisible and perceived as a small and exotic minority (Westin, 2006 [online]; Ang et al., 2002:17; Baker, 1992:78). Families that would potentially have been multicultural not only yielded to societal pressure to assimilate. Frequently they made a conscious decision to reject the further use of the mother tongue and abandon some of their multicultural bonds upon arrival in the new host country in order to escape marginalization and ease integration into their new surroundings and the use of the majority language. The parents of the participants who were born before the 1980s often lacked substantial support from their surrounding as multilingualism was frequently perceived by the dominant society as "deviated from the norm" (Lanza, 2007: 45-6; Jessner, 2006: 39; Pavlenko, 2006: 3; Kazzazi, 2009: 98). At this time, it was common to advise the use of only one language within multicultural families in order to reduce presumed negative consequences for the children in terms of mental health, the development of cognitive and affective abilities, and language proficiency (Pavlenko, 2006: 3) in spite of the fact that numerous linguistic studies since the early 20th century have proven these prejudices to be incorrect (see for instance Ronjat, 1913; Oksaar, 1977; Hoffmann, 1985; Maneva, 2004; Cruz-Ferreira, 2005; Barnes, 2006; Kazzazi, 2007).

Until the mid-1970s, it was common law in several countries for women marrying foreigners to lose their citizenship rights and apply for their husband's nationality (Kerber 2009: 105; Piller, 2001b:

218-9). In the majority of bilingual and bicultural relationships, the couple would reside in the husband's country of origin (Tuomi-Nikula, 1987/88: 6). Children of such mixed marriages would automatically be eligible to receive only their father's nationality, which was also applicable in the case of the parents' separation (Piller, 2001b: 218-9; Kerber, 2009: 105). As a result of this legal situation, which both reflected the woman's inferior role within her family and which underlined her detachment from (part of) her original cultural identity, a multilingual and multicultural upbringing and education was discouraged (Lanza, 2007:45).

►Individualised experiences of cultural mixedness

With one exception all participants of my study are European citizens, although some are also citizens of non-European countries. Some participants grew up outside of Europe but the majority resided in European countries during their childhood and adolescence. All of them have either lived in Europe at a period of time, or continue to do so. My work will therefore frequently relate to the construction of the participants' sense of belonging from a European point of view, one that situates them as current or former citizens and residents of European states. Some of my more general remarks may also be transferred to multilingual individuals who grew up in other Western societies.

Similarly to members of cultural minorities and groups with lesser known and less valued languages, or diaspora groups (Klaas, 2015: 12; Byram, 1990b: 128), the study's multicultural individuals share concerns about language proficiency and identification and are acquainted with issues of partial acquisition of language and cultural skills. It is widely recognised that language is a powerful cultural symbol for purposes of maintaining social order and for developing shared concepts (Geertz, 1975: 89; Byram, 1990a; 93; Kuutma, 2006: 7). The study's multicultural individuals also relate to the significance of language use for creating meaningful relationships, in particular with family members. This is an issue which is also frequently addressed by numerous fictional and autobiographical works of authors with a migrant background (see for instance Anzaldúa, 2007:77; Hoffmann, 1989: 272; Walcott, 1986: 346; Albright, 2003: 119; Morales & Morales, 1986: 212; Noe, 2009: 68; Pavlenko, 2001:157).

The individuals of my study are not connected with Europe's history of imperial expansion and colonisation, nor are they limited to historically grown regional, cultural or linguistic minority groups. Their multicultural family background is also not necessarily associated with classical labour migration and long-term absences, or the state of diaspora as previously encountered. For instance, their parents' mobility relates to a variety of personal reasons and is not primarily supported by economic

reasons as often suggested in the context of ethnic labour migration. While many parents initially moved abroad to pursue studies and improve their language skills, others were driven away during or in the aftermath of the Second World War and yet some others moved because they had fallen in love. Some of the participants' parents met abroad after both had made the move, others made their acquaintance in the home country of one of the partners' and yet some other couples met while travelling abroad and thereafter decided to move to a third country. As concerns this particular group of participants we may therefore talk about a recent phenomenon that is linked with the post-war structuring of Europe and with diverse social transformations and economic developments of the late 20th century associated with globalisation, such as the significant rise of companies operating on a transnational level and international organisations as well as the increased mobility of individuals (Block, 2006: 3, 41; Beck, 2015: 89).

Today's possibilities of interconnecting with a variety of people and places assist to construct meaningful relationships and to maintain notions of attachment with family members and friends, as well as with particular places, languages and cultures across the world. Unlike established diaspora, minority or migrant groups (Bozkurt, 2009: 46; Levitt 2004 [online]; Safran, 2005: 53), or expatriate networks (Willis & Yeoh, 2008: 214), the multicultural individuals under investigation in the present study lack institutionalised group support and the right to recognition in efforts to maintain their various multicultural bonds. As a result, they commonly perceive their multicultural experiences to be very individual, unique and inextricably connected with their particular, mixed family backgrounds.

The participants all grew up in families that are situated in and between diverse cultures. At the same time, they possess diverse cultures within a single family and are also linguistically immersed in several societies through imaginative dimensions of sharing roots, routes and cultural representations (Anderson, 2001:111; Clifford, 1997: 46; Cohen, 1996: 516). Thus, the participants have in common multiple transnational connections and extended mobile identities with various groups, such as members of a diaspora, second generation migrants, transnational families, Third Culture Kids (TCK) and expatriates, that attach them to several separate places and groups at the same time (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 7; Glick-Schiller, 2004: 457; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001: 6; Vertovec, 1999: 447; Colombo et al., 2009: 39-40). Although sharing overlapping features with many other transnational people, the participants do not fit into conventional patterns. For instance, the participants feel allegiance to multiple places that cannot be easily defined in terms of "home country" and "country of destination". Neither are they actual migrants nor non-migrants, but rather "culturally

mobile" people. Although the multicultural individuals do not necessarily share personal experiences of mobility during childhood, their particular situation of cultural mixedness is connected with their parents' mobility. However, their parents frequently do not correspond classical perceptions of migrants, neither in the context of post-colonial or labour migration nor as far as mobile elites are concerned.

The particular situation of the study's multicultural individuals has not been explored in the same ways as compared to numerous studies that examine transnational families with regard to care relations, matters of belonging and identities or with regard to socio-economic issues (see for instance Charsley, 2012, Friedman & Schultermandl, 2011, Trask, 2010; Goulbourne et al., 2010, Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Baldassar, 2001; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007).

Recently, other studies have demonstrated an interest in children's perspectives of transnational family lifestyles and attempt to bridge the gulf between the focus on disadvantaged migrant children that tends to discuss their welfare, education and livelihoods as affected by mobility, and the study of cross-cultural experiences and intrinsic processes of comparatively privileged, so-called third culture kids (TCK) (see for instance Korpela, 2014; Tanu, 2011, Trabka, 2013 [online]; Lulle & Assmuth, 2013; Fechter, 2008, 2014; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009). There is much potential in exploring how transnational experiences of mobility and the ability to speak multiple languages constitute a child's inner process of identity formation between adjusting to family ties and society. Indeed, these insights gain in value where they are contrasted with the experience of the elder generations of multicultural individuals who grew up under similar and yet different circumstances, which I shall attempt to make in my work.

►Interrelation between language and culture

In the year 2000, the European Union adopted the motto "United in diversity" (EU - Motto [online]), which illustrates precisely the lived cultural and linguistic diversity and variety that exist within and across the European member states. A high percentage of Europeans speak at least two languages in their everyday practices (see European Commission Special Eurobarometer, 2006: 8), nevertheless European societies are frequently considered as monolingual.

The monolingual paradigm, the idea that having just one language is the norm, has only relatively recently become a dominant structuring principle of modernity since the making of nation-states in

the eighteenth century (Yildiz, 2011: 2-3). The linguist Kerstin Kazzazi describes such societies with a complex political unit in which only one standard or official language is used as societies with "macrostructural monolingualism" (Kazzazi, 2009: 90). Macrostructural monolingualism extends to the ways in which societies function and construct their interaction in terms of the strong political and philosophical tradition of ethnic, cultural and linguistic coherence (Kazzazi 2009: 90). The monolingual paradigm also applies to most members of the group of OECD-post industrial countries, including European states that are institutionally bi- and multilingual (OECD, 2012 [online], Kazzazi, 2009: 86). The multicultural adults of my study spent their childhood and continue to reside in several of these states that share similar political and cultural premises of being imagined communities of nation states with a shared history and one dominant language (Craig, 1989: 316; Maier, 2007: 67; Anderson, [1983]1991: 6-7). This has certainly shaped their views on belonging.

The monolingual paradigm emphasises the conception of language and culture as being intrinsically and incontestably linked. Specific stereotypes and expectations of group conformity are evoked that not only extend to people who are visually and audibly distinct but also to everyday interactions with other individuals and collectives. In the context of post-colonialism, Homi K. Bhabha states that the loyalty and sincerity of people who present themselves as members of more than one group are often called into question. Bhabha points out that multiple loyalties may be perceived as having a destabilising effect on the unity of a particular national community (Bhabha, 1990a: 314).

Multicultural individuals directly experience the significant interrelation between language and culture in their everyday practices. On an individual level, overlapping identities fit together and allow distinct local, regional, national as well as cultural and social dimensions of identity. The person decides which dimension of identity is more dominant in a given context. However, Anthony K. Appiah cautions that conflict between multiple affiliations and allegiances are programmed in certain areas where the notion of a national identity and of authentic cultural traditions is still overwhelming (Appiah, 2006: 104-7).

For the participants, it is a matter of becoming as well as being (Hall, 1990: 225) multicultural through possessing multiple bonds. Language thereby plays an important role in that it allows them to create deep bonds, to communicate with diverse groups and to express differences in their everyday life. The use of a broader set of languages rather than just the one assumes various specific functions and additionally serves as a means of preserving, as well as allowing them to emotionally

connect with, their diverse personal cultural settings (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004: 14, 18-9; Grosjean, 1982: 232; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 5-6). As a result, the social and cultural relation between the languages may differ as well as their emotional significance for the speaker, irrespective of the speaker's fluency in that language (Oksaar 1980: 43-44).

In the participants' case, language proficiency, language affiliation and language inheritance are not necessarily the same. Language choice is primarily social in nature, and language use is a social activity that manages continuity, change and the relationship between social groups (Leung et al., 1997:1). Often a correlation is assumed between language identity and a person's association with specific family networks, community structures and identification with a particular ethnic group (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 92-3; Noels et al., 1996: 246).

2.2 Research questions

Multicultural individuals have a multidimensional and multi-functional sense of self and belonging that extends to their relation with the "other". They are perceived by others and identify themselves as incorporating similar and at the same time dissimilar, "other" traits because of their overlapping and various influences, attachments and allegiances. In their particular case, the fact that they possess mixed ethnic origins, speak multiple languages and connect with various cultures may transform notions of belonging, because it relates to the question of how to define belonging, whether by birth; by their parents' origins; by the place where the parents and/or siblings live; by the place of one's actual or former residence; by citizenship; by language skills; by dominant cultural affiliation; or indeed by looks. All these different dimensions need not be, and frequently are not at all, the same for the study's multicultural individuals.

The notion of belonging specifically relates to the fact that personal and group identities are formed by juxtaposing with "the other". I am therefore interested in exploring the following questions:

1. How do multilingual, multicultural and multinational individuals construct their sense of belonging in relation to others and in what way do they perceive their belonging?

This question aims to identify the most significant bonds to which individuals with a mixed family background relate. It equally refers to the multicultural individuals' development of meaningful re-

lations with their languages and cultural affiliations as well as their other various attachments that point to different directions. During our life-long negotiation of values and the content of our identities, self-images and representations, we are engaged in interaction and dialogue with our environment (Smith, 2001: 188). The response of the environment proves to be important for the formation of our selves. In acknowledging the dynamics of culture, complex and ambivalent power relationships with "the other" become apparent, in particular through language use (Smith, 2001: 188).

The question also examines the psychological aspect of what it means for individuals to grow up possessing a multitude of different cultural ties and allegiances across nation states, and what significance they attach to their multiple bonds. Language skills and the development of a shared language are considered to be a significant prerequisite for constructing a group as a culture and ethnicity and, in extension, for creating a national consciousness (Kuutma, 2006: 7; Byram, 1990a: 93, 1990b:127; Geertz, 1975: 89). How exactly the participants relate to the relationship of language, culture and identity is not based on previous culture-contact concepts in relation to self-identification (Brubaker, 2001: 542-5; Colombo et al., 2009: 54-5) but rather includes a variety of different experiences arising from their mixed background.

Individuals with a mixed family background may have expertise in a particular language, but this does not necessarily mean that they identify or possess a sense of close attachment to that particular language. The needs and uses of their linguistic repertoires are very complex and never balanced. There are no rational answers that account for the use and subjective meaning of a certain language for an individual in a particular context. Being born into a family, which is associated with the use of a specific language, neither assures proficiency nor close relationship with this language (Block, 2006: 36). Equally, however, the study's multicultural individuals may feel cultural allegiance to a particular ethnic entity without mastering the language well (Pease-Alvarez, 2003:15-6; Bozkurt, 2009: 156-7). Tensions arise if they are proficient in several languages but deliberately choose to mostly use one language while personally identifying with a cultural entity associated with another language (Herdina & Jessner, 2002: 104-5; Lamarre, 2003: 67-9; Pease-Alvarez, 2003: 14).

Manifestations of ethnicity and belonging are based on an individual's personality and are felt as an integral part of the individual's self. They become private matters (Österlund-Pötzsch, 2003: 225-7) and, similarly to language use, may change and shift during a lifetime. I am interested in exploring how the everyday processes of positioning themselves with regard to their multiple bonds affect the participants and how they contribute to make it an individual experience that possibly differs from

other transnational experiences.

2. What possible constraints may they experience in the process of constructing belonging?

This issue explores how multicultural adults relate to the association of exclusive belonging in relation to the notion of possessing multiple attachments. The study's multicultural individuals live both with a strong notion of cultural mixing and experiences that limit such notions of mixing. This relates directly to the issue that the existence of individual multilingual and multicultural ties are regarded as a new or "exotic" phenomenon within the societies the participants live and that they are not members of a recognised group as for instance minority, diaspora or migrant groups (Baker, 1992:78; Ang et al. 2002: 17, 39, 2006: 22, 32-4; Scarino, 2014: 292, 301-2).

This question relates to the participants' notion of belonging as a transnational experience that is characterised simultaneously as intimate, multi-local and multi-sited. For instance, multiple national loyalties may exist within one family; nevertheless the family forms a unity across borders. They share with transnational families the feature that the family unit serves as an identity marker for the individual within a community and additionally creates a sense of communality (Vuorela, 2002:76). Transnational studies show that although each family and each member within that family creates new ties and loyalties, the family bonds remain significant for placing and rooting the individuals in their family history and chain of events that allow real and imagined bonds across national borders and entities (Macdonald, 1993:1; Vuorela, 2002:68). At the same time, the participants are able to establish relationships with people they may not have met before and with whom they share a sense of connection and community, despite a lack of shared origins, cultural socialisation and languages. With regard to this particular experience they seem to move within a specific space of multiple cultural contact that allows for very differing experiences to belonging.

Belonging is predominantly defined with regard to group conformity and often interrelated with language use and cultural immersion in terms of a monolingual paradigm and concepts of nationhood. Linguistic practices are important for constructing the multicultural individuals' cultural identities and regarded as symbolic resources that are convertible into social capital (Bourdieu, 1984: 178, 250-1; Goulbourne et al., 2010: 28, 31, 101). The relation between language, culture and emotional identification remains significant for understanding how belonging is constructed in the case of multilingual individuals who may deliberately choose to predominantly use one language while at the same time identifying with cultural groups that are associated with other languages.

Nationalism becomes more important the moment it seems relevant to people to compare themselves, their country, products and other things with foreigners rather than with a compatriot (Eriksen, 1995: 433). For the majority of people who live in Western societies, nationality and the cultural reference to the Western hemisphere are important for defining and identifying origins, belonging and home in everyday encounters. Although nation-ness is a "contingent event" that does not need to remain a substantial or enduring collectivity, it is rather a fluctuating, multi-faceted conception of a geo-political entity that overcomes plural ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups in one territory (Brubaker, 2007: 18-21). At the same time, the interrelation of nation states with language and culture complicates matters and limits the free development of a sense of belonging for multicultural individuals. The participants live in nation-states where the use and the existence of multiple languages are regarded as a threat to the cohesion of individuals and communities, cultures, nations and institutions (Yildiz, 2011, 2-3). This attitude affects the participants ways of constructing belonging in relation to group and personal identifications.

3. Which particular strategies do multicultural individuals develop in order to manage their multiple attachments?

The experience of various allegiances and claims that pull and push them into opposite directions make the participants simultaneously perceive themselves as insiders and outsiders in the entities to which they feel allegiance. The participants' identity work and their construction of a sense of belonging is complicated by a myriad of social, cultural and historical factors (Trask, 2010:70). They frequently experience situations in their daily interactions where they are not able to display coherence between expected behaviour, attitudes, language knowledge, accents or names, and thereby do not conform to issues of "national and cultural purity" and expected signs of membership. In addition, they possess more allegiances and attachments than commonly assumed that allow them to interrelate and establish a sense of community with people, despite a lack of shared origins, cultural socialisation or languages.

The participants' strategies to construct belonging must be seen in the light of their childhood experiences, when multiple identities were often contested in societies and fewer technological possibilities existed that facilitated keeping in contact with relatives across distances and with the languages and cultures in question. With regard to the multicultural participants, it can be assumed that the more languages with an emotional relevance they possess, regardless of their fluency, the more they will connect to a diversity of cultures. However, does this in turn also imply that extended experi-

ences of cultural contacts might obstruct the development of a specific sense of belonging? My interest in the participants' strategies sets out to explore in what ways they adjust both to their diverse multicultural bonds and the antagonistic claims connected with them. In addition, it relates to the question of whether multicultural experience and the possession of multiple affiliations and loyalties may result in a more inclusive sense of cultural belonging.

3. THEORIES OF CULTURAL BORDERLAND

In the chapters above, I introduced the various reasons for the participants' experiences of intensive cultural contact across cultural and language group boundaries to which they are subjected and that additionally connect them with multiple places. In the following, I shall present a number of concepts that make it possible to frame the participants' experiences of possessing a variety of different cultural ties across multiple spatial, political and cultural boundaries as related to the construction of a cultural space that is defined by encounters and boundaries.

The development of Western nation states is a crucial factor in understanding why the construction of belonging may prove to be a complex issue for multicultural individuals. Nationhood is a relatively modern socio-political category and needs to be seen in the context of the increasing political and social importance of national movements in the 19th century, which fostered different geo-political, social and emotional conceptions of membership than has previously been the case (Judson, 2012: 19; Anderson, [1983]1991: 15; Brubaker, 2007: 18-20). The nation state is constructed as a symbolic and imagined community of shared ancestry and history and defined in ethnocultural terms as well as in terms of a language community between a people, a language, a culture and a territory (Weber-Kellermann & Bimmler, 1985: 7, 18, 22; Eisch, 2007:142). Nations thus function as a divide that creates borders and demarcates exclusive territories and groups. National narratives assist to exert political and cultural hegemony by creating a sense of unequivocal belonging among a nation's subjects (Bartov & Weitz, 2013: 17).

To argue that nations are imagined communities (Anderson, 1991: 6-7) is not to say that they are not experienced as real (Ahmed, 2000: 98). According to Sara Ahmed, the nation becomes imagined and embodied as a space in contrast to others/strangers but also in identifications with close others (Ahmed, 2000: 100). Specific places, locations, landscapes and symbols are frequently more important for the individual than a territory in the sense of nation-ness (Urry, 2007: 263); however, we express belonging through language use, the sharing of cultural concepts and cultural practices, through a sense of emotional membership, citizenship and through actual participation in the social and political realm. The individual self and its "proper place and positioning" in a wider global context are confirmed by a set of interrelations and oppositions with "the other" (Kuutma, 2006:7). The responses from the environment prove to be very important for an individual's self-representation and sense of belonging (Smith, 2001: 188). In the case of the study's multicultural individuals, the fact of associating with several nationalities and ethnicities is a personal marker. It allows the indi-

vidual to distinguish from others and at the same time indicates zones of overlapping cultural contact with a multitude of people. Multicultural individuals routinely cross exclusive boundaries in their every day interactions.

►Defining cultural borderland

A borderland is usually defined in geo-political terms as a region that separates states with differing political sovereignty. It is often discussed in relation to mark boundaries between different states with culturally and historically distinct communities (Bartov & Weitz, 2013:1). The concept of cultural borderland, however, defines a zone of intrinsic experience of cultural contact that allows individuals to reject concrete forms of socio-cultural identifications (Anzaldúa, 2007: 100). At the same time, the concept also describes specific geo-political spaces and practices of extensive cultural exchange in everyday life (Judson, 2012: 19). Thus, cultural borderland offers a constructive approach both for exploring the processes in which the study's multicultural individuals construct belonging and for understanding how their sense of belonging relates to specific experiences of being situated between various exclusive groups.

The concept was first introduced in Latin American and Feminist studies in the context of transnational belonging in the US-Mexico border region. It explores the underlying dynamics and the significance of cultural exchange and mixing for individuals that view their affiliations in terms of overlapping regional loyalties, mixed language use and social class that go beyond exclusive language use and national borders (Anzaldúa, 2007:102). People living in these borderland areas are affected by the borders in multiple ways. They speak not one but several languages and experience that the frontier may also physically and culturally separate their families.

The American-Mexican feminist Gloria Anzaldúa has discussed cultural borderland in relation to her personal experience of being a *mestiza*, a woman of mixed racial and ethnic descent, a lesbian and writer. She has argued that the cultural borderland (or: *la frontera*) is not solely a divide between distinct cultures and social systems. Rather, it creates a new subjective state of ambiguity that enables individuals to hold multiple social and cultural perspectives (Anzaldúa, 2007:7), thereby situating the concerned individuals in a lived or third space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 38-39; Soja, 1996: 31). The borderland is perceived as being created by those who are subjected to substantial cultural contact and tensions, and, at the same time, it is also part of those who produce it, in particular through the active use and mixing of languages (Anzaldúa, 2007: 81). Anzaldúa describes the

borderland as a space of constant shifts and struggles that allow for the de-construction of existing and the production of new meanings across distinct cultural traditions and practices. The concept thus also encourages discussions that connect border identities and cultural membership with existential issues of conformity, oppression and social inequalities (Anzaldúa, 2007: 100).

The concept of cultural borderland has recently also become popular as an analytical approach in historical studies for studying the political dimensions of cultural relations in multilingual regions of Central and Eastern Europe. It refers to geographical areas that indicate former zones of intense social exchange as well as cultural and linguistic mixing across all strata of population in the multiethnic territories of the Austria-Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Empires (Judson, 2012: 18; Bartov & Weitz, 2013: 2). For centuries, people living in these multilingual borderland regions defied political or national tendencies and instead identified with regional loyalties, religious practice and social class (Applebaum, 2015 [1992]: xvi-xvii; Judson, 2012: 19; Bartov & Weitz, 2013: 8). The experience of everyday cultural difference and diversity assisted the development of heterogeneous identities within a demarcated space that blurred the outlines of borders (Applebaum, 2015 [1992]: xx). The historic approach to borderlands has contributed to shift the focus away from emphasising cultural differences that mark boundaries between states to the exploration of zones of cultural exchange and historic influences.

The cultural borderland is characterised as a space that includes increased cultural mixing on the one hand and the confrontation with (in)visible boundaries on the other hand. The concept of cultural borderland is more than a mere geographic marker that highlights division or a space of direct contact between two neighbouring countries. It is also to be understood as a cultural space of contact that allows for the exploration of different levels of political and social interactions between the national and the regional and between different cultural and linguistic groups that make up the region as well as diverse forms of transnational or hybrid cultures (Haas & Herrera-Sobek, 2012: 1 [online]). This space relates to an inner state that situates individuals in ambiguity by connecting and resembling them to two or more distinct conditions at the same time.

►Transnational perspectives

The concept of borderland allows the individual to hold multiple perspectives, which are multifaceted and change throughout life. At the same time, cultural borderland is not recognised as a legitimate form of creating membership. Thus, it relates to the construction of a space that is developed

by numerous encounters that simultaneously support and limit the experience of multiple cultural contact and attachments in modern nation states. I regard this aspect as being particularly relevant to studying the ways in which multicultural individuals conceive a sense of belonging in their social interaction with others.

Various concepts have emerged in the study of global flows and cultural contact to describe cultural confluence and demonstrate how cultural landscapes are subject to change everywhere. The Cuban historian Fernando Ortiz first coined the term transculturalism in his study "Cuban counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar" (1940) that explored socio-economic processes and their effects on the formation of national and individual identities within Cuban society. Ortiz described transculturalism as a transformative local process in which different cultural practices cooperate to bring about a new reality which necessitates a phase of uprooting and deculturation (Birringer, 2000: 174-175).

Although the concept of cultural borderland is often depicted as a transformative and site-specific process in which the experience and regular use of diverse cultural practices bring about an awareness of otherness, it need not relate to a specific place. Unlike Ortiz' concept, the appreciation of cultural differences does not require a loss of the previous culture. In this, the participants are closer to ideas of establishing transnational bonds.

The participants' ability to change perspectives and to form different dimensions of social relationships is not necessarily linked with direct experiences of place and ethnicity as is often suggested in the context of transnational migration studies (see for instance Vertovec, 1999:450; Portes et al., 1999: 219; Levitt, 2004 [online]; Baldassar, 2007: 282-4**)**. Contrary to traditional concepts of nostalgia, as commonly proposed in diaspora studies (Safran, 1991: 83), multicultural individuals are orientated simultaneously to the past, present and future (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 6). They possess transnational ties that cut through time and space and allow them to establish a connection with their parents' and their own past and present lives, which additionally have an impact on their future bonds. Transnational experiences contribute to develop a spatial, temporal and cultural imaginative space that is not linked with the experience of actual dwelling.

Recent studies on "return migrants" and second and third generation migrants suggest that the use of ethnicity and place is not sufficient for understanding local and hybrid changes (Thai, 2006: 2 [online]; Kanno, 2000: 11; Christou, 2006: 1045; Roth, 2007: 202, 217; Bozkurt, 2009: 215). Rather, the transnational experiences and practices of the study's participants extend to various areas

that also connect with lifestyle choices (see for instance Kleinert, 2014; Rolshoven, 2011, 2010; Rolshoven & Winkler, 2009; Benson, 2010; Benson & Reilly, 2009), but they do not need to share narratives of "upheaval" and high mobility, commonly associated with the international mobility of highly-skilled professionals and expatriates (Coles & Fechter, 2008: 15-6; Gordon, 2008: 26; Willis & Yeoh, 2008: 214; Gatti, 2009: 28).

Drawing on the concept of third space makes it possible to understand the construction of the participants' sense of belonging in terms of creating ambiguity and negotiating between plural attachments and loyalties that are perceived as both real and symbolic, and which are not necessarily attached to specific territories. The concept of cultural borderland helps in paying closer attention to the individual's own assertion of status and social relationships which has hitherto been neglected in migration studies that traditionally stressed the detachment or placelessness and rootlessness of mobile persons (Siim, 2013: 120). Often individuals resist labels given to them (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 16, 21-2). The anthropologists Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich and Catherine Trundle argue that "while we might define [individuals] as transnational, they may self-define as 'locals' or use other place-based labels" (Bönisch-Brednisch & Trundle, 2010: 4; Benson, 2010: 74). They suggest that research should focus on the process of emplacement that goes beyond mobility and network flows.

Most people connect the experience of transnationalism with active migration that creates a social existence attaching individuals and groups not primarily to one locality but to several at the same time (see Glick-Schiller et al., 1992: 1; Basch et al., 1994: 27). Transnationalism refers to the ongoing development of multiple links that permit the formation of deep relationships of exchange, reciprocity and solidarity between people and organisations of different places (Vertovec, 1999: 447; Colombo et al. 2009: 39-40). Although the concept of transnationalism is usually associated with people in movement, it does not necessarily depict a spatial scope that describes actual movement or living in two or multiple different places. Rather, it has an imaginative dimension of sharing roots, routes and cultural symbolic representations that connect people across diverse nation states and thereby spatially link separate places, groups and individuals (Cohen, 1996: 516; Clifford, 1997: 3; Kivisto, 2001: 571). The anthropologist Nina Glick-Schiller observes that "[t]ransnational social fields include individuals who have never themselves crossed borders but who are linked through social relations to people in distant and perhaps disparate locations" (Glick-Schiller, 2004: 457).

►Significance of otherness

Cultural studies of transnationalism often emphasise hybrid outcomes and processes of cultural change (Bhabha, 1990b: 211; Hall, 1990: 231; Hannerz, 1987: 555). Concepts of hybridity and thirding in post-colonial discourse (Bhabha, 1990a: 312-3; Hall, 1996: 443, 2003: 310) refer to dislocation and notions of foreign influence and otherness that challenge power relations and contrast political discourses of exclusionary social representation and purity of cultures. Discussion of third space and hybridity favour the selective and strategic acquisition of meaning and may result in experiences of uprootedness and cultural transformations in societies with increased contact and mutual dependencies in times of high mobility (Bhabha, 1990b: 220; 2007: 247; Hannerz, 1996: 87).

Frequently, people find it difficult to accept in-between identities, and conform to societal norms by repressing certain aspects of their multiple subjectivities (hooks, 1990: 148). The concept of hybrid identities has developed as a potentially positive self-image in particular for minority groups living within cultural majority groups. The concepts of third space and hybridity place the emphasis on the experience of cultural difference which offers new interpretations of cultural dynamics and processes of constructing multiple belonging for multicultural individuals, rather than preserving fixed boundaries (Hannerz, 1996: 138; Eriksen, 1995: 434-5). It makes it possible to explore the ambiguity associated with multiple cultural attachments and national narratives of exclusive belonging.

Hybridity alone, however, is not sufficient to explain the complex situation of individuals from mixed and multicultural families and how people relate to their diverse multiple attachments or what strategies they may develop to conceive a sense of belonging when situated within nation states. The experience of ambiguity and of being both insider and outsider at the same time may be uncomfortable in everyday life and necessitates concrete links to spatial forms of social identification. The creation of a third space relates to a change of perception but falls short of explaining the longer-lasting effect of experiences that are not perceived as only temporarily restricted to the moment of cultural encounter (Bhabha, 2007: 2).

The concept of cosmopolitanism is associated with the development of a cultural disposition that facilitates the embracing of otherness and cultural difference as something desirable (Kendall et al. 2009: 105). Most debates on the subject of cosmopolitanism tend to contrast cosmopolitanism with belonging to the local and the rejection of national attachments, and thereby connect with processes of globalisation and transnational mobility (Kendall et al, 2009: 35, 39). However, not all transnational experiences lead to cosmopolitanism (Kendall et al. 2009:3), and neither are cosmopolitan

experiences solely reserved for elites (Calhoun, 2002: 105), as cosmopolitanism requires a sense of solidarity with others (Calhoun, 2002: 108), which relates to a social dimension of belonging.

Usually cosmopolitanism is discussed in terms of rootlessness, movement/nomadism and homelessness and often regarded as free from belonging to social spaces (Kendall et al., 2009: 13). However, other scholars have argued that cosmopolitanism requires the ability to draw upon and enact vocabularies and discourses from a variety of cultural repertoires, which implies the individual's participation in a variety of cultural settings (Kendall et al. 2009: 24; Hall, 2002: 276). The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005: 24) argued that cosmopolitanism can only be imagined from a particular place and its impact can only be secured through local participation, which also allows the experiences of belonging to precisely defined social spaces (Appiah, 2005: 24; Appiah, 1998: 101).

Experiences of lived diversity may clash with rejections of difference and otherness. The Western conception of nation states perceives belonging as having a monolingual and monocultural bias that rejects hybrid identities as potentially destabilising (Bhabha, 2007: 41, 55) and excludes those who speak the country's language less well or differently, or who display, in addition to shared cultural traits, unfamiliar practices and beliefs (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 5-6; Gibson, 2004: 4). Cultural identities are often imposed, and multiple identities contested even in apparently liberal societies (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 10-11, 19) because language use is always socially situated and linked to issues of identity and power in societies (Blom & Gumperz, 1972: 433).

The participants experience that in some settings languages function as markers of national or ethnic identities, in others as a form of symbolic capital or as a means of social control; and in yet others these multiple roles may be interconnected, while multilingualism is appropriated to construct transnational identities that challenge concepts of exclusive national and cultural boundaries (Piller, 2001a: 180-1; Maier, 2007: 67; Dauenhauer, 1997:132). Individual choices are therefore restricted to space and time, and depend on social and political categories of differentiation that confer varying degrees of socially endorsing or socially stigmatising labels (May, 2001: 40; Leinonen, 2012: 218-9).

►A space of encounter

Frequently, border regions are described in terms of producing a space of encounter. The concept of a cultural contact zone was first introduced by the linguist Mary Louise Pratt who defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in

highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination - like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (Pratt 1992: 4, 6-7). Contact zones are understood as places such as trading posts, border regions or metropolitan areas, in which cross-cultural interaction occurs on a regular basis (Pratt, 1992: 33-4). Pratt discusses complex processes of cultural contact and conflict between colonies and power capitals and between an increasingly domineering Europe and North America and the "non-Western" world. Her conception of cultural contact zones as places of encounters between people with a different cultural, ethnic and racial background who become transformed by their transcultural experiences perceives cultural negotiation as depending on the knowledge of languages and a sensitivity for different sets of cultural practice. This approach supports notions of difference and otherness as important aspects for exploring a specific cultural space that connects to different dimensions of constructing belonging.

Diverse forms of encounters produce cultural transformations and assist in developing a different way of understanding space. We live in times of greater cultural, social and economic exchange and increasing experience of cultural mixing. Ambiguity and multiple ties characterise the experience of many people in today's world. The study's participants are situated in an environment in which they experience a high degree of cultural contact and exchange that directly relates to their social and emotional relationships with various individuals and groups as well as their use of multiple languages in everyday life. Their multiple social and complex narrative identities create a sense of ambiguity and enables them to transcend various cultural and state borders. The experiences of the study's participants cannot merely be seen in the context of transnationalism, mobility or hybridity that allow to transcend various boundaries. Rather, they must be understood as developing a socially constructed space across diverse cultures that allows them to explore perceptions of exclusive boundaries of collective identifications and experience of existing and new ties that are created by cultural interaction.

The perception of a cultural borderland in terms of a zone of cultural contact refers to a socially constructed site that is relational and changing in response to particular historical and everyday political conditions. Discussions of simultaneous belonging to multiple actual and symbolic places that are meaningful for the individual produce a change of consciousness that renegotiate the individual's relation with place (Augé, 1992: 92, 110; Urry, 2007: 254). Places depend upon the symbols, practices, and emotional bonds associated with them, and thereby extend to encounters between individuals and communities (Medved, 2000: 76). Drawing on the concept of cultural borderland makes it possible to de-construct and renegotiate boundaries and favours the emergence of addition-

al alternatives to binary conceptions of (non-)belonging (Soja, 1996: 5, 61; Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 31). Cultural contact contributes to the development of new cultural processes and cultures and facilitates perceiving the issue of belonging in the light of the interrelated experiences of hybridity, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, diaspora and mobility.

Areas of culture contact, which multicultural individuals experience within and outside their home settings and while crossing these boundaries, result in cultural change and necessitate an active negotiation with their various bonds and identifications on the one hand and the traded conceptions of exclusive belonging through socio-political categories of cultural differentiation and shared bonds on the other hand. In their case, however, the number of allegiances is even doubled, tripled and multiplied, and so are the expectations associated with those ties. This simple fact renders their personal process of negotiating their selves and constructing a sense of belonging much more complex. As a result, multicultural individuals are believed to experience some sort of conflict between their allegiances and, by extension, a struggle in the formation of their selves and their sense of membership and belonging. The concept of cultural borderland assists in exploring the relationship between the significance the study's multicultural individuals attribute to plural cultural attachments and the use of multiple languages and their incorporation of different cultural perspectives of in-betweenness. It allows for the creation of a space that includes both experiences of boundaries and contact.

4. METHODS AND DATA

4.1 Changing researcher's roles during the research process

►A dialogic approach

My article-based dissertation is an empirical and emic study that combines qualitative methods with insider perspectives. My primary source of data collection employs a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and consists principally of data collected from, and in interaction with, the participants. In addition, I reflect on my personal experiences through the exchange with the participants. My work also relies on other sources to illustrate the particular contexts that affect the lives of the participants, such as autobiographical and fictive literature that deals with individual identification processes in the course of migration and intercultural contact, as well as newspaper articles.

My personal background is closely intertwined with my research topic. In this study I am focusing on a field that is not unfamiliar to me, but is the site of my own personal activities and experiences. I am an insider and share the participants' engagement with similar notions of belonging, non-belonging and self-identification as a multicultural person. This enables me to establish spaces of mutual understanding and of shared meaning as well as to add depth and authenticity to my research findings.

Since the shift from the search for the unfamiliar "other" towards a new "anthropology at home" as a central aspect of research in various fields (Jackson, 1987: 13; Bönisch-Brednich, 2012: 52-3), much has been written about the concept of "insider research". Significant intersections between the researcher's and participants' lives often lead to assumptions of shared experiences and understandings. They also result in expectations of the researcher's increased ability to use their own experiences to reveal insights about the participants' experiences, which brings with it the danger of "going native" (Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2014:10).

Insider research, in terms of the researcher's claims of direct involvement and connection with the research field, is often perceived as biased and is thus criticised for producing over-familiarity or over-rapport that questions the researcher's ability of critical reflection and the validity of research (Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2014: 3; De Laine, 2000: 105; Tzadik-Fallik, 2014: 106). Distance is an important tool for understanding context and keeping an synoptic view that guides the academic work and the researcher's integrity and relationships in multiple ways during the actual research

process, analysis and presentation of results (Gerndt, 2001: 79-81; Golafshani, 2003: 601). Distance also helps make for an unbiased and objective approach that aids the researcher in de-familiarising and alienating her/his field of study in order to gather new aspects through the change of perspective (Eisch, 2001: 31; Gerndt, 2001: 70; Kohl, 1993: 125).

The aim of insider research is to enhance the researchers' growing consciousness of the research issue and to gain reflective understanding of cultural and social interactions and their meanings, rather than observing the researched from a distant perspective (De Laine, 2000: 25). Insiderness is relational and makes it possible to discover otherness as a category that is negotiable in relation to the participants (Narayan, 1993: 682; Foster 2009: 19). The concrete field context may influence the roles of the researcher and participants, and thereby highlights the role of reciprocity in the research process. The perspective of the researcher is never stable and always changing with the context. Consequently, data production is never free of intersubjectivity but is always produced in a context that is reflected in the way that a specific topic is approached, discussed and understood (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 247; Narayan, 1993: 676). During the entire research process different perspectives are at work and relate to the relationship with the participants, the data and the researcher's own subjectivity. What is said about the social surroundings is thus done in a particular place, for a particular reason, at a particular time and to a particular audience (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 247).

Data guides the research process but data production in qualitative studies is not a one-sided enterprise. Rather, research is an on-going negotiation between the researcher and the data in one sense and a collaborative endeavour between researcher, participant and the audience in another, both of which probe issues that transpire in dialogues (Ellis et al., 2011: 21 [online]). The researcher is never just a mere receiver of information who plainly represents this information; neither is the participant a mere mediator of information. Rather, both participant and researcher interrelate in a process during the interview setting and jointly engage in a dialogue that produces data (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 246, 249). The analysis of the participants' data therefore also determined my final objective and criteria of research as well as my approach.

The Finnish folklorists Maria Vasenkari and Armi Pekkala (2000: 247) suggest the use of a dialogic approach that aims to fuse these different perspectives into the production of thick data that the reader may re-enact and apprehend in the written study. This dialogic approach is based on the interdependent relationships between the researcher, the researched and the audience as well as on the ways that the researcher engages with the data during different stages of the research process

(Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 249; De Laine, 2000: 181). As a researcher, I am actively involved in the entire process of research from data gathering and interacting with the participants during the interview encounters, to analysing data and finalising a written study. My engagement during the research process and my roles as a researcher are multifaceted and go beyond mere interaction, analysis or writing.

By understanding my research as a dialogue, my work does not claim to convey an ultimate truth and fixed meaning (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 249). On the contrary, data is always situational (De Laine, 2000: 181), and likewise an interview is a temporal encounter between the participating informant and the researcher that always depends on their respective cultural, social, historical, temporal and personal contexts, backgrounds and understandings (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 247). My research therefore remains open to reinterpretation, and the interpretation of my study's findings is also influenced by what I assume the audience, in terms of an academic audience and also other multicultural individuals, might expect, know and feel about the topic (De Laine 2000: 177).

►Conducting extreme insider research

My research initially focused on revealing how specific aspects of the participants' realities were interrelated and constructed by comparing their lived experiences. As the research proceeded, I gradually noticed that I was beginning to compare my findings with my family's experiences. Being a family member, I was familiar with my siblings' attitudes towards certain topics, which I had discussed with some of them on numerous occasions. In certain areas, my siblings seemed to display a more extreme attitude to multicultural upbringing and everyday identification than the study's participants. I could not help but become interested in these differences, and decided to interview my siblings.

During the process of comparing and analysing data, a multitude of different perspectives emerged among the participants and even among my siblings. Different "groups" appeared, which shared similar and differing attitudes. Occasionally, they all seemed to agree on the same position towards certain topics. Despite these overlapping notions, however, some greater accordance persisted between my siblings' perspectives, which on some occasions differed noticeably from the other participants. I decided to explore these varying perspectives at a deeper level and therefore included my siblings' data in my study so as to make my research more authentic. Some of the data was only generated during discussions of our (differing) attitudes, in which I also reflected on my own expe-

riences with regard to their responses on the same topics and referred to issues I had previously discussed with other participants. It also worked the other way around in the sense that the analysis of our topics was reviewed in the interviews with the other participants.

It was an unconscious act and certainly not a pre-mediated methodological choice to involve my family in my research, and thereby to make my siblings' and my personal contributions part of the data. Rather, the inclusion of my family members relates to the procedural nature of my research that is connected with the methodological approach of comparison and the fact that my objective changed during the course of the research process. It equally relates to the fact that I did not find sufficient other participants that corresponded to my criteria. The lack of a more balanced methodological position from the beginning created a number of ethical and methodological dilemmas, which I will address further below.

My approach could be best described as "conducting extreme insider research" (Seymour 2011: 92), where the inclusion of my siblings into my study adds to yet another dimension of my already existing insider status. The sociologist Julie Seymour (2011) introduced this term in connection with earlier fieldwork, which she had conducted on locations that are simultaneously homes and public places, such as pubs or hotels. Extreme insider research hereby refers to the researcher's insider position of being personally familiar with the research issue (Seymour is the daughter of a pub owner) and additionally interviewing family members in the course of the work. There are few other examples of scholars interviewing close family members. For instance, the folklorist Riina Haanpää explored her own family history in relation to a fratricide that took place in her family (Haanpää, 2008: 25).

Both Seymour and Haanpää raise ethical considerations connected with this particular approach of conducting interviews with family members, questioning whether research that is embedded in family relationships can be considered valid, and whether family members could be accepted as appropriate research informants despite conducting the research and interviews appropriately (Seymour, 2011: 92; Haanpää, 2008: 27-29). Although it is certainly easier and less of a challenge to exclude close family members from the research, the closeness of personal relationships should not result in denying them a voice (Seymour, 2011: 92). Family members can contribute valuable insights from an intrinsic perspective and facilitate a better understanding of the lived experiences under discussion. In their relationship with them, the researcher may additionally experience a change of perspective as well as enhanced reflexivity towards the topic.

Haanpää argues that instead of evaluating the family members' and the researcher's personal experiences in terms of accuracy or truthfulness, the point is more the prolific information and informative values it offers about multiple aspects that the individuals deem to be important (Haanpää, 2008: 29). I agree with Haanpää as concerns the value of this specific research approach for gathering intrinsic information. It is not possible to objectively analyse the experiences of the participants and my family members that interconnect with my own. In my specific case, objectivity and authenticity might be found rather by presenting closeness and writing into proximity of the participants' experiences (Bönisch-Brednich, 2001; 2012), than through actively or artificially creating distance. In fact, by exploring, deepening and engaging with the familiar I have the opportunity to discover the other.

In the specific situation of simultaneously being an insider, the researcher and interviewing family members, my personal subjectivity had a greater impact on my research. However, it is too simplistic to speak only of a dichotomy between the researcher's insider-outsider-positions, as other scholars have pointed out in similar studies (Bilecen, 2014: 53). My insiderness is situational and always partial and dependent on the context, which situates me somewhere between emic and etic perspectives (Halilovich 2014: 100). On some occasions I was an insider but at other times in the research process I did not share the participants' experiences and encounters. I also do not share the same (set of) languages, preferences, nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, age, gender or modes of socialisation with them. I do not even share all the different contexts, identifications as well as ideas and feelings with my biological siblings. Given the diversity within cultural domains and across groups and individuals, there are certain facets of the researchers' selves that connect them with the people they study and other facets that emphasise their difference and create greater distance (Narayan, 1993: 678-80; Chawla, 2006: 3).

Literature about how to approach data and how to negotiate common grounds when researching one's own family members is scarce (see for instance Parkin & Stone, 2003; Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). Most guide-lines are related to the specific areas of health care and nursing research (Lang et al., 2002), with the explicit understanding of interviewing a patient's family members. Instead of placing my experiences at the centre of my focus, I used them as a tool of comparison and contrast, which allowed me to change between different perspectives with regard to my relationship to various participants, my siblings as well as my role as researcher. The change from the role of researcher to researched and back allowed me to create a certain distance to the research field, just as it challenged me to question my understanding and the relevance of remembered experiences generally. I

am at the same time an involved outsider and a reflective insider, which makes it possible to consider the field from a variety of perspectives and to reconcile the positions of a cultural insider and of a professional outsider (Halilovich 2014: 88).

The references to the experiences of my siblings' and of myself in the text allowed me to relate to the participants' data and to reflect upon common issues and search for explanations. In the introductory paper, I opted to use autobiographic narrative insertions as a means of familiarising the reader with different perspectives by using a first-hand account and so to create a contrast between the experiences of the reader, other participants and myself. The use of vignettes and reference to personal experiences do not solely relate to specific events or experiences in retrospect, but are also applied as a means of interacting with the participants' interpretation of past and present everyday experiences. In addition to allowing outsiders to understand the emic dimensions, they also allow other multicultural individuals to perceive and contrast their present situations and personal experiences with what I set out as concerns the study's participants and their social relationships with others (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008; 449, 469; Brednich, 2001: 88-89).

I benefited from my extreme insider approach in that the combined use of my insider knowledge, the use of data from family members and my autobiographic perspective allowed me to analyse the relationship between the individual and the social surrounding more profoundly. For instance, I was able to discern that the differences between the participants, my siblings and my own attitudes were not only a "family matter" but owed to our experience of the social environment and diverse reactions to our multicultural backgrounds. My insiderness also lent assistance by showing that, despite the same preconditions, attitudes within a multicultural family need not be the same, just as it highlights existing differences among multicultural individuals who are a heterogeneous group with very individual experiences.

►Researchers do not exist in isolation - methodological, ethical and practical dilemmas

My master degree studies of history and European ethnology in the 1990s introduced me to the German research tradition, which stresses the importance of distance and objectivity (Gerndt, 2001: 79-81). At that time I had not been acquainted with other, more subjective approaches in historical research and ethnography and this inexperience as an insider researcher combined with my attempt to reunite my different roles with my objective and method of comparison caused me to commit a series of mistakes in the way I assessed my research situation and dealt with the issue of extreme

insider research.

This is why I would now like to address a wide range of complex ethical and methodological dilemmas I encountered, the idea also being to provide for a better understanding as to why I made certain decisions in particular contexts and at specific times of my research. Ethical dilemmas are part of fieldwork and cannot be adequately anticipated given that they usually emerge *ex post facto* during the research process (De Laine, 2000: 1). The ethnographer Marlene De Laine argues that such problems relate to situations in which there is no "right" decision but only one that is thoughtfully made (De Laine, 2000: 39).

While writing my first article I became very concerned that a disclosure of my subjectivity would directly affect my siblings in that I could no longer guarantee anonymity and confidentiality to the same extent as for other participants who were not related to me. Despite efforts to mask my siblings and their locality, the likelihood remained they could still be identified fairly easily. In my specific case, becoming visible in research does not only result in virtually no anonymity for the author (Bönisch-Brednich, 2012: 59), but it creates a serious dilemma of relational concern that has far-reaching consequences for others associated with my research, a dilemma with which auto-ethnographers are familiar (Ellis et al., 2011: 31 [online]). Auto-ethnography acknowledges that "researchers do not exist in isolation" (Ellis et al., 2011: 28 [online]). The maintenance of interpersonal ties with participants, or close family members, makes relational ethics more complicated and a crucial dimension of research (Ellis et al., 2011: 30-31 [online]). Although I did not conduct an auto-ethnography, I nevertheless share some similar issues in my research approach.

Although my first article explored among others my siblings' experiences and relations to me, I did not openly discuss this relation and its consequences for my research because I did not know how to do this without affecting my siblings' rights. My research had already progressed to the extent that there was no longer an option to exclude my siblings' data or to suddenly construct their experiences into one fictive person's experience, which might have been an acceptable solution under other circumstances and which is sometimes done in auto-ethnography (Bönisch-Brednich, 2012: 62). Owing to the distance from an academic environment and my past research tradition, I was still unaware of other approaches that acknowledge and accommodate subjectivity (Ellis et al., 2011: 3 [online]; De Laine, 2000: 25). I chose an incorrect approach but its use also helped me to identify important issues and relationships.

In my first article, which was the result of a presentation on a conference, I deemed my responsibility towards protecting my siblings' interest and ensuring their equal treatment with other research participants as more critical than disclosing my insiderness and subjectivity to a greater audience. Additionally, the lack of space in the journal article did not allow for a full consideration of the specific research design. I did not receive any methodological feedback on my first article and therefore continued to write later articles in the same manner so as not to create a discrepancy between them, although with increasingly greater reservations. I realised that whether I continued to use my siblings' data or not, in any case, their experiences and relationship with me had already become apparent with the first article. I felt that I needed to openly disclose my personal involvement and discuss my extreme insider approach, but still without knowing precisely how to do this as far as my siblings were concerned. In addition, I personally felt very uncomfortable and vulnerable about the idea of exposing my personal experiences to a critical and anonymous audience.

Certainly, I am aware of the principle methodological and ethical reproaches to my work. After recently having become more familiar with subjective approaches, I would be now more confident discuss my biographical presence and its implication for my work more openly and critically, from the very beginning. Looking back with hindsight and greater knowledge of the issue, I would have written my articles differently. Instead of using a pseudonym when referring to similarities and differences between my siblings' and my personal experiences, I would have included my subjective and auto-biographical contributions as integrated data of research and comparison that would have permitted an exploration of the boundary that separates closeness and distance in research (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008: 448; Bönisch-Brednich, 2012: 54). At that time, however, I did not know how to go about this and the way I chose seemed to be the most logical way to present my work and protect my siblings' rights.

I would like to address here other issues of overlapping researcher's roles and close relationships with participants, as concerns their potential to create practical problems. Once I decided to become visible and thereby no longer able to guarantee my siblings' anonymity, I needed to explain the situation, let my siblings comment on my material and ask once again for their consent to pursue my further use of their data. In this context, I unintendedly created a situation, which to a certain extent obliged one of my siblings to accept my continuous use of their data. This situation arose as a consequence of my fluid position as simultaneously sister and researcher and it was certainly also due to my inexperience as a researcher in how to deal with such a particular situation.

My request affected two aspects of my relationships as an insider researcher. Firstly, it is more difficult to deny a favour to a close person (sister) than to someone more distant (usually an unrelated researcher). With family, a request can easily become a more personal matter and the participant will, whether subconsciously or deliberately, consider the effect of her/his answer on future familial relations. Secondly, I had not considered the indirect group dynamics that may take place within a family. One of my siblings was a little more concerned about the issue of data protection and during our conversation on this issue my sibling discovered that two of our other siblings had already given their immediate consent, and therefore agreed as well. I cannot rule out the possibility, however, that if a complete stranger had made the same request, my sibling may have been more comfortable to answer differently.

The other issue relates to conducting research with close family. I underestimated the complications in some interview situations that could arise from the fact that I was the youngest sibling and also the researcher. A serious danger in conducting interviews with close family members is that communication may become ineffective when siblings fall back into their usual family behaviour, which may reveal itself in various guises such as interrupting one another, poor attention or poor listening skills, monopolising the discussion, using critical or sarcastic comments, speaking for others or making demands (Thompson, 2007 [online]). There were times in some interviews when it became difficult to make it clear that personal discussions were off-limits, while at the same time trying not to fall into the trap of becoming engaged in the very same discussions or to drift off into specific and personal family issues. In such situations, it may well have been beneficial to have a third, non-related party present that could have helped to steer discussions back into neutral waters, and whose authority was not called into question as it was in my case being the youngest sibling. Without doubt it is easier to develop a good balance between creating a constructive and close working relationship and keeping a distance with strangers rather than with closely related people.

►Dialogue put into practice

When undertaking empirical research and adopting an emic perspective, it is in principle the material and data that guides and refines the research objective, as well as the survey and interview questions, even at later stages of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1996: 8). The simultaneous process of collecting, comparing and analysing data also allowed me to elaborate on relations between the material or to discover new aspects that questioned earlier views.

Grounded theory was introduced as a constant comparative method based on collecting empirical data through a variety of methods, including interviews, surveys, documents, memos and secondary literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 101-2). I used a similar approach that allowed me to generate concepts and form categories through constant analysis and comparison of data (Strübing 2008²: 82; Strauss & Corbin, 1996: 89f), which served to contextualise data (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 251) and to explain many aspects of the investigated phenomenon (Strauss, 1991: 29).

In approaching the research topic I used various methodological means, which helped in understanding and making comprehensive the meaning that lies behind the participants' data. Comparison of the participant data enabled me to identify common issues, keywords and ideas. It then permitted me to develop different categories such as individual cultural pluralism, exclusivity and the familiar other, which helped me to gain a more solid understanding of the processes and factors involved, as well as of the phenomenon of belonging that situated the participants as "mixtures" and their notion of otherness as means of creating communality across boundaries. The simultaneous process of collecting, comparing and analysing data also allowed me to elaborate on relationships within the material and to notice substantial differences between the participants, which I could then follow up. For instance, the study participants' persisting self-identification with their multiple allegiances allowed me to identify their diverse life strategies.

In addition to interview data, I used e-mail correspondence with some of my participants, in which they elaborated or commented on specific topics. This allowed me to continue a dialogue with the participants outside the interview setting. I also benefited from personal notes that I took during or immediately after the interviews, as well as from my memos. The latter in particular proved to be valuable for refining my research process. In these memos I used brainstorming techniques and tried to find possible approaches to my research issue by sketching relationships, categories and comparisons; sometimes in various styles. Among other things, I created "poems" by comparing and combining the participants' data and situations with my personal associations and recollections. This process allowed me to move between different perspectives and to discover new aspects of the data that questioned earlier views. My acts of decontextualisation and interpretation of the data also encouraged self-reflection and allowed me to view the data from different perspectives that work against possible personal bias in interaction with the participants and the topic (Vasenkari & Pekkala, 2000: 245).

During the interviews, I used various poems and poetic lines, some of which I had written myself,

and a game of association to allow the participants to reflect on more specific issues. This approach enabled me to draft ideas on the material and to phrase questions that would lead to further relevant information. Poetic techniques are commonly used as a deliberate means of condensing data and presenting it in a different manner to the audience (Prendergast, 2006: 369, 372, 385; Lahman et al., 2010: 40), but my approach differs somewhat in that I asked the participants to freely and reflectively elaborate on themes and topics that they recognised both in the poems and from personal experience. These poems concerned topics that the participants and I had discussed earlier during the interviews. In this way, there was no longer any separation between my data collection and analysis. Vasenkari and Pekkala (2000: 250-51) point out that qualitative research processes depend on a dialogic and recursive methodology that calls into question what has preceded, albeit not necessarily in a linear, but in a contextual sense. The recursive exchange with the data between researcher and participants allows for the production of thick data.

Approaching the participants through a medium other than the use of semi-structured interviews was an effective way of entering into deeper discussions. The fact that they actively became involved in exploring certain issues intensified our collaboration as participant-researcher and added to the quality of their contributions. This dialogic and participatory approach was also quite favourable for my situation of possessing multiple roles and being simultaneously researcher and one of the "researched". It also assisted me in accessing significant themes from a multifaceted perspective during different stages of my research process.

4.2 Doing research

►The design of the questionnaire

I launched a small pilot study prior to sending out my questionnaires and before interviewing the first participants. My main objectives were (1) to identify potential issues of misunderstanding regarding the phrasing of my questionnaires; (2) to find out how participants might react to certain questions; and (3) to establish whether the number of questions was appropriate and feasible.

My early research focused on multicultural families with younger and adult children alike and I initially designed three different questionnaires for potential participants: one for the parents of multicultural children, another (called "18plus") for adults who were born into multilingual and multicultural families, and finally one for children under eighteen. In the course of my research I decided to change my focus from families to adult individuals and I began to use only a single questionnaire

that merged the questions from the earlier questionnaires for parents and adult children. Eventually I refined the questionnaire by adding and deleting questions from the original design, which allowed me to identify issues and to alert me to possible relationships more swiftly.

Between 2006 and 2011, I sent out sixty-five questionnaires and received fifty-two responses from families and adults alike. The fact that 80% of the people contacted responded to my questionnaire shows that most respondents were very interested in discovering more about issues of multicultural belonging. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed questions (see Appendix). I created four main parts that concerned (1) personal information about the participant: name, age, parents' countries of origin and education; (2) the communication structure within and outside the family; (3) personal opinions, attitudes and issues that deal with the participant's childhood and adulthood experience; and (4) questions about the participant's social interactions. Finally the participants were free to leave personal comments, with some participants making use of this and others omitting this section.

Despite my rather extensive questionnaire, my work relies primarily on the interviews with only some adults. This does not imply that I excluded the answers from the questionnaire; on the contrary, various topics from the questionnaire found their way through the interviews into my research analysis. I approached the questionnaire as a means for selecting themes and for constructing a guideline for the later interviews. To analyse all aspects of the data from the questionnaire or to make a quantitative assessment of the material would go beyond the scope of my present, already broad study. I limited myself to exploring the topics that directly related to my research objective in the interviews with the participants, which explains the amount of my interview material.

I prepared an interview guide before each interview. The topics had been drafted based on the participants' responses to the questionnaire or also derived from a previous interview with the same participant. The questions were ordered as specific blocks of themes, with references to adjacent questions, thus linking the sections of issues in such ways that allowed me to consider various perspectives on one and the same topic. Each interview guide differed a little from the others because I added specific questions for individual participants.

►Conducting semi-structured interviews

Interviews are defined as "an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest" (Kvale 1996: 14), with special emphasis on the significance of human interaction and the understanding of social situatedness of research data. Participants communicate their life experiences, emotions and attitudes towards specific matters which facilitate the deduction of diverse meanings. Interviews are methods for exploring data "on understanding, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings and the like, that people have in common" (Arksey & Knight, 1999: 2). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to approach various topics with greater flexibility and to emphasise the interviewees' own perspectives as a central topic. The researcher is free to conduct the conversation as they see fit, to ask the questions they deem appropriate in the words they consider best, and to prompt participants to elucidate further (Corbetta, 2003: 277). The spontaneous and open-ended wording of my questions allowed me to establish a conversational style with the participants, and yet to focus on the participants and the particular key themes, issues and questions they share (David & Sutton, 2004: 87).

While conducting the interviews I tried to formulate my questions as clearly and straight-forwardly as possible. At the same time, I constructed the interview as a "normal conversation", in which the participant and I engaged wholeheartedly. I hoped that this situation would be the most natural and would help the participants to forget that they were "actually being actively researched" during this time. Although the participants were aware of the recorder placed nearby, they generally tended to ignore it, and focused on the issues. During the interview I would take notes about interesting points on a note pad in front of me so as not to interrupt the participant's train of thought. Often the participants would return to points that were of particular interest to me by themselves.

My interview guide served as a "gentle guideline" that contained the leitmotifs of my research interest but enabled me at the same time to conduct smooth interviews that paid attention to the participants' *tempi* and turns of thoughts. This was particularly useful in situations when the participant had terminated a theme, became stuck in a prolonged pause, or whenever there was a danger that the participant would veer from the topic. I did not strictly follow my guideline or try to tick off all my questions, rather I used it in a flexible way, depending on the interview situation.

I arrived for each interview well prepared on the topics I intended to cover without being too stringent about the exact wording or order of questions. I was open to any spontaneous and unexpected turns the interviews might take. During the interviews I adapted my questions to the conversational

setting and left room for questions that rose from the context. On several occasions I made use of additional unstructured and non-directive interviews. For instance, I encouraged my siblings to speak without having prepared an interview list. I did not address any specific themes or questions; this was rather a small conversation that spontaneously took an interesting direction. These interview situations were only possible because of my intimacy with my siblings and with a very small number of the other participants.

Robert Weiss argues that creating an informal setting is important when conducting qualitative research. It helps in creating an atmosphere that makes participants more comfortable about disclosing valuable personal information and matters of emotional importance than is often the case in strictly formal or academic interview situations. He suggests the use of the research guide technique as a means for the researcher to also keep an emotional distance from the respondent (Weiss, 1994: 123).

My questionnaires were composed in English in terms of a *lingua franca*, and most participants filled them out in English. As a consequence, I predominantly used English during the interviews with the participants. My language(s) of interaction before and after the interview were subject to change and depended on the participant's language knowledge, or on the circumstances under which we had come into contact. In some cases, I also spoke German with some participants, and/or Estonian with my siblings during the interviews, and acknowledged my understanding of certain other languages whenever they were used. Generally speaking, participant language use during the interviews varied from English alone, to mixtures of half and half (e.g. English and German) or thirds (e.g. Estonian/English/German, English/Swedish/German or English/French/Dutch). Almost all interviewees used some phrases in a language other than English, frequently as a means to underline important issues, to give an example, or simply for fun. Being able to switch languages also contributed to creating a special and beneficial atmosphere between the particular participant and myself.

To use a language other than one's "own" in an interview raises issues of whether the researcher and participant alike manage to convey all their information in a language that is not theirs. In every interview the focus lies on the content and the message underlining the conversation rather than on the use of the right grammar or appropriate expressions. It certainly helps to be a multilingual to understand the message when "false friends" slip into the interviews or when code-switching occurs. There is no empirical proof of this, but I have often observed that people who are used to a multilin-

gual environment on a regular basis, tend to be more tolerant and have few difficulties connecting with their conversation partner even when neither of them use the exact expressions or correct grammar.

►The interview material

My thesis builds on approximately thirty-five hours of interview material (in total 2120 minutes) with fifteen participants who were interviewed in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The recordings took place in the participants' homes in the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Germany. These "regional" concentrations illustrate both the participants' and my own mobility during these years. The first round of interviews in autumn 2006 was still rather expansive due to my original research objective and included interviews with twenty people from eight multilingual and multicultural families that I did not ultimately include in my present thesis.

I interviewed each participant at least once, and each interview lasted on average 100 minutes. All interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder and the files were stored on my Notebook. Seven participants were interviewed twice in longer sessions. With some other participants I had a series of very short interviews over a couple of years. This turned out to be very interesting because it generated new qualitative data about certain issues and allowed me to undertake research into their views, thus both observing possible changes in their attitudes over several years, as well as gaining a more holistic picture.

In one case the interview was conducted at my home, in another case we met in a public place. I also made use of telephone calls for some interviews, as there were some issues with the recording quality using Skype. The same principle applied for the telephone and face-to-face interview recordings. The participant and I agreed on a date and time for me to call him or her. I usually put the phone on loudspeaker allowing me to record the interview with the participant. Additionally, I immediately made notes about the recording after the phone call, emphasising the most important topics as well as summarising the interview and describing the participants' reactions as I did after the face-to-face interview sessions.

The atmosphere during the interviews was generally relaxed. There was a good conversational flow with minor long-lasting pauses. In general, short pauses turned out to be important to the participant and myself. They allowed the participants to collect their thoughts and focus on how to explain cer-

tain ideas. Additionally, it marked the end of topics and allowed me to either move on to another topic or to deepen particular aspects that had been raised during that session.

In every research process there is a remaining doubt; the possibility of having missed relevant aspects of the data, or that multiple readings exist of one and the same material. This is an insecurity that accompanies any research, however, whether qualitative or quantitative, as there is no such thing as absolute objectivity. Subjectivity is always embedded in every from of data collection and data analysis, and research is actually a matter of selective contextualization (Amit, 2008:7 63; Charmaz, 2008: 401). My thesis does not claim to provide the "full truth" and I am aware that its content is essentially relative and strongly dependent on my position as a researcher.

I made the conscious decision to do the coding myself and not to use any software for my data. First of all, I felt that the software might not be able to cope with all the code-switching between different languages, which occurred during the interviews. I also have to admit that I personally do not feel comfortable using software, although there are many different and good programmes on the market. I therefore cannot exclude the idea that I may reach other conclusions if I re-examine the same material some years from now, or if I had used specific software.

The recording quality and audibility was usually good but some transcriptions were more demanding than others, due to background noises, the participant's individual speaking rate and articulation or the change of languages during the interviews. Before transcribing I listened to each interview several times, thus focusing on particularly troublesome passages. When working on specific topics or using direct quotes from the transcription I always checked with the original recording to make sure that no errors had occurred in transcription due to mishearing, fatigue or by misspelling. At the beginning, I transcribed complete interviews soon after having conducted them. At a later stage, however, I contented myself with selective transcriptions of particular themes or passages that I was mostly interested in working with. In this I followed the advice of Anselm Strauss and Julie Corbin who suggest transcribing only as much as necessary, favouring selective transcription that depends on the research objective, so as to allow the researcher to focus on the most essential elements (Strauss & Corbin, 1996: 14).

4.3. Meet the Participants

►Criteria

I defined four key criteria for choosing suitable participants for my thesis. They had to be:

(1) adults

(2) who grew up in multicultural and mixed-heritage families outside their parents' home countries

(3) with parents who originally derived from two different countries, ethnicities and nations and were native speakers of two different languages;

(4) suitable participants who from early childhood had been exposed to three or more languages as well as to multiple bonds and ties that linked them to three or more countries and nations

It was important for my research that suitable participants had early acquired their multiple languages and knowledge of distinct cultures preferably in a family setting that covered different forms of everyday interaction, and not as part of their school curricula or later as adults. I wanted to exclude that school education or later choices in life were the most dominant factors for the participants' identification with multiple bonds. Studies show that school education has a great influence on bi- or multilingual people in that the language of schooling usually becomes the most dominant language despite the continuous use of the other languages (Olshtain & Nissim-Amitai, 2004: 44; Shohamy, 2006: 173-4; Pease-Alvarez, 2003:12-3). According to psychologists, the most influential processes that involve identity issues take place during childhood and adolescence, affecting our present and future situations as well as connecting us with the past (Erikson, 1965:402**;** Berry et al., 2002: 29-30).

It was additionally important for me that their everyday socialisation had not taken place in one of their parents' countries of origin which might have encouraged a dominant relationship with that particular country in terms of culture, language, memories and experiences of everyday life. Choosing participants who grew up outside their parents' countries of origin meant that their relationships with both of their heritage countries were theoretically equally strong and weak. Their efforts to maintain a relationship with their countries of origin were also challenged by the bonds to the third country, in which they had grown up. I found it particularly interesting that most participants had lived in only one country for the greatest part of their childhood because I assumed that they had been exposed to a greater pressure of assimilation and integration forces than those who experi-

enced frequent temporal and short-term stays in various countries.

Exposure to all the languages of their heritage and socialisation does not imply that the participants were balanced speakers of their languages (Grosjean, 1982: 232, 1995: 259, 2012). In fact, the individual linguistic and cultural competence of the participants may vary widely, as their abilities depend, among other things, on their parents, relatives, peers and institutions as primary sources of learning and imitation (Allemann-Ghionda, 2003: 186-7). Circumstances in later life also meant that some participants continued to use multiple languages on a daily basis, while others used their multiple languages only occasionally.

►Finding participants

It was a difficult process finding enough adult participants who matched my criteria. With regard to multilingual and multicultural individuals, findig samples of identical sets of multiple languages, ethnic background and cultures is seen as being difficult (Barron-Hauwaert, 2003:129). As a result, the participants of my study are very heterogeneous in terms of their linguistic, cultural and ethnic constellations.

In addition, the potential number of adults with active multilingual and multicultural backgrounds is rather small. Many participants frequently commented that during their childhood they had were aware of fewer multicultural families as compared with present times where they have recently noticed a significant increase in the numbers of multicultural families with young children. Unlike members of larger migrant groups or members of specific socio-cultural communities, multilingual individuals with mixed family backgrounds neither form nor belong to a specific social category, a lobby or group that supports them. Most of the participants later maintained that they did not move in specific circles and clubs; nor did they stay in touch with specific institutions through which I could have easily contacted them. Contact points for bicultural families or my attempt to trace potential participants through ethnic community groups or a national census did not yield the desired results with regard to the tight criteria of my research. Double citizenship does not necessarily indicate that an individual grew up in a multicultural family. The study's participants who held multiple citizenship often explained that they did not disclose all their nationalities to the authorities.

A methodological problem in dealing with multicultural individuals is that family members often live far apart, and the story they tell differs, depending on who is recounting it. The participants

never suggested their own siblings for my study. I can only speculate on the reasons, apart from the fact that most of the participants' siblings lived far away, often on different continents. Perhaps the individuals I had already approached for my study feared that it might become too personal or intimate if I additionally contacted their siblings; maybe they had no desire to hear their siblings' versions; or they expected contradicting statements. Yet as Ulla Vuorela suggested for the research about involving transnational family members (Vuorela, 2002: 64), it is not necessary to conduct multi-sited ethnography in order to understand a multi-sited family in terms of the issues that arise and which they have in common.

I used various approaches to search for participants. While still living in the Netherlands, I introduced my research project in the students' and parents' news bulletins of the British, International and American schools in The Hague. I chose these particular schools because they were relatively large and, participating myself in the expatriate community at that time, I was aware that many mixed and expatriate families deliberately chose to send their children to English-speaking schools, regardless of their linguistic, ethnic and cultural origins. Some of the students' parents matched my criteria and I followed them up. I also contacted local expatriate platforms, such as "Connecting Women" in The Netherlands, in order to make my research public. Most responses, however, concerned family situations that differed from my specific criteria.

The best approach for contacting adult participants proofed to be asking personal friends and existing participants for their help. In particular those working in the fields of international organisations or in language schools were able to introduce me to colleagues or friends who might match my criteria. This may explain why the participants of my study were predominantly situated in Europe at the time of the interviews, or why most of them had grown up and spent a considerable number of years in Europe. It also explains why several participants work in international fields.

A small case study offers the opportunity to closely follow participants without exhausting available financial and personal resources. Its advantage lies precisely in the production of deep data that emphasises the context. It should be understood that the number of cases is less significant in qualitative studies if the researcher manages to conduct an in-depth analysis. Although my study covers only a small number of cases (n=15+1), this allowed me to deal with a multitude of individual data in a flexible way. My findings are only conclusive for this group of participants, but the broad scope of data enabled me to discover diverse issues and to develop my understanding of the participants' inner processes and their highly personalised experiences in interaction with others in particular si-

tuations.

►The participants

Table 1 below lists the study's interviewees according to pseudonym, age, ethnic background, languages, nationality, residence and education. Altogether, I interviewed seven women and eight men. I have included myself in this list, although I am strictly speaking not a participant. As my personal experiences form part of my research, I find it necessary to disclose some information on myself, in order to allow the reader to see similarities or differences in my background compared to other participants.

The participants (and I) were born between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s. They could roughly be divided into three age groups: four participants, basically my older siblings, belonged to the first group and were born between the mid-1950s and 1960. The largest group in terms of numbers were the eight participants born between the late 1960s and mid-1970s. I assume the main reason for this is that my friends, who assisted in contacting possible other participants, and I belong to precisely this age group, and we sought contacts within that group. Finally, three participants were born in the early and mid-1980s.

Despite the three age groups, I have not undertaken a "generational" study. I have tried to ensure that the findings are viewed within their historical and social context, however, which does differ for the three age groups. The participants of different age groups have developed distinct strategies and approaches to the idea of othering. It would be interesting in the future to conduct a "generational" study on a larger scale to compare results, provided sufficient multilingual, multicultural and multinational participants could be found who experienced their childhood and adolescence before the 1980s, in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s.

The table below indicates the participants with their given or chosen alias and shows their year and place of birth. It outlines the background of the participant's parents by indicating their nationalities and possible changes of nationality. Additionally, I included the languages which the participants had spoken or heard during their childhood. The level of their language competence did not necessarily matter. There are no "objective" means of determining and measuring fluency in a language, or of defining whether the participants' parents had succeeded in passing on their languages and cultural heritage, or to what extent (Kazzazi, 2009: 81-2, Grosjean, 1985: 470-1). I was simply inter-

ested in mapping the possible influence of languages, cultural concepts and ideas that participants had experienced through the transmission of active and passive language use.

I also listed the countries in which the participants had spent more than six months during their childhood as well as their nationalities in terms of citizenship and whether they had dual citizenship (or in some cases triple or quadruple). Those participants with multiple passports generally chose to use one passport, although not necessarily the same passport, which changed depending on travel purposes and occasions as well as on their residences.

This list also includes references to the participants' schools and higher education. They all belong to the middle-class and are well educated but this table does not go into detail as concerns their social and professional affiliations. My objective was to show the milieu in which the participants had grown up, not only in terms of their social background but also in their possible relationship to their country of residence during childhood; whether they had become immersed in the country's educational system or whether they had been predominantly exposed to international surroundings, with peers coming from all over the world.

The religious affiliations of the participants cover a broad spectrum of diverse Protestant churches, Roman Catholicism, Judaism and atheism. As the majority of the participants were very secular and did not attach a significant role to religion, I decided not to list their religious affiliations.

A final note on the choice of alias: in the majority of the cases, the participants responded positively to my request to assign themselves an alias. Often they chose a second or middle name, or picked personal nicknames. In other cases, they purposefully adopted stereotypical or common names. I assigned names which I believed to fit the person I had interviewed in the cases when the participants did not themselves choose a pseudonym. In earlier articles, I refer to my personal experiences under the alias of "Aldona" (my third name), which I have indicated below.

Table 1: List of Participants

Alias, Year and place of birth	**Family background**	**Languages during childhood and adolescence**	**Countries of residence during childhood**	**Citizenship and passport**	**Education**
Paula, 1965, USA	Mother: Danish (later US citizen), Father: French *lingua franca*: French	English,French, Danish	USA	USA	French Lycée, USA; university studies, USA
Christine, 1967, Uruguay	Mother: Uruguayan Father: Dutch (migrated to ARG & returned to Europe) *lingua franca*: Spanish and English	Spanish, English, Dutch	Argentina (ARG)	Netherlands (NL), Uruguay	State school, ARG American high school in ARG; university studies in NL & ARG
Sergio, 1972, Slovenia	Mother: Slovenian, Father: Paraguayan *lingua franca*: Italian	Slovenian, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Swiss-German, German	Italy, Brazil, Switzerland (German-speaking part), Germany	Slovenia, Paraguay	Schools in Brazil, Switzerland & Germany; university studies in Germany
Céline, 1972, Switzerland	Mother: German Father: Italian *lingua franca*: French	French, Italian, German	Switzerland (French-speaking part)	Italy, Germany until 2000, Switzerland since 2000	School, Switzerland (French part); Studies in Switzerland & USA
John, 1975, Belgium	Mother: Norwegian, Father: English *lingua franca*: English	English, Norwegian, French, Flemish	Predominantly Belgium (BE), UK	UK, Norway	European school, BE Secondary school,UK university studies in UK, BE, Netherlands
Raphael, 1976, Germany	Mother: American, Father: Israeli *linguae franca*: Hebrew & English	Hebrew, English, German	Germany	USA, Germany since 2006	State school, Germany; studies in USA and Israel
Fiona, 1976, UK	Mother: Danish, Father: English *lingua franca*: English	English, Danish, German	UK, predominantly in Germany	UK, Germany since 2011	European school, Germany; university studies in Germany
William, 1978, Canada	Mother: Polish, Father: American *lingua franca*: English, Polish	English, Polish, French (Quebec)	Quebec, Australia, USA	USA, Poland, Ireland, Canada	State schools, Canada (French & English) & Australia; College in USA; university studies in France and Poland

Jalmar, 1981, Scotland	Mother: Finnish, Father: Dutch *lingua franca*: English	English, Dutch, Finnish	Scotland, Canada, Japan, Korea, Finland, the Netherlands	Netherlands, Finland	International schools in Europe and Asia; Finnish state school; Dutch state school; university studies, NL
Mina, 1983, Finland	See Jalmar	See Jalmar	Canada, Asia, Europe	Netherlands, Finland	See Jalmar
Peter, 1987, Canada	See Jalmar	See Jalmar	See Mina	Netherlands	International schools in Europe and Asia; Dutch state school; university studies, NL
Anė, 1956, France	Mother: Estonian Father: Lithuanian (stateless; Swedish citizens; since 1990s Swedish- Estonian & Swedish-Lithuanian) *lingua franca*: French	Estonian, Lithuanian, passive French, Swedish, passive German (*lingua franca* between father and maternal grandparents)	France, Germany, predominantly Sweden	Swedish	School and university studies in Sweden (SE)
Augustinas, 1957, Germany	see Anė	see Anė	Germany, predominantly Sweden	Swedish	School and university studies in Sweden
Ivaras, 1958, Germany	see Anė	Estonian, Lithuanian, Swedish, German, passive French	Germany, predominantly Sweden	Swedish	Schools in Sweden and in Germany (DE) (1976-77); university studies in Sweden and Norway
Laurytė, 1960, Sweden	see Anė	See Ivaras	Predominantly Sweden, Germany	Swedish	Schools in SE and DE (1976-78); university studies, SE
Author or Aldona, 1974, Sweden	see Anė	See Ivaras	Sweden, predominantly Germany	Swedish, Estonian since 1995	School in DE; university studies in DE, UK and Finland

5. DIFFERENT FACETS OF BELONGING

To be multilingual
To long for belonging
To belong somewhere
At the same time to be happy to be different, and not to belong
An - Other Space?

I wrote these lines while reflecting on my data and trying to connect the participants' answers in a certain way. I presented these lines to the participants among real poems, such as an excerpt of Derek Walcott's The Schooner flight (1986: 346), in order to discuss whether and how they could relate to certain ideas I had read into different poems and what I had tried to convey in my various other lines. I agree that these lines above have no literary value but the effect on the participants was nevertheless very interesting to observe. I received comments such as: "*Now, this poem speaks to me!*"; -"*This is me!*"; -"*That's a feeling I've had my whole life long.*"; - "*That I can relate to, yeah!*"; - "*I actually like the way it's worded. It also says the fact of belonging somewhere, to be or belong somewhere, that I kind of feel that I would want to belong to some specific thing that I can talk about. But then again, I'm happy to belong to nowhere*". My lines proved to be a valuable "ice breaker", and encouraged me to ask the participants to elaborate more on this particular subject.

In my introductory paper, I present the analysis of the study's findings in relation to my published articles that are listed in the table of contents. The discrepancy between the published and introductory papers is due to the choice of writing a cumulative, article-based dissertation. The articles actually illustrate the complexity of my research objective and how my main *foci* changed over the course of the long elapse of time. My introductory paper attempts to provide a comprehensive perspective on the issue of multicultural belonging that connects to both my earlier and recent insights.

My findings are presented in three parts. In the first part, I discuss the multicultural individuals' notion of being a mixture with multiple but distinct bonds. Their understanding relates to different aspects, such as their knowledge of multiple languages and different cultural systems, which support the presumption of the participants' specific disposition for a multicultural family life-style. The second part predominantly focuses on their experience of otherness as a significant aspect in their social relationships. Although the study's participants are sometimes troubled by the notion of non-belonging, my findings show that this is not necessarily experienced as an overall negative aspect of their identification but rather assists in affirming their unique positioning as individuals with multiple bonds. Notions of difference and otherness may actually constitute a social and cultural resource

in terms of creating a sense of communality. In the third part, I present different strategies of the multicultural adults that describe how the participants make their "cultural borderlands" which are associated with the construction of a multicultural belonging. I introduce various concepts that suggest the participants' flexible mode of relating to and relativising their attachments according to the context. Their life strategies allow them to blend in and juggle particular affiliations without disregarding other and equally significant attachments. Their approaches allow the multicultural adults to develop a new perspective for dealing with notions of proximity and distance and contribute to the development of a sense of ironic nation-ness.

I selected four papers for inclusion in my thesis (as listed in Table 2), of which I submitted three to international and Finnish journals dealing with diverse fields that cover multilingualism, ethnology, identity and cultural heritage. One paper was printed in the *International Journal of Multilingualism* (IJM), 2010, 7 (3), 211-224, another in *Ethnologia fennica* 2011, 38, 7-24 and the third in *Lähde* 2012, 8, 233-252. The fourth paper appeared as a chapter in a volume edited by Outi Tuomi-Nikula, Riina Haanpää and Aura Kivilaakso (2013, pp. 106-130). Over the course of our department's ten-year anniversary, affiliated and former members and students of the Department of Cultural Production and Heritage Studies of the University of Turku were invited to explore different angles of cultural heritage. My contribution examines the ways in which the concept of cultural heritage is understood and dealt with by the study's participants.

The four papers build upon each other textually and relate to the participants' individual processes that deal with the construction and experience of belonging under contested circumstances and in the light of having multiple, partly contradicting, bonds. The papers highlight my specific emphasis on exploring the intrinsic experiences of how to conceive belonging, rather than analysing actual socio-political aspects (for instance citizenship) and their effects on the study's participants. Occasionally, I refer to my personal experiences under the pseudonym of Aldona in the four papers, in my attempt to protect my siblings' rights to anonymity. I hereby acknowledge permission to reprint copyright material. My book chapter as well as my contributions for *IJM* and *Ethnologia fennica* were each reviewed by two referees before being accepted by the editors and the respective journal.

Table 2 below lists the four articles that are reprinted in their original length at the end of this thesis. This table briefly indicates the objective and context of the paper, the data used, year and place of publication, and the paper's relevance for my thesis.

Table 2: Overview of articles

Article	Research Question	Research Data	Theoretical-Methodological Context	Journal and Year of Publication	Relevance for Thesis
1. Being 'the strange one' or 'like everybody else': school education and the negotiation of multilingual identity	What roles are played by social environment, education and various school systems in developing different perceptions of self-representation and notions of inclusion and exclusion?	Interviews with twelve participants; personal notes	Multilingualism; multilinguality; school education; identity; representation	*International Journal of Multilingualism* (*IJM*) (2010, 7/3, pp. 211-224) Peer-reviewed	Discussion of the influence of social interaction and institutionalised settings on developing different attitudes of belonging and on the construction and negotiation of multilingual identity
2. Experienced Multiculturalism − Experienced Cosmopolitanism?	Does the experience of cultural diversity help in developing a notion of supranational belonging? What is the relation between possessing multiple affiliations, the experience of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism?	Interviews and written exchanges with fifteen participants; personal notes	Identity belonging everyday multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism	*Ethnologia Fennica* (2011/38, pp. 7-24) Peer-reviewed	Introduction to concepts of everyday multiculturalism, the familiar other, ironic identity and experienced cosmopolitanism. Discussion of the readiness to absorb and use new cultural differences in relation to one's self.
3. Belonging, Home and Identity of Multicultural and Multilingual Adults	How does the experience of multiple attachments affect the sense and construction of home and belonging?	Interviews and written exchanges with fifteen participants; personal notes	Identity; belonging; in-group membership; home	Lähde (2012/8, pp. 233-252)	Analysis of different strategies for constructing belonging, identity and home. Introduction to the concepts of blending in and of individual cultural pluralism
4. Mitä kulttuuriperintö merkitsee monikulttuuriseesa ympäristössä kasvaneelle? (What is the meaning of cultural heritage for individuals with a mixed background?)	What do multicultural individuals consider as their cultural heritage and how do they express it? How do they relate to the usual definitions of cultural heritage?	Interviews and written exchanges with fifteen participants; personal notes	Cultural heritage; identity; representation	Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: Helsinki (2013, pp. 106-130) Peer-reviewed	Discussion of cultural heritage production in relation to possessing a notion of plural and mixed attachments

5.1 Mixed with distinct attachments

My study discusses the participants' perception of belonging that is characterised by their sensing of many different ways of cultural and social belonging at the same time, and which is based on an intrinsic notion of being many in one and of being a mixture with different components. In their report on how young Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds experience multiculturalism in Australia, Ang et al. (2006: 30) hold that in our current times we have to acknowledge that "people can be many things at the same time, and that people can move between different social and cultural domains in the course of their lives". They call this a "source of enablement" (Ang et al. 2006: 30) that makes it possible to move back and forth between ethnic homeland and host nation and creates different forms of belonging. The same may be said about the study's participants with the difference that allegiances to more places, cultures and languages are at stake.

►Family bonds, linguistic and social identifications

The childhood home and family bonds generally connect an individual's relevant biographic memories and stages with particular sites. It is both about remembering and being recognised as an active agent, and memories of family bonds are frequently very representative of creating a feeling of home (Gordon 2008: 36). In the cases of the participants, family bonds are expressed through the use of multiple languages that are associated with the creation of specific memories, which in turn reinforce their notions of diverse allegiances.

Frequently, the participants appreciated the reference to their multilinguality as a personal identity marker (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004: 18-9), although not all identified with the term "multilingual". Several participants pointed out that their multiple languages had come "naturally" to them and are part of their specific backgrounds and socialisation that allow them to associate the use of a specific language with precise bonds. For instance, Anė described the language use at her childhood home as follows:

> The surrounding was Swedish. Mother and father had two different languages, they spoke another one with themselves. And when Nänna and Abbapapa [the grandparents] arrived, they used a fifth language. (Translated by VLAČ)

The use of plural languages in interaction with their families and outside the home constituted a particularly significant experience, which according to the participants' personal assessment set them apart from most people around them. Although they became conscious that their situation differed

from other families at an early stage, the participants regarded the use of multiple languages as a normal experience when they were small because it was inextricably interwoven with their specific family situation. Several participants stressed in the interviews that they had not acquired languages at school or in other institutionalised settings but as a result of their environment. When asked whether he perceives himself as multilingual, William replied:

> Sort of. Russian was the only language I had to learn on my own, the other languages were given. I had to learn all the languages because of my surroundings.

Similarly to William, other participants also distinguish between their acquired and innate (first) languages. They often have difficulties to name their dominant languages. The participants stated that some languages produced a stronger emotional bond, others were used more pragmatically and connected for instance with perceived advantages in professional life. A greater emotional value is attached to their parents' languages. For instance, Mina perceives Finnish, her mother's language, as very important although she is more fluent in English and Dutch, which she used predominantly at school and university. She regards Finnish as a very close language that is emotionally loaded and that creates a sense of belonging to her wider family and situates her with Finland as a place of reference. Also Augustinas claims that his parents' native languages are important because of their "symbolic, and more than symbolic relationship" to him. In his words, his parents' languages are "part of my life."

Studies have shown that the age at which a person comes into meaningful contact with a language has a direct impact on their emotional attachment to the language, regardless of how well they later speak it (Pavlenko, 2002: 47, 2006: 23; Besemeres, 2004: 140, 157). Indeed, some participants no longer regard themselves as very fluent in one or several of their first languages, which does not necessarily affect their emotional bond to these languages. In turn, the participants' most fluent languages need not always carry strong emotional value for the individual. However, fluency, language preference or the notion of possessing an emotional bond to a language are not necessarily linked with the age when the participants acquired the languages. The reasons for the differing relationships with their languages are very individual and changes have occurred during their lifetime due to education, work, long-time residences, and for other reasons. Therefore the participants' cultural and linguistic competence may differ with respect to the context, frequency and utility in their everyday lives, but not in their overall significance for the individual.

Generally speaking, the majority of the participants claimed to be most comfortable when able to

switch from one language to another, which they frequently did during the interview sessions. They regarded the switching as a normal experience that was frequently intertwined with their early childhood memories, as a typical family experience. Code-switching also related to their present social interactions, as Christine explained:

> You know that there is a word in another language that explains much better what you are trying to say. So you use it with multilingual ones but, of course, that's impossible with people who do not speak all your languages, and that means one cannot fully express oneself without creating the impression of showing off with another language.

The participants are aware that many people they meet are less fluent in as many languages. Therefore, some connect the mixing of languages with negative aspects, as for instance Christine, who feared that switching might create an impression of boasting with her language skills, although it is an intrinsic experience of possessing mixed attachments and part of their self-representation.

The participants are aware of the significance of language use as a means to develop meaningful relationships with their families as well as the languages and cultures in question. Languages are crucial for the group under study if they are to become familiar with diverse cultural practices introduced in their home environment and outside home. They actively engage with multiple cultures through various forms of interaction. In this respect, their multilingual skills interrelate with their sense of belonging. Sergio explained that language knowledge not only concerns fluency in a language but rather about knowing and being willing to learn specific specific cultural concepts that make it possible to understand another culture. He distinguished between language use on a superficial and a deeper level,

> Culture is identity. You have to be familiar and know certain things about a culture which others cannot know that easily. Let's say someone claims he is Slovenian, fine, but, then he has to prove that he speaks not only the language but also knows the culture in all its different facets, like certain attitudes, ways of behaving, manners and so on. (Translated by VLAČ)

Sergio relates to the inextricable relationship between culture and language, and claims that his family bonds and ways of socialisation have predominantly contributed towards acquiring a deeper insight into all the cultures to which he feels he belongs. Superficial language knowledge facilitate communicating with others as a tourist, without deeper immersion into the culture in question, or puts one on the same level with expatriates, as John and Raphael make clear. Language knowledge without deeper cultural immersion may help to identify other languages and to become aware of differences and similarities between cultures and languages, but it does not imply the understanding of

cultural practices that go beyond mere language use.

Other participants also distinguish between language knowledge, language preference and a cultural immersion within their own set of languages. John stated that he is "linguistically more French and English, and culturally more British". Although he loves and feels at ease speaking French, he is aware that he does not qualify as culturally French. The fact that he essentially grew up in Belgium and went to the British section of the European school increased his affinity and identification with British and Belgian humour, literature and cultural concepts, although he admits that he is not familiar with everyday English life. In his view, speaking a language may assist in understanding another culture better but it will not create a new identity if there are no other points of references that allow a connection to the culture behind the language. In the case of the participants, they have multiple, affective attachments that allow them to feel more deeply immersed in different cultures and languages which equally assist in conceiving feelings of belonging and membership.

The participants share the notion that the use of multiple languages in their immediate surroundings contributed to enhance their awareness of differences in terms of diversity of languages, differing occasions for language use, and cultures at an early stage. For instance, Raphael also referred to a game of guessing other languages spoken around his family in public. I also remember that my parents encouraged me to "spy" on languages spoken at neighbouring tables in restaurants. Both, Raphael and I recalled that we considered this sort of activity as great fun when we were children, and that we were proud of identifying various different languages. Other participants recounted episodes of how one of their family languages was used as a secret language in public places to prevent others from listening in on their conversations and to be able to comment freely on a variety of things and people. These different experiences contributed to develop the participants' interest in other languages and cultures. Their experienced multilingualism in everyday interaction proved to be an important factor in strengthening their notion of possessing a multitude of different bonds.

The experience of specific languages and cultures are inextricably connected with different contexts that facilitate the creation of a relationship with specific places and most notably connect them to their parents' families living in different countries. For instance, Jalmar described that his summer holidays and yearly visits to his mother's family in Finland created a sense of belonging to a wider family circle, in which one particular language, Finnish, was spoken. It equally contributed to him developing a strong connection with Finland because of his family bonds, childhood memories and friends. His brother Peter agreed that family connections matter, referring to them as his "Finnish

blood" that includes many different aspects of belonging. In my fourth paper (2013), I analyse the relationship between self and family bonds in terms of creating cultural heritage in greater detail. The participants' heritage is not associated with a single site or group or specific heritage narratives but connects with multiple languages, cultures and nations at the same time. I suggest that the participants associate cultural heritage with close social relations that allow a new form of cultural heritage production and perceive heritage in abstract terms that connect with expressions of lifestyle choices.

Although Peter's family bonds and childhood memories assist in increasing his sense of belonging to Finland, he also stated that he cannot connect with everyday Finnish life or "Finnishness". Similarly, William and John who referred to a strong sense of connection with Poland, and respectively England, emphasised that everyday Polish or English, life is unfamiliar to them and does not evoke strong associations. Despite varying language proficiency, the participants experience a sense of unity with family members across geopolitical boundaries that changes notions of distance and proximity. However, some participants pointed out that in their opinion their family bonds were less tight than for those people whose family members live within a radius of 50 km. The multicultural adults referred to an experience of more independence and liberty in their family relations that nevertheless allowed mutual notions of welfare and interest. Goulbourne et al. (2010:12) propose the concepts of "bonding", "bridging" and "linking" as useful approaches for understanding how the participants maintain meaningful bonds with family members who are scattered across nation states in terms of creating social capital. The geographical distance is not a barrier for sensing close emotional bonds and a transnational family does not need to be a linguistically or culturally uniform entity.

Over the course of time, the participants experienced crucial phases of change in the way that they dealt with their attachments and how they perceived their sense of belonging at distinct times. The change in their approaches is part of an individual and highly subjective process that is inextricably linked to their personal evolution. The phases are neither regular nor easily predictable. While the participants experienced them at comparable times, the intensity differed. Incidentally, the phases correspond to what is usually perceived as *rites de passage* in every individual's life (Van Gennep, [1909] 2005: 21; Turner, 1964: 47, 53-4). Experiences during childhood, adolescence and adulthood are very significant and triggering moments but do not necessarily produce a sense of detachment from the participants' former selves. Instead, they allow the participants to mark important changes in their personal perspectives and to conform to the new situation as a way of trying to create new

bonds and communality with various people.

Most participants became more interested in exploring their family roots and improving their skills in some of their family languages during the period of their late adolescence and early adulthood. At the same time, they also felt the need to mark their entry as an equal member and participant of their parents' cultures and societies of origin. As Laurytė argues, to grow up in a multicultural family is connected with the notion "to belong and not to belong" at the same time. She associates positive ideas with this status, except for the period of her teenage years, "when it burdened me for some years". She wanted to have a more pronounced feeling of belonging to a particular place and group, but "[w]hether it was Sweden or Germany or Lithuania or Estonia, that is not important".

Other participants described similar experiences of actively exploring their attachments that connected with their family bonds and their socialisation. Raphael remembered that he varied in his allegiances during his teenage and early adult years, almost to the point of assimilating and passing himself off as an American or German in many respects. He explained that after finishing school he was motivated by the urge to improve his language skills and to experience Israel as his father's country, which also allowed him to discover that "there was much more to the country" than he had previously thought.

Fiona also touched upon the different phases of becoming more engaged with her various bonds and her interest in the associated languages and countries. She explained that her identity search during her teenage and young adult years was a difficult personal process and set her apart from other peers who "would never even ask where they belong". At school, she was very English but during her studies she experienced a German phase due to her increasing contacts with Germans. At the time she came together with her later German husband, she constantly travelled to Denmark and spent all her vacation there. This phase also coincided with the death of her Danish grandmother but she also felt confined with the overwhelming German input she experienced at that time and became anxious to strengthen her Danish components. With respect to that particular process she cautioned that:

> if you go down this road too much, then you lose yourself. As long as you have enough self-esteem, and know who you are, accept the fact that you have various different cultures in you, then it is not a problem.

Of all other possible events in the participants' personal lives, the death of close family members constitutes a major rupture in their imagined continuity of belonging. It modifies the quality and extent of the individual's other relationships and requires new ways of dealing with these ruptured

links. Any change of previous life circumstances may threaten the fragile balance between distinct bonds that an individual possesses and that guarantees the imagined continuity between the individual's past and future. For multicultural individuals such major personal events may cause more concrete complications because the death of a parent or grandparent may relate to concrete fears of losing existing language skills and previously close cultural bonds. It directly affects their biographically interwoven zone of cultural contact and disrupts notions of continuity. Their bonds are spread across diverse entities, sites and languages, and their relationship to a specific allegiance depends only a certain segment of their ties. For the study's participants, both existing and disrupted family ties and memories remain important markers and associate them with their family's past, cultural heritage and their parents' personal experiences.

As adults, the participants realised that they are neither exposed to their attachments to the same extent as during their childhood nor with the same quality. They agreed that as children they would take the existence of plural bonds and languages, as well as having family members across various states, for granted, but with age it becomes more difficult to conceive such an uncontested and coherent sense of being naturally multicultural. The participants' sense of belonging is not defined by material objects or territory but relevant ties are intimately connected with people and the use of multiple languages. Primarily, family bonds and languages serve as a means to establish a symbolic link across time and space between the multicultural individual and specific cultural affiliations. Many participants experienced situations in their relationships with others that shook their beliefs of shared membership and bonds with certain groups and specific sites. For instance, Fiona referred to some of her English friends in Germany who would make her feel excluded by commenting "oh, it's because you haven't lived in England" as soon as she did not know certain things or behaved slightly differently than expected. Others referred to critical remarks regarding their language skills or possible accents that challenged their previously naive perception of being undisputed members of their various groups of allegiances.

I discovered that many participants had refused to use a specific, early-acquired language during their childhood. This period, depending on the participant, could last for a shorter or longer time. Different reasons triggered these periods of refusal and concerned the participants' social relationship with various individuals. Language refusal may indicate the individual's new positioning, as in the case of John. At the age of five years he reduced his use of Norwegian with his mother, because he wanted to be treated as an equal by his elder siblings who predominantly spoke a mixture of French and English among themselves and frequently also with their mother. A rejection of active

language use may also be a direct response to changed conditions and a change in the status of the language which is often connected with the increasing dominance of a particular language in the participant's social life as a child or adolescent or due to relocation. At other times, language refusal connects with first experiences of stigmatisation or the participants' increasing awareness of difference between their personal *vitae* and that of their peers. For instance, my older siblings were ashamed of using Estonian in public when they were small because of its closeness to the Finnish language. They tried to dissociate themselves from prejudices about Finnish migrants that existed in Swedish society in the 1960s (Lainio, 1997: 983; Weckström, 2011; Asplund, 2014 [online]).

Unlike people whose affiliations are not scattered across various groups and states, the participants experienced antagonistic responses to their attempt to accommodate their various allegiances. For instance, Raphael explained that his attachment to Germany and the German language were in conflict with his Jewish heritage, the historical awareness of the Shoa and his parents' noticeable uneasiness with Germany and the Germans, despite their long and continuing residence in Germany. The fact of being Jewish, living in Germany and additionally identifying with certain practices that were considered as German was also an issue of disagreement with other Jews not based in Germany. Similarly, the attitude of fellow Germans (parents of non-Jewish peers, teachers, neighbours, locals of his town), their uneasy attitude and certain bewilderment as to how to behave towards him, as someone Jewish, into which was mixed a consciousness of guilt and shame, made it difficult for him to stress the German-Bavarian attachments that he felt and were akin to him through his immediate personal memories and experiences. Paula argued likewise that although she felt like a true New Yorker, the fact that her parents had always emphasized European culture and values at home over what had been perceived as American values made it difficult for her to unconditionally accept herself as an American.

In the course of the participants' lives new bonds are formed, which may become more significant but without replacing the earlier ones. Rather, new and old bonds need to be accommodated into existing networks of attachments, with the intention of constructing a coherent sense of belonging. A multitude of bonds affect the participants and their dynamic relationships with family and community (Goulbourne et al., 2010: 32-36) and the composition of attachments may therefore significantly differ among multicultural individuals of the same family. The participants recognise the importance of their family bonds for forming their linguistic and ethnic identities, however, these identities are not the sole contributions to their specific sense of belonging.

►The notion of being a mixture

In the interviews, most participants positioned themselves as mixtures. Different aspects contribute to create this notion. The experience of their multicultural family situation, which includes the use of multiple languages, family members with different citizenships and the parallel ways of being acculturated through society, peers and school on the one hand, and through parents and extended family members on the other hand, play a role. As Paula puts it, "I feel that I've been made from different parts, so that makes sense to me."

The participants' parents have experienced transnationalism and extended cultural contact under slightly different circumstances. The way that their parents form their relationships with their origins and new places was noticed early by the participants, and to a certain extent incorporated into their own attitudes. For instance, Céline notes that the way her father, with whom she has a very close and affectionate relationship, felt about Italy and Switzerland influenced her earlier perceptions of being predominantly Italian. Equally, the way my parents considered themselves first and foremost Estonian and Lithuanian affected my siblings' and my relationship with Sweden/Swedes and Germany/Germans. So did my parents' traumatic experiences of the Second World War and my mother's judgment of Sweden's "treacherous" recognition of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States as the only Western state to do so. As a result, we children had (initially) had rather negative associations with being German, Russian or Swedish, although our parents were much more conciliatory than we children understood our parents' recollection of their personal past. Thus, to a certain extent, the past experiences and social relationships of their parents affect the participants and also complicate the quality and quantity of their bonds and attachments.

Most of the participants explained that they present themselves in terms of their parental background, for instance as half Dutch/half Finnish, or even more elaborately by adding where they were born and grew up. Partly this is because they are aware that they represent a mixture that is frequently an uncommon sight in many Western societies. It is easier to position oneself with the help of the complex family bonds. My sister Anė referred to this problem when meeting strangers and elaborated that,

> [W]hen people ask me where I am from, I answer that I don't know: 'How come you don't know? [people ask her]. They know I'm Swedish. - Well, I was born in France, my brothers in Germany, my sisters in Sweden. My father is Lithuanian, my mother is from Estonia. So, I don't know.' Then they stare at me strangely (laughs). But that's how it is. I don't know. (Translated by VLAČ)

William also explained that the complexity of his background does not allow him to perceive himself in simple terms that would allude to only one place, ethnicity or language:

> I was born in Quebec. Both of my parents were foreigners. I lived for a year in Australia [as a child]. I spent all my vacation in the US or in Poland. Most of my friends are Polish or American or international. My mother lives in Switzerland.

Several places, cultures and personal bonds influence him. For instance, he feels a strong connection to his Polish grandfather. As a child he wanted to share this Polishness, but often experienced that people objected because of his name, residence and weaker Polish compared to other language skills. He adjusted to the expectations of his surroundings and began to stress instead that he was born in Canada but that his mother was Polish and his father from the US. Thereby, his self-representation enhanced the feeling of being a mixture. Also Raphael argues that he finds it too limiting to be only perceived as American, Jewish, Jewish American, Israeli or German, although these terms are all appropriate when referring to him. The terms depict membership and loyalties, which he feels, but they alone do not manage to explain the complex relationships in which these attachments and allegiances stand to each other and to himself. He specifies that he wants "people to acknowledge my complexity. I do not want to be simplified."

In this context, Raphael refers to episodes when he and his wife jokingly insult each other by calling the other "American". They are both US citizens but they are also aware of their ethnically and culturally mixed family backgrounds. Some other participants also refer to such arguments, usually with siblings, in which allusions to reduced experiences of attachments and sites are frequently used as a means of depicting the other as one-dimensional and narrow-minded. They usually experienced these characterisations as a personal attack that bereaves them of their claims to connect with different places and groups.

The participants also develop the notion of being a mixture because of the different labels being projected upon them. Sergio describes the different ways he is perceived in changing surroundings, which adds to his perception of being multiple and mixed:

> In Brazil, I'm considered Paraguayan, in Paraguay as European, and in Europe, I am South American. And then in Germany I'm considered Swiss and in Switzerland as German. No, I am not German, but I am also South American in Switzerland.
>
> (Translated by VLAČ)

Many participants confirmed that they ascribe to a particular ethnic group and still have a symbolic

attachment to other groups through an associated language or another cultural bond. Plural attachments form a "groundwork" of different dimensions that contribute to creating the participants' self-ascription in relation to a particular context. For instance, Sergio acknowledged that his gestures, behaviour and self-representation change according to the language he is using at a certain time, where he is, or the image of himself that he intends to invoke. He argued that he can only draw upon those components that he is personally connected to through a meaningful relationship and active contacts. His parents' ethnic origins and his dual citizenship, which both connect him to his parents' origins and families, his most influential years of adolescence in Brazil and Switzerland, as well as the languages most frequently used in his childhood home are very significant for defining the way he still presents himself. Although he has spent most of his adult life in Germany and speaks German with his wife, he regards his links to Germany as far less important or almost non-existent. In that, he has made a decision about his mode of self-representation and about the impact of particular cultural influences. As a result, he resists the application of other categories to himself.

Each of the participants' attachments assumes a distinct function in their social interrelations and shows a specific quality that can be described as affective, practical, both or other; in that their multiple allegiances and attachments are multifunctional and multidimensional. They assist in connecting the participants with family members in various countries as well as to different cultures, partly through the use of languages, partly through establishing a symbolic relationship that makes it possible to feel concern and loyalty. One of the reasons the participants rely in particular on the quality and the emotional nature of their various personal and social relationships is that they are not connected through numerous bonds with one specific cultural or linguistic entity only, but they actually experience scattered attachments. They have continuous mixed contacts in family life and in everyday life that attach them to plural entities and sites. As a result, the participants frequently perceived of themselves as mixtures or a mishmash of diverse and distinct attachments. They reject associations of being an unspecific concoction, however. Instead Sergio argues that "ich bin eine Mischung, aber kein Gemisch [I'm a mixture and no concoction]." He claims that the different components of his self do not neutralise each other and therefore he is "not a separate nation." Instead he considers himself as a particular mixture which he is able to justify towards others. At the same time, he is able to separate his different allegiances from each other and furthermore, to distinguish them from various other cultures and language groups to which he is not connected. It allows him to perceive differences between various cultures and language groups.

Other participants also reported that they are open to change and that they play with the notion of

boundaries. They use national and cultural boundaries to construct new forms of identification and thereby demonstrate their permeability (see Beck, 2015: 134; Lugones, 1989: 396, 401). Other studies have reported similar findings when dealing with adolescent second generation migrants. They, too, negotiate collective identities separately from their ethnic and cultural groups, and they construct hyphenated identities by merging universally valid and globally known cultural symbols with distinctive features of their countries of origin and socialisation (Colombo et al., 2009: 40; Nanz, 2009: 419). John, for example, described himself as "English, Norwegian, Belgian or Belgiumy-French" in his attitudes and behaviour. Different aspects such as his family background, citizenship, socialisation and his language preferences play a role in his self-representation and allow him to construct a sense of closeness.

John indicated that he does not have "sufficient ingredients to make a good Englishman or Norwegian or Belgian." Rather he claims that he is a mixture and "nothing pure." Therefore, he is unable to claim that he belongs to only one culture, language or nation, precisely as is the case for the other participants. This notion directly connects to the discussion of how the participants perceive culture and heritage in my fourth paper (2013). Here I show that the participants of the study define themselves in terms of combining multiple different cultural elements and languages, which they connect with family bonds and ways of socialisation. They reject associations with a specific cultural or ethnic group only, and frequently perceive their cultural heritage as a crossover of various traditions that are not rooted in the experience of only one site, culture or in their parents' past. They are bearers of different cultural practices to which they have become exposed in childhood, but their traditions are mixed and not easy to trace. This and the fact that they are multilingual make for an ambiguous sense of cultural belonging.

Despite the fact that the participants' sense of cultural belonging is linked to expressions of lifestyle choices and general cultural values rather than defined in precise cultural, linguistic, ethnic or national terms, they acknowledge, and to a certain degree also endorse, national and cultural boundaries. They stress that belonging to certain nations and ethnicities matters both as a means of personal orientation and of distinguishing themselves from others. In the case of the participants, the merging of different dimensions of belonging generated a distinct notion of "individual cultural pluralism". I understand "individual cultural pluralism" to be a multitude of identity dimensions that coexist simultaneously within a single person and comprise real and imagined cultural elements that are essential for the making and remaking of the individual through plural temporal, spatial, affective and social dimensions. It draws upon the individual's meaningful relationships with her/his past, present

and future (see also Bhabha, 1990b: 208-9; Hall, 1990: 225, 235). It is part of becoming and being one self.

I do not wish to overemphasise the importance of national and ethnic identities in people's lives for the construction of their selves. For instance, citizenship is frequently perceived as a mere political concept that describes people's civic relationship with a particular state. Also some participants agree that a passport is no more than an administrative document. Nevertheless, the cultural concept of nation-ness, in terms of binding people on the basis of a shared identity, has multiple significations. It has an emotional dimension for constructing collective and individual participation and belonging as well as for experiencing being a self that goes beyond the mere statement of national and ethnic identities. Sergio speaks in this context about two nationalities, a subjectively experienced nationality and an official, bureaucratic nationality, which in some contexts may overlap but also clash. According to Sergio, in particular his family bonds and languages are very important aspects for creating the subjectively experienced nationality. The approach of claiming certain national and ethnic identities is another way to emphasise the importance he attributes to his family bonds that connect him not only to his parents but also other, extended family members.

Individuals are generally involved in a continuous process of constructing their selves from a spectrum of shifting identities. People are aware of changes in their identities, and that by choosing between a variety of social, cultural and ethnic markers they sometimes produce new hybrid identities (Trask, 2010: 17, 77-79; Ackroyd & Pilkington, 1999: 448). The participants also have associations with their multiple attachments that connect with different dimensions of intimate and extended social interrelations and networks. Individuals from multicultural families who mix and use plural languages do not necessarily consider themselves only hybrids. Rather, they interconnect their plural affiliations and use them interdependently for different reasons and in various contexts. The number and the quality of bonds matter for the individuals in constructing attachments to specific sites and groups. They also matter in creating the notion of diverse and multiple spaces within which their social interactions take place.

Different dimensions of attachments and identifications are not perceived as antagonistic on an individual level. Instead, the participants perceive their distinct attachments as supplementary and equal in significance for creating their notions of lived experience. They are in a particular situation that enables them to acquire insider knowledge about several distinct cultural codes, language modes and uses. This makes up part of a complex mechanism that contributes to create a feeling of

inclusion and emotional bonding for multicultural individuals. As Augustinas stresses, he is "proud of [his] mixed background. I'm proud to be the one who I am, and conscious of my different origins."

Although their allegiances are equally significant overall to the participants, they do not possess the same sets of bonds linking them to their various allegiances. Depending on the context and the people they meet, the participants are able, and regard it as a necessity, to stress particular bonds and allegiances. To outsiders these shifts of dominance may create an impression of constant competition between the participants' various allegiances and attachments, a view that is not necessarily shared by the participants. As I will try to outline later, these different allegiances supplement each other and the experience of multiple bonds is fundamental for creating a balanced notion of self.

►Increased disposition towards a mixed family lifestyle

The personal experiences of a multicultural family situation are equally significant when faced with the individual decision to maintain a multilingual and multicultural lifestyle. Many participants of the study continued their early experience of diverse and active cultural mixing and contact into adulthood. Frequently, they opted to pursue university studies and to work in foreign countries. They also often live in an "internationally mixed" environment: they or their partners work for international organisations or institutions; they have friends with different cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds; they regularly use several languages in private and/or at work.

The majority of the study's participants who have children raise them with three languages. For instance, Fiona stated that it was both a conscious and natural decision to raise her child with more than one language. She had been raised with multiple languages and wanted to share this experience with her child. In addition, she experienced a strong emotional bond to the language she chose, which also happened to be her best language. Of the remaining six participants without children, Paula was in the process of adopting a child and had decided to raise it with two family languages, English and Dutch. Sergio referred to his Polish wife and stated that their eventual children would be raised with several languages. William, Jalmar, Mina and Peter did not have children at the end of my study but they, too, imagined multicultural family situations for their future in order to establish a personal coherence between their experiences and that of their children.

Only my four elder siblings decided to raise their children monolingually in Swedish and with the

explicit notion of being Swedish. They decided differently because of their ambiguous recollection of our childhood situation. They still consider the lack of a single family language and our use of multiple languages in interaction with close family members (parents, siblings, grandparents) as a burden. They pointed out that we siblings all have different levels of fluency in our various languages and this may impede a smooth exchange and cause a possible strain in our inter-family relations. Conversations among siblings and parents in our family have a tendency of frequent language shifts, which may exclude others (in-laws, friends) who do not speak all our languages. In addition, my siblings were already second-generation speakers and noticed a lack of support to carry on with our parents' languages with their children who were born before or only shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of my sisters explained that during my siblings' childhood our parents were among the only ones of their generation of Baltic refugees who decided to pass on their languages. She complained about the lack of encouragement in Sweden at that time and explained that

> all the other ones who had come from Estonia, they spoke Swedish. Maybe in Stockholm, there were a few families that spoke Estonian at home, but there were also lots of mixed Estonian-Swedish families who didn't speak Estonian at all.

The majority of the participants intended to pass on their individual experience of plural cultural contacts to their children, predominantly through the use of languages as the "easiest" means of establishing contact but also by conveying a notion of mixed attachments that could be regarded as a lifestyle. The family and personal experience of the participants suggests a higher disposition for founding multilingual and multicultural families as a transgenerational model. This life style implies the continuation of family multilingualism in the next generation, the transmission of multiple bonds and exposure to similarly culturally mixed family contexts as the participants had previously experienced.

A multicultural family style depends on the interplay between personal attitudes, context and circumstances. It becomes more complicated when adding new bonds and languages that need to be adapted into a mixed family's complex network of attachments (Kazzazi, 2009: 90-1). Cultural meanings are produced, reproduced and transmitted by generations, usually through an adjoining language, but in the cases of the multicultural participants this is the crux: a single person cannot easily transmit multiple languages, but will often focus on one, thus also limiting her-/himself to predominantly one culture.

Language is associated with the idea of belonging, of being at home and of establishing a symbolic link between the individual and her/his past and future. Many participants understood a change in

the next generation's language use as forming a serious barrier to creating a profound emotional relationship. Experiencing a situation in which grandparents have to communicate in a foreign language with their grandchildren connects to a psychologically sensitive issue for multicultural individuals. Although they take their language skills and cultural competence for granted, they may eventually not consider them to be adequate. Many participants had experienced similar situations and associated them with a feeling of personal failure in producing continuity. The issue of language use in a multilingual family is therefore a matter of highly emotional significance and extends to the individual's relation with family members.

Many female participants spoke about their strong urge to transmit their personal experiences in terms of languages to their children. At the same time, they were faced with more practical and ordinary matters, such as which language to actually use with their children. In most cases, it was not an easy or obvious decision. For instance, Laurytė explained that she wanted to teach her children both Estonian and Lithuanian but for practical matters that was impossible. At the same time she experienced a real dilemma, because she could not choose and "[she] couldn't say 'OK, then I'll pick Estonian or Lithuanian', because both languages are as important to [her]." Laurytė indicated that in practical terms choosing one language means deciding against other languages that are of equal emotional significance. Whatever the decision, it affects the previous composition of significant ties and creates new relations between the diverse attachments a multicultural individual possesses.

Other participants also demonstrated the existence of strong feelings in passing on one's linguistic identity. Paula acknowledged that it was clear for her that with a biological child she would use French, one of her heritage languages because "French is part of me, and still a language that is important for me." However, she confessed that the importance of speaking French with an adopted child significantly decreased for her. She was concerned that since the adopted child came from a country in which it had been exposed to languages other than the two new family languages she did not want to complicate matters. Through the decision about which language to use with their children, the participants constituted themselves in terms of culture, language and the personal relationships they decided to predominantly maintain and reproduce in the future via the relationship with their children.

My sister Anė initially associated her choice to use the language she speaks best with a feeling of guilt and of not meeting imagined expectations. Swedish is not one of our parents' mother tongues

and it does not have a long family history or relate to our family's origins. Similarly, Anė referred to a new feeling of embarrassment in her relationship with our parents after having realised that she had become more rooted in a society and in a language in which our parents never sincerely felt at home. The use of only Swedish with her children has contributed in the long run to a significant change in Anė's self-representation and sense of belonging. She reported that she became more at ease describing herself as a Swede and that it took her almost fifty years to be able to acknowledge her dominant identification with Swedish-ness and the Swedish language. The limitation to the use of one language also serves to reduce the active experience of multiple bonds across distinct entities and borders.

My siblings' negative attitude towards the use of family multilingualism at home did not extend to being and becoming multilingual. On the contrary, they are very supportive of their children learning multiple languages in an institutionalised setting, such as school and university, and of their children going and studying abroad, in order to expand their cultural horizons and acquire better language skills. At the same time, their children lack the ambiguity of multiple allegiances with which my siblings and I are acquainted from personal experience: my nieces and nephews are very certain of their "Swedish-ness", and of their exclusive allegiance to Swedish as their best language and to Sweden as their home country.

Despite sharing the same family background and similar conditions, siblings may therefore develop different attitudes towards the idea of transmitting their multilingual and multicultural lifestyle. Equally significant is the prevailing attitude towards multilingualism and a growing acceptance of possessing multiple cultural attachments in the societies to which the study's participants feel allegiance. For instance, my siblings grew up in societies that called themselves predominantly homogeneous in terms of linguistic and cultural coherence. Other participants of my study had a greater opportunity to remain in international environments that offered more potential for cross-societal interactions and acceptance of multiple allegiances.

The participants very much rely on their family members to support their choice of language use with their children and to emphasise the images of belonging they have created. For instance, Raphael asked his older brothers to speak German with his children. For his children, German is not only connected with him but also relevant for the forming of a relationship with their uncles. Thus, Raphael has managed to maintain a kind of family continuity and to show that speaking German is not only a personal decision but "runs in the family".

The expected support goes beyond mere language use, rather it has a very psychological effect on the individual. Some participants spoke of family conflicts when close family members criticised individual decisions. For instance, each of the three languages used in Céline's family has a particular function and relationship: English is the *lingua franca* between her and her husband, her German husband speaks German with their children and she uses French with them. She relies heavily on the rest of her close family members to support her decision to use French in everyday life, in order to ensure her children's language competence in French, which is rendered more difficult by the fact that Céline and her family reside in Germany. Although her father and sister comply, Céline's mother does not play to Céline's rules. One thing that particularly infuriates Céline is the fact that during her childhood Céline's mother changed from using German to French with Céline and her sister, but now insists on speaking German with her grandchildren, instead of using French, which she still employs in interaction with her daughters.

I personally experienced a similar situation of conflict in my family with my sisters who strongly criticise my decision to use Estonian with my children and not German, analogous to my sisters' decision to use Swedish. I do not have, however, an emotionally meaningful relationship with German that goes beyond the mere fact of possessing native-speaker skills. Fluency in a language does not necessarily result in a stronger attachment to, or identification with, the culture and society that is represented by that language. Although the German language and culture are part of my bigger spectrum, my relationship with them has not intensified adequately through new ties. This has, however, also been a very conscious decision on my part.

The fact that no common and collective "multilingual and multicultural identity" exists further complicates the transmission of a transgenerational family model. Although multicultural individuals continue to grow in numbers, they are very heterogeneous and cannot count on institutionalised support, unlike particular migrant and diaspora communities. As a result, multicultural individuals and families lack support for mastering the efforts of maintaining multiple cultural ties and multilingualism at home.

5.2 Otherness

►Non-belonging as an experience of multi-sited belonging

Although most participants of my study spent their childhood in one particular place, or at least in the same country, they nevertheless speak of reoccurring notions of homelessness and loneliness. They often explained that they did not know where their home was, or where they belonged. Anė elaborated a little on her experiences with (non-) belonging:

> I've always felt that I can get along well everywhere, adjust to things. But the older I got, the more I noticed that roots are much, much more important than one would think. So, the thing that I liked when I was younger was that no matter where I would go or travel in the world, I would feel at home. Well, but now at my age? I think this is a bit annoying. You don't feel attached either here or there, and that also means that one's relationships with people and other places are not, I don't know how to say it: not as ... [pause]. On the one hand, it's good. On the other hand, it means that you don't really know who you are, isn't it like that? (Translated by VLAČ)

The concept of place is central in our lives and connected with notions of home and belonging, while the opposite is supposed to inspire fear, terror and pity (Casey, 1993: IX-XI). A considerable number of participants understood home not in terms of an actual site, a *terroir* or residence, as an object, a house, a region or a country, but rather in a figurative sense that covers shifting notions of self in relation to one's multiple bonds. For instance, Anė admitted that her experience of our family multilingualism created an ambivalent situation of non-belonging. She, as well as other participants, insinuated that the possession of multiple connections to many different sites and entities complicated the sensation and production of a clear notion of home.

My third article (2012) explores the interrelated relationship between the three notions of belonging, home and identity, and uses the dichotomy of difference/sameness as a starting point for my reflections. My paper shows that the participants draw on a variety of definitions for the concept of home. Home is not presented as a nostalgic cry but rather viewed as a process with diverse aspects of making/having a home and being at home that allows the individual to construct a sense of belonging. Therefore, the participants' sense of homelessness does not refer to a nostalgic feeling of lost origins or a romance with one's past, but rather to a concrete feeling of ambivalence. This also applies to their notions of loneliness. It does not relate to a conscious notion of exclusion or marginalisation but rather indicates a lack of imagined exclusivity and specificity of their identifications, which makes them different from many people they meet.

I propose in my paper (2012) that the notion of home is an entirely emotional conceptions that

adapts constantly to changes in the participants' affective bonds and their experiences of cultural contact in everyday life. Notions of home and belonging transform over time and depend on the context. Particular experiences, such as leaving the childhood home for further studies or translocation due to one's professional career, may create a strangeness in any individual's relationship to their original home. The notion of home is also highly ambiguous as it is linked with the participants' biographies and their multiple attachments, which results in the development of multiple symbolic and optional links. The participants' references to notions of "no-home" and "ambivalence" indicate the changing character of home over the course of their lives, and that does not necessarily relate to an object or location. As a result, home may be and become different places and no-places at different moments within an individual's life story (Gordon, 2008: 37). As Sara Ahmed (2000: 89) has pointed out, the central issue is, however, that the question of home is interrelated and sentimentalised with belonging and being: it can only be addressed by considering the question of how one feels or how one might fail to feel.

Commonly, the notion of home alludes to the site where feelings of belonging are created in a wider sense and is therefore of particular significance (Coles & Fechter, 2008: 12). Home is a place that allows an individual to assert her/his plural and particular identities as something natural and self-evident. By this, I understand home as a construction of belonging and identity that relates to sentimentalised notions of where people feel they belong and how they define themselves individually and collectively. In my paper (2012), I suggest that the experience of plural links and sites that play a role in the participants' lives, contributes to create their actual sense of belonging. The way they view home suggests that they perceive belonging as a fundamentally inherent construction that challenges their social world's more rigid definition of belonging. This approach allows them to stress the feeling of possessing diverse bonds and multiple attachments rather than staying fixed on notions of possession/loss, membership/lack of membership.

Many participants connect the notion of belonging and home with their ethnic and cultural identifications and refer to experiences of contradiction and ambivalence in their daily lives. One participant, Christine, told me that she did not know where she was from or where she belonged, as she had earlier experienced a serious mismatch between her personal self-representation and the ways others perceived her. For instance, she had grown up believing she was Dutch and presenting herself this way in Argentina, because of her father, her passport and perceived differences to Argentineans. When she came to study in the Netherlands, her father's relatives made it clear to her that she was a Latin-American foreigner who behaved and spoke differently than was expected of a Dutch person.

Despite her childhood in Argentina, Christine could not identify with the Argentinean society or that she belonged to the Argentinean expat circles because she sensed a great difference between them and herself. She described these feelings in terms of "not quite fitting in the Argentine society" and of not having "the same mentality".

Christine admitted that it bothered her sometimes not to be able to claim a specific nationality or to perceive herself in specific national, ethnic and cultural terms with the same conviction or natural ease as other people she knew. Similarly, Paula, who grew up in the United States with a Danish mother and a French father, but had lived many years of her adult life outside the US, cannot just say, "I am American". Instead, she prefers to answer, "I am American but...", because this implies that there is more to follow, also in terms of the plural attachments that are personally relevant for her. But more frequently, both Christine and Paula understood this notion of non-belonging as an opportunity: it allowed them to feel detached from any particular claims.

Other participants also refer to their feeling of ambivalent belonging as a positive, albeit at times a little uncomfortable, feeling that significantly helps them to maintain their personal notion of multi-sited belonging. For instance, Céline is happy not to be "place-able" in terms of being categorised according to specific patterns. This enhanced her ability to feel at home in several places and communities, although at the same time it also involves an inability to completely feel belonging in any of them. John also spoke of an opportunity in the lack of belonging because the lack contributes to enlarging his horizon and freeing him from feelings of being bound by any nation. Instead of producing and reproducing a notion of belonging exclusively to one actual place or entity, the participants feel connected to multiple sites and groups. They have formed a multi-sited network of interrelated and autonomous bonds and relationships. A sense of non-belonging contributes to being able to enjoy plural, multidimensional bonds at the same time, but it equally sometimes bears the risk that the participants experience sensations of homelessness and non-belonging. Peter elaborated on his sense of inconclusiveness and lack of an explicit ascription to specific groups. He argued that he would like to "belong to some specific thing I can talk about". At the same time he maintains that "then again I'm happy to belong to nowhere".

The feeling of belonging is not given, but an inner construct. For the study's multicultural individuals, a crystal clear sense of belonging is not evident as they engage with different elements, places and entities at the same time. This does not, however, lead to a refusal of the desire for a sense of community, common heritage and home (Ahmed, 2000: 84), on the contrary, the desire for home

and belonging is pervasive. Similarly to the way that gender is more than a free and unconstrained act of choice (Butler, 1990: 140-1), the production and reproduction of a sense of belonging to (multiple) place(s) is governed by a set of stereotypes and claims that measure up to particular cultural norms and expectations with which every individual is confronted in everyday life. The participants' sense of belongingness is never completely "finished" but evolves and flexibly changes along with the participants' experiences of multiple affiliations and daily social encounters. In their responses, the participants shared the perception that nothing about home or belonging was fixed or certain. On the contrary, they demonstrated a high level of consciousness about their flexible and contextual sense of belonging. Céline argued that for the moment she wants to belong because she has a family and children. However, this was a recent feeling she had only developed in the past few years and prior to that she had been happy not to be "placed" and "more than just one thing."

The participants understand belonging in contradictory terms. Belonging creates a zone of comfort, acceptance and of being at ease. It does not produce the feeling of being indifferent or rejected. At the same time, belonging does not exclude the experience of being different or a stranger. William explained what he appreciated about living in Paris and Vilnius was that "everyone was a foreigner". It created the feeling of being at home, contrary to his experiences of living in Canada and the United States, where he felt compelled to demonstrate unbiased belonging without being totally able to produce that feeling because of his other, equally important allegiances. For the study's participants, belonging is not only about the development of a sense of familiarity but it is also connected with being able to identify with a specific situation and with notions of strangeness and movement across boundaries.

For most participants the sense of non-belonging marks their personal situatedness and experience of ambivalence. The way the participants deal with their ambiguous experiences may differ because of the various input and responses they receive from their surrounding societies and everyday interactions with families, friends, peers and strangers, and their experience of dealing with various claims affects their sense of constructing belonging. As Augustinas observed, he does not feel "a hundred percent in place", nor "truly comfortable in place." He instead describes the sense of belonging as part of the process of "growing up to [the] reality that you have to accommodate yourself" with multiple notions. He explains that with age he has become more accepting of the present situation he is living in.

The notion of belonging is interwoven with the individual's biography and biographic references to

various times and places (Gordon, 2008: 33). In the cases of the participants, belonging is not just connected with one or multiple places or sites. Instead, it seems to allude to a search for something, a destination or an in-between-space (Ahmed, 2000: 77-78). Maybe with age and certain knowledge about one's personal situation the search becomes less acute, because belonging is increasingly recognised as a process. The way the participants connect the issue of (non-)belonging to an multidimensional and multi-sited experience allows them to define boundaries as lived spaces of cultural exchange and mixing rather than just as a conception of functional, spatial, cultural and political division and demarcation between different spaces.

►Sense of uniqueness

The participants of my study allude to their individual cultural pluralism as a dominant feature in their lives. Their multiple allegiances as a form of othering, of being different, is the key to their sense of belonging. In my fourth paper (2013) I examine the ways in which the participants associate their cultural heritage with close social relationships that allow a new form of cultural heritage production. They create new personal traditions rather than drawing on collective memories that necessitates an active engagement with their multiple cultural and social input. They use and deconstruct diverse expressions of their representations that merge global and distinctive characteristics of multiple communities. The continuity of cultural heritage lies in the fact that the participants manifest an increased open-mindedness and tolerance towards otherness. The acquired appreciation of their multicultural attachments serves as a link between their grandparents' and parents' different origins and their own identity. It also resonates with their preference for presenting themselves as a "mixture". The quality of managing their various positions is different, also among siblings, and relates not only to the quantity of their attachments but also to the emotional value connected with them.

The study's multicultural individuals accommodate many familiar and yet equally many unfamiliar identity markers. For individuals, their symbolic self-representation, a feeling of symbolic connectedness to one or several communities, as well as an external ascription in interaction with others, are significant aspects that define belonging and that are constructed in social interaction through narratives, discourse and representation (Bhabha, 1990a: 298; Hall, 2003: 493). As I will show in the next subchapter, the notion of otherness is not only perceived as a means of division. On the contrary, it is a construct that is also actively developed by the participants to enhance a sense of communality.

Eventually two perspectives crystallised as very significant for understanding the specific situation of the study's participants. They had clear perceptions of being or having been "strange" in the sense of not fitting in and of sensing exclusion, which were occasionally associated with sombre feelings and anxiety. Some emphasised their interest in being more like "everybody else", whereas others seemed to be less bothered by feelings of otherness. Instead, they connected a more positive attitude towards not being like everyone else, in the sense of being unique.

I discussed these notions in my first article (2010), which focuses on the interrelation between language, culture and self for forming a notion of otherness and its consequence for the participants' construction of belonging. The comparison of data allowed me to assume that the differing attitudes among the participants were directly connected with their experiences of social interaction outside their core family surrounding, rather than being only related to their personalities or gender. My analysis showed that institutionalised settings such as schools with an open or latent reference to national uniformity and the resulting responses from direct social interaction are crucial for the development of the participants' attitudes towards a notion of otherness and their ways of dealing with multiple bonds. Conversely, the experience of culturally mixed settings contributes to integrating notions of existing cultural diversity instead of highlighting differences as a means of exclusion.

The participants referred to multiple situations in which their "otherness" became apparent and more pronounced in contact situations outside their usual circles of friends and family. They had grown up in times when European societies and most of their other receptive societies outside of Europe acted in predetermined patterns of assimilation towards non-nationals. In particular in the times before Schengen, the participants were confronted with explicit ideas of citizenship, residential control and the pressure to conform to stereotype expectations in everyday interactions. Alone the amount of languages the participants speak, and which they have primarily learned outside institutionalised settings, sets them apart from other populations in societies with monolingual macrostructures. Thus, otherness was established by labels that were attached to them. John disclosed that he did not actively "play a card like English, Norwegian or Belgian", but rather that he felt he was labelled by others. He states that in particular during childhood he became aware that there was always something to differentiate him: in England he was the Belgian, in Belgium he was largely the English. He maintains that he sounds "familiar" but at the same time he notices from the reaction of other people that something is amiss and they cannot place him.

The participants' experiences of otherness are shaped by the possession of plural attachments, in

terms of their loyalties, affections and languages, which emerge as a reaction to various forms of social relationships. The development of a notion of otherness is a sensitive issue. Studies show that transnational adolescents distinguish between various forms of cultural and identity elements. The experience of contrasting cultural contact situations make them select, negotiate and amalgamate different values and practices, which may result in intergenerational, gender and cultural conflicts (Timera, 2002: 147; Colombo et al., 2009: 54-5). In the same context, Christine stated that she feels ashamed that she needs so many words to describe herself compared to other people. In younger years, she felt it necessary to explain that she was born in Uruguay, had grown up in Argentina and was a Dutch citizen. She frequently heard other people say that "you can't be so many in one", and that she was just trying to show off. At other times, she also felt that her self-description was doubted, that "they won't believe me because I don't look Dutch."

Otherness is also affirmed because the participants do not correspond to stereotype expectations at first sight. Their looks may not correspond with common expectations about a certain country, their name does not correspond with their passport nationality or their language skills, their language skills may not necessarily match with their ancestry, and their cultural competence neither corresponds to their origins nor their language skills, just to name some experiences of otherness which the participants share. Speaking of his childhood, Raphael explained that he created "a kind of novelty factor" that made him be "an unusual *Ausländer* [foreigner] who looks different, has a different name but speaks German with a Bavarian accent". Mina also reported that otherness is a common response she receives from various social surroundings. She stresses that her parents never gave her the impression that she was an outsider, but she frequently experienced "other cultures but the same response", in the sense of being different.

This feeling of otherness becomes even more pronounced when relatives give the impression that the participants are different. Céline remembered how upset she was when her Italian cousins claimed that she, her sister and even their father were no longer "real" Italians but Swiss, although at that time she did not have a Swiss passport and considered herself very Italian. As a result, she experienced feelings of being hurt and excluded. This emphasised her feeling of not belonging anywhere and of being different. Her Swiss friends did not consider her Swiss because she went to the Italian school after regular school and because Italian immigration to Switzerland in the 1970s was still subject to a heated debate in society at that time. It was not a sense of discrimination but her Italian name alone caused her to feel singled out. Christine also explained that she felt rejected by her Dutch relatives when she moved to the Netherlands at the age of 18 years. She explains that she

is rather dark compared with her Dutch family's fair complexions and her Dutch relatives commented on her looks and Dutch language skills in such a way that she felt a little discriminated. She remembered that

> [w]hen I arrived to Holland, he [an uncle] told me, don't try to speak Dutch because then they're gonna think you're Turkish and then they're gonna try to abuse you. I was eighteen years old!

Multicultural individuals experience several factors that push and pull them in various directions. A myriad of factors such as education, social background, ancestry and cultural context complicate their identity work (Trask, 2010: 79) and accentuate their notions of possessing plural affiliations, which become apparent in different situations. Consequently, the reactions from their social environment turn out to be very significant for the multicultural individual.

The participants also related to incidents in "official relations" that emphasised their notion of otherness. Céline recalled an episode when she was younger and her Italian passport was stolen during a vacation in Spain. She needed to go to the Italian consulate to get papers that would allow her to cross borders on her return to Switzerland. She described this incident as "awful" because the consulate employee had problems relating to her as an Italian living in Switzerland and complained about not finding suitable paperwork. His behaviour made it clear to her that she fell outside the accepted norms and categories, which emphasised her feeling of being very different from real Italians. Frequently, a correlation is still assumed between the country of residence and citizenship. For instance, Fiona was recently confronted with an issue that arose from such a (mis-) understanding. She had auditioned for a orchestra trip to Japan for which only ten participants from selected countries were allowed to participate. The fact that she resided in Germany and applied from there created confusion because the organisers automatically assumed that she was also a German national, which she was not at that time.

The participants' otherness relates to the interrelation between language skills and cultural identification. Paula stated that whenever she is in France, she feels part of the place because she speaks the language and because the way people behave is so familiar to her. Yet, there always comes a point where she realises that she is not fully party to French society. She claims that "it is the language that alienates, not the cultural part", by which Paula means that she feels as if she speaks out-dated French. Language thus connects and alienates at the same time. Languages develop and in order to feel confident in the use of a language, one needs to constantly keep up with the changes, which is rather difficult if one lives outside of the country. Other participants also refer to notions of other-

ness that show in situations when they are familiar with certain cultural meanings without being fluent language speakers or when they feel insecure about specific cultural attitudes and intentions connected with the use of a language they speak. Jalmar explained that languages are very complex to him and go beyond aspects of proficiency and fluency of speech. He elaborated that the "subtle tones to the language" is highly problematic and can only be learned through socialisation in the country itself. From his own experience he knows that even if

> you master every word, the grammar perfectly, you still don't speak the language. The way you put the emphasis, the way you perceive jokes, especially in an unserious context, a more social context, that's the point when it's toughest when you don't speak a language through and through. 'Coz people might be joking around with you but because you don't perceive that as a joke or whatever, you assume it to be serious.

Jalmar discerns a disadvantage for people who grew up in a multicultural setting in that they do not speak a language thoroughly enough when compared to someone who has grown up with only one and stayed in one place. Despite efforts to improve language skills, there is always "some" otherness noticeable, and if not to other people, at least to himself. There are time when he envies the natural way some people use a specific language and how they support this with their body language and cultural knowledge. Frequently, however, he connects the ease of language use to a certain rigidity, which according to him decreases notions of openness towards others. This is an important aspect that other participants also underline and associate with a broader view of things that makes it possible to connect with other people, getting a point across rather than perfectly expressing oneself in a language.

Languages and family bonds connect to experiences of closeness and shared memories that make it possible to "root" the study's participants. Whereas family bonds are usually a means of constructing a coherent relation to one's personal past, the use of multiple languages contributes to establishing connections but also to erecting boundaries at the same time. Common to all participants were the same feelings of strong embarrassment when a native speaker corrected them in one of their languages or when their language skills were criticised. Despite their mixed origins, they do not feel just in-between and it is therefore troubling for them when people detect accents because it creates a notion of otherness that functions as a means of setting them apart from cultures to which they feel connections.

►Experience of otherness as a means of communality

The study's multicultural individuals share the fact that they speak multiple languages and understand distinct cultural codes, which allow them to recognise differences between various cultures and in their own attitudes. However, difference and otherness are still not perceived as overly positive features in the Western context of the participants' lives. Many people regard difference as a source of anomaly, unhappiness, and as a burden. Commonly, issues of othering are considered as a divide that accentuates disconnection and denotes political and racial conflicts (Butler, 1990; Hall, 2003: 296-7; Anzaldúa, 2007: 100). Otherness, however, is a reoccurring feeling that the participants have in common. It connects to regular experiences of cultural diversity that relates to the participants' regular negotiation of conflicting cultural values, differences and similarities between genders, generations and individuals.

Many participants actively engage in preserving a notion of otherness, also in their daily interactions. For instance, Raphael constantly experienced that people would indignantly complain to him that "yesterday [he] claimed something else". Sergio also explained that otherness and difference is nothing bad, on the contrary, it is "ganz interessant und wunderbar! [interesting and wonderful]". Some participants even seemed to worry about losing that particular notion of otherness if they stayed in one country for too long. Most participants stressed the fact that their friends came from various backgrounds. Paula, for example, emphasised the importance of connecting with people who share a "broader view of things", and not necessarily because they work in the same professional field, have lived in the same places or are co-patriots. Other participants also referred to their need to interact with a mixed community that would allow them to continue switching languages and meeting people with different backgrounds who would allow them to develop new perspectives. William stated that he gets nervous whenever he is in Poland for too long a time because it is "only Polish, only Polish people." Similarly he finds it is "depressing" that everyone speaks English in the US despite the different ethnic backgrounds and different languages that exist there.

Feelings of otherness can help to reconcile different aspects of identity and belonging (Ahmed, 1999: 336). In this context, Sara Ahmed (1999: 330-336) speaks of a new community of strangers that may create bonds between various migrants that builds on the experience of leaving home and becoming a stranger rather than on the aspect of sharing a common past. In the case of the participants, I would like to emphasise their use of difference and otherness as a tool to create solidarity and in-group feelings (Nanz, 2009:426), rather than a notion of loss or shared past. First, on a personal level the participants try to distinguish themselves from others who do not share their plural

attachments; second, they use difference on a macro level to evoke familiarity and agreement with a specific cultural and ethnic entity; and third, they use the notion of difference and otherness as a means of connecting with other individuals who have similar experiences but who do not necessarily share similar backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, culture and language. Thus, the ability to reflect on otherness assists in constructing relationships with other individuals who are aliens to each other (Nanz, 2009: 426) and allows the participants to experience various areas of cultural contact and mixing as communality.

The first aspect of otherness emphasises the participants' sense of uniqueness and is an intrinsic feature of their self-representation. The participants transmit as well as receive diffuse and shifting meanings of belonging in the course of their lives. The experience of having grown up in specific cultural environment that differs from others, because of the mixed practices and use of a multitude of languages, has shaped them. The participants are aware that their displayed attitudes and practices do not always conform to expected skills and may noticeably differ from associated patterns of behaviour. They have learned in social interaction dating from early childhood that their mixed backgrounds are regularly perceived as uncommon, both by extended family members and by people with whom they share communality in terms of language skills, culture or nationality. Subsequently, a number of participants defined their situation as a unique experience because their plural attachments simultaneously enhanced and obstructed their attempts to construct connection and inclusion.

Many participants explained that their alleged otherness was disclosed because of their names, language skills or nationality, which indicated that something was unusual about them. It often resulted in situations in which others interpreted them, their views or practices as "strange", "different" or "inconsistent". Multicultural individuals have more points of reference and therefore run into difficulties when asked about their best language or origins because many aspects that are personally important to them do not necessarily seem to match. For instance, despite native language skills and acculturation, a visibly foreign name will frequently prompt the question "where do you come from?". Although the question sounds simple enough, it goes beyond the interest of localising an individual in geographical terms. Instead, it blurs a number of aspects and establishes cross-associations between an individual's social identity, heritage, language skills, cultural practice, nationality and place of residence. As a result, the participants attract attention in various forms of social interaction from private conversations to official dealings because they do not conform to expectations. It does not mean that they are marginalised but it explains their feelings of non-

belonging and loneliness.

Social relationships are accompanied by certain expectations that people have about how a person should look, sound and behave, and where that person belongs, based on both negative and positive stereotypes and prejudices. It equally contributes to the production of an image or illusion of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image (Bhabha, 2007: 45-6). Frequently, people tend to acknowledge and confirm created categories and labels, but they may equally reject them. The situation is more complex for individuals with a multicultural background: the majority of the participants grew up and reside in societies where the recognition of similarity and difference in relation to others remains vital for establishing social identities and concepts of exclusivity based on a particular language and culture (Kazzazi, 2009: 95).

With regard to the second aspect of otherness, the participants are able to produce simultaneous notions of cultural familiarity and otherness due to their personal practices of creating personally meaningful bonds to various in-groups across a variety of cultural and social boundaries. Through a continuous process of interaction participants are able to merge seemingly inconsistent allegiances and contradictory claims into a relationship that allows them to sense a detached form of belonging through notions of proximity and distance instead of a manifestation of exclusive membership. They are both familiar and other at the same time. Languages are hereby crucial for the group of the study's participants to become acquainted with diverse cultural practices and to actively engage with their cultural backgrounds. It becomes a more difficult task to claim attachment where exposure to a certain language, matching ancestry or socialisation is lacking.

The third aspect of otherness as a means of creating communality seems to be a contradiction in terms as notions of otherness commonly emphasise feelings of exclusion. However, the participants share notions of communality with others that are directly connected with the possession of multiple, but distinct, bonds. To move between several cultural settings and to connect with multiple languages enhances the personal feeling of rootlessness but it also indicates the contrary. The experience of otherness may contribute to develop a reflective sense of belonging that depends on context, situation, place and people. The fact, that the participants possess distinct attachments allows them to feel included. The lack of a singular allegiance equally allows them to freely incorporate new bonds that depend on shared experiences and friendships. While the participants orient themselves towards others, they also sense a certain remoteness in their relationships. Provided that multiple allegiances are acknowledged as a resource for society and not only as a danger to cohesion, notions

of otherness have the potential to produce a more tolerant and inclusive understanding of belonging and membership. It equally assists in creating a sympathetic feeling towards other human beings.

The participants' approach to identity work and conception of belonging situates them in a borderland (Anzaldúa, 2007: 101) or third space (Soja, 1996: 31), which one participant compared to an ambivalent state of being "in-between, neither outsider nor insider." Another participant, Raphael, chose to perceive himself as an "outsider who is also an insider." For instance, my brother Augustinas explained that for a long time he refused to regard himself as Swedish because of our parents different ethnic origins, the multiple languages spoken in our family and his associations of foreignness in Swedish society. After having spent more than fifty years in Sweden, however, he is aware that ethnic Swedes and new migrants alike perceive him as a "real Swede" and thus question the existence of his other plural affiliations that still are essential for him.

Although family ties and national membership are both social constructions, membership of a family is frequently taken for granted as a natural community and as an extension of the concept of the nation, which is both real and imagined at the same time (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 10). The participants referred to experiences of othering in their relationships with both their close and extended family members and their surrounding societies, which allowed them to construct and de-construct boundaries through their interaction with others (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 12). They talked about the fact that they possess plural backgrounds, bonds, and different experiences that others frequently consider "uncomfortable" and antagonistic, but which the participants generally find complementary. By producing their personal myth of mixed origin and belonging, the participants contribute to de-constructing dominant myths of cultural exclusivity and purity, belonging, and identity. Instead they perceive, utilize and reproduce their plural attachments as a social and cultural capital. The participants thus create a cultural borderland that consists of spaces of cultural exchange and mixing as well as of zones of dividing boundaries and borders.

The participants are strongly oriented towards other individuals who share the experience of otherness without considering themselves as being openly discriminated against or marginalised. They also frequently voiced their longing to understand "others" in order to integrate otherness as a way of enhancing a feeling of inclusion. For instance, Jalmar explained that, on the one hand, he was envious of the perceived advantages of "understanding a nation absolutely, a hundred percent, completely". On the other hand, Jalmar felt uneasy about being exclusively attached to one culture. He reasoned that this "must mean that you have spent practically your entire life there" which according

to him “makes you very static” and “not open to the rest of the world.” Instead, he would rather use the more universal term of “understanding” when talking about belonging. He argued that “understanding something” refers to culture or multiple nations and cultures.

The participants use cultural difference as a basis for creating communality with others, regardless of whether they are “compatriots” or whether they simply share the experience of possessing multiple attachments. One important aspect that all participants emphasised was their profound experience of dissimilarities and agreements as a result of growing up with different cultures in various countries and environments, regardless of their language skills. Thus, the experience of otherness is a norm rather than something exotic or surprising for the participants. They are aware of a notion of otherness as they share both familiarity and alienation in their relationships with people from specific linguistic, cultural and ethnic entities. At the same time, their emphasis on perceived otherness allows the participants to preserve a sense of uniqueness which they define through their ethnically, culturally and linguistically mixed backgrounds, and their complex situation of feeling plural allegiances. The participants additionally share communality with others who also appreciate the sensation of being other given their own multiple attachments.

However, the younger participants seem to be more positive and self-assured in this context. This might be connected with a different appreciation of cultural diversity, which we experience nowadays rather than how it was more than thirty years ago. The participants themselves referred to the fact that cultural diversity has become a more “normal” phenomenon than was the case during most of their childhoods, which may be the reason why the older participants in the study seem to struggle more with their multiple belonging. People have become more accustomed to diversity and accept it as a process one can learn and benefit from. Indeed, the impression that people have become more at home with cultural diversity and accept it as a normal experience from which one may benefit, is also echoed in a report on young Australians and their views on multiculturalism (Ang et al., 2006: 24). There, too, the interviewees speak of a considerable shift in society (Ang et al., 2006:24).

5.3 Strategies

►Flexible relativising

I have introduced various concepts in my articles that play a role in the ways in which the participants actively engage in producing and maintaining a sense of belonging in interaction with their social world. The participants possess different abilities in dealing with their multiple allegiances

and multi-sided belonging in interaction with others. In my third paper (2012) I discuss the participants' ability to construct, transform and deconstruct the notion of difference as a boundary for sensing acceptance and membership. Their experiences of difference enhance their complex understanding of possessing plural and parallel bonds of equal importance. Frequently, an individual does not experience these distinct and different bonds as antagonistic, which is particularly the case early in life, but these bonds may become conflicting in interaction with others and with the individual's growing experience of social claims of exclusivity.

The participants possess a particular competence to relate to their distinct bonds in a flexible manner. They also have in common the ability to access the expectations of people and contexts in a split second and to react accordingly. Independently of one another, the siblings Mina and Jalmar explained that they frequently posed the following question to people who were interested in their whereabouts and belonging: "Do you want to hear the long or the short story?" Several participants compared themselves to chameleons and explained that some situations or encounters required them to stress particular components of their plural affiliations, while their other components were at that moment rendered less visible although without being lost. In the interviews, the participants were conscious of a certain amount of flexibility in their self-representation in social interactions. They were equally aware of the fact that others noticed their changing and at times contradicting images of belonging which they projected on themselves.

Flexibility is the option to emphasise their particular features that the participants share with other groups, independent of the totality of their bonds and without losing the sense of possessing interdependent and multiple other bonds. It is an individual strategy that allows for the projection of different images of self and belonging. It offers the participants the ability to decide whether they present a partial picture of their belonging to others, evade the question, reinvent themselves or explain the complexity of their sense of belonging without being reduced to just one of their various cultural, linguistic and ethnic attachments and allegiances. Many participants refer to this as part of their privilege of being multilingual and multicultural, or as Raphael puts it, it is part of his specific multicultural story. He argued that his allegiances and presentation of belonging changed according to circumstances or his personal mood. Both Raphael and other participants share feelings of patriotism, pride and other notions of "banal nationalism" in their everyday life (Billig, 1995: 6, 8). At the same time, the participants position themselves as cosmopolitans, citizens of the world who share cross-border basic needs and origins with the rest of humanity. The participants make use of both global and distinctive cultural markers in the process of their flexible self-presentation and creation

of belonging, which contribute to their awareness of differences and similarities.

The dimensions of the participants' identities undergo constant transformation and are not restricted to time or space. They depend on social interaction, and the participants may transgress boundaries of memories, aspirations, and daily lived experiences. Conceptions of belonging and identification are perceived as relational and in flow, and thus challenge common ideas of group hegemony and integration, as well as of cultural purity and exclusivity as expressed in Western principles of nationhood (Bhabha, 1990a: 299; Gibson, 2004: 4). In the case of the multicultural individuals, negotiation underlines the aspects of individual flexibility that both allow them to remain socially embedded in their family and community cultures and to build upon other transnational experiences (Goulbourne et al., 2010: 10). There is a constant interplay and exchange between individuals' self-chosen and reflexive identities, the positioning of themselves in discursive practices with others and other's attempts to situate them differently (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 20).

The participants also possess a disposition to relativise common notions of in-groups and out-groups (Thode-Arora, 1999: 32). The anthropologists Bryceson and Vuorela discuss "relativising" with an explicit emphasis on the relationships of transnational families within European societies in a time of spatial mobility and historical changes (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 14). They define relativising as "the variety of ways individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002: 14). It describes the family's relationship with others in specific sites and entails the construction and continual revision of one's roles and family identity throughout the individual's life cycle (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 15).

I use the concept of relativising slightly differently, placing emphasis on the relationships of the multilingual, multicultural and multinational individuals with various interrelated and independent dimensions of their attachments and allegiances. This allows for the conception of zones of cultural connection and understanding with various entities and places. My understanding of relativising is based on the act of stressing particular ethnic, cultural or linguistic affiliations and skills for contextual purposes without losing other bonds or a holistic perception of embodying cultural pluralism. Each acculturating affiliation separately and interdependently assumes a distinct function in constructing the individual's self, similar to the function of language for multilingual speakers (see Grosjean, 1985: 471, 474; Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2004: 18-19). This seems to confirm the participants' sense of belonging to plural, yet distinct entities. Sergio very explicitly describes this act as a form of "taking off and slipping into another me." It allows him to introduce himself at work first as a

German teacher from Switzerland and, in the next lesson, as the Brazilian teacher of Portuguese. He makes use of his ability to relativise his multiple allegiances in order to project different images on himself in his everyday life, which only correspond to some of his different bonds and to which he would not always be formally entitled to feel allegiance and belonging, because he lacks recognition in terms of citizenship or family bonds.

The act of relativising is only connected with specific allegiances to which a multicultural and multilingual individual has meaningful relationships. Although Sergio sees himself as Slovenian, Paraguayan, Brazilian and Swiss, depending on the circumstances he uses a certain flexibility in the way he presents himself, and this in distinctive ways that conceal his other bonds, so ruling out the possibility of presenting himself as something other than what he perceives himself to be. The other participants do not seem to develop a sense of assumed belonging that totally departs from the tradition of defining their belonging in terms of concrete social and cultural features, either. They always use their personal experiences of acculturation, heritage, citizenship, language skills, their personal and parents' experiences and pasts as means to create a notion of coherent belonging, both in interaction with others and personally for themselves.

►Blending in

I introduce here the concept of "blending in" which describes the participants' ability to relate to their various affiliations for demonstrating cultural understanding in different contexts by means of their language skills. The concept of blending in allows the participants to create a feeling of inclusion and in-group membership while sensing distance and noticing differences in their relations with distinct cultural and linguistic groups. The participants sometimes use precisely the term of blending in when describing their relations with their surroundings. For instance, Jalmar says that he manages to "blend in" in his interactions with Dutch society. By this he is referring to his ability to pass as a Dutch person, although he himself perceives differences in his language use and mentality. The approach of blending in presupposes a willingness to understand culture, which is a central aspect in the participants' lives. Several participants voiced their incomprehension about people who would not try to learn the local language and culture no matter how short their stay was abroad because they considered this a prerequisite of enhancing cultural understanding.

In my third paper (2012), I discussed this approach and argued that depending on the context of their various social interactions, the participants are able to relate to separate components of their

identities. This ability enables them to connect with "meaningful others" with whom they share overlapping allegiances. My concept of blending in is not a form of hybrid belonging but very much depends on the individual process that allows the participants to become aware of multiple attachments and their shifting roles in dealing with them. The participants demonstrated a specific approach in how they relate to their individual bonds, which I describe as "juggling" with their various bonds. I understand juggling as the multicultural individual's approach towards coming to terms with and finding a *modus vivendi* for possessing various affiliations. The notion of a coherent and meaningful symbiosis of several cultures does not always work as expected, and a transnational individual has to make compromises and be open to develop new perspectives (Siim, 2014:132-3). In my opinion, "juggling" evokes a slightly different and a more fitting image of the work the participants have to do than does the term "negotiation". Juggling enables the study's multicultural individuals to create either a balance or a flexible and changing relationship of dominance and power between their various affiliations. It equally modifies their relationships with their bonds by emphasising or diminishing their importance depending on the context and interaction.

The majority of the participants refer to their ability to perceive the world from different perspectives by changing from being an insider from outside to being an outsider from within (Anzaldúa, 2007: 102). The fact that they speak multiple languages, may swiftly switch between their cultural affiliations depending on the context, and are able to relate to diverse historical pasts and present situations adds to this perception. They refer to the importance of experiencing difference as just another facet of normality, one that is not strange, odd, or separating. It allows them to perceive and present their diverse and simultaneous attachments as being interrelated and independent at the same time. For instance, Raphael appreciates the idea "to be in", which creates a sense of being included without being monopolised, as he still needs the recognition of being a mix. The way he elaborates on this antagonistic desire of belonging to somewhere specific without wanting to be identified with only a single allegiance shows that he does not completely consider himself an insider or a hybrid. Instead he prefers the possibility of occasionally blending in, which describes his ability to move in different settings without people noticing him as "an alien element".

The approach of blending in allows Raphael to be "an outsider who is also an insider." Raphael claims that as a consequence of possessing plural attachments and being in the act of juggling them, he is able to assume different perspectives in his relationships to specific in-groups (see also Nanz, 2009: 419, 425; Lugones, 1989: 396, 401). It shows that he is "not really part of it [a society]" but that he "can go under cover and nobody will find out." This enables him to construct belonging to

an in-group but to view it from the outside with an insider's additional knowledge. Raphael likens this experience to possessing a secret coat that makes him invisible and at the same time allows him to act according the society's code. The participants' approach of blending in within a community or entity by flexibly emphasising or mitigating particular cultural features and components allows them to become invisible and inconspicuous in relation to others. Blending in allows individuals to visualise themselves as part of a community with whom they share particular feelings, ideas, obligations and rights in order to produce a specific notion of belonging at specific times and for specific purposes. The act of blending in is an intrinsic process that is open to all individuals, no matter whether they are classified as fortunate, elite migrants (Erfurt & Amelina, 2008: 24) or as individuals who struggle with social and racially motivated issues of marginalisation.

The participants manoeuvre between diverse affiliations and changing degrees of attachments that refer to real and imagined commitments as well as to specific societies and places. The ability to effortlessly construct a coherent sense of belonging differs from participant to participant, however, and very much depends on their past experiences and successes. For instance, Raphael argued that his older brothers think he is much more German and at the same time also much more Israeli and American than any of them. He claims that he has always expressed a stronger interest in acting on his different cultural components, and in improving and using his various language skills. His interest in engaging with several cultures at different phases in his life has allowed him to fit into his Bavarian, American and Israeli surroundings and not to be identified as a non-local. His multidimensional encounters with others in everyday life helped him to create instead a reflexive self-representation that is both detached and close. Despite this ability to fit in, Raphael also insisted on receiving "public recognition for being a mishmash", which defies traditional perceptions of belonging. The approach of blending in allows him to conceive of himself as a unique mixture who shares communality with those who also possess multiple attachments and with so-called compatriots. It dissolves the dichotomy of who is the same or different as proposed by socio-political definitions that are commonly used to establish who are a nation's/entity's members and non-members.

The concept of blending in relates to other approaches connected with transnational and mixed families that are elsewhere described as "frontiering" in terms of familial relativising (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 11-14). Bryceson's and Vuorela's concept is particularly useful for dealing with transnational experiences that are predominantly linked to two main strings of attachments, but it falls a little short for the study's participants. Whereas frontiering focuses on encounters between people and the drawing of boundaries between contrasting ways of life (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002:

11), the intercultural experience of the study's multicultural individuals is more complex. The emphasis on conflicting experiences does not necessarily correspond to the way that the participants personally perceive and define their identities and sense of belonging within a Western context. Their everyday experiences instead require an act of balancing multiple personal and external claims that allow the participants to connect and network across distances and to deal with perceptions of multi-sited belonging and multiple affiliations. The concept of "blending in" contains the idea of the individual's flexible and permanent reconsideration of their relations with others, both on a personal level as well as in interaction within and outside the family.

My proposed concept of blending in describes the participants' conscious act of using their bonds for differing purposes and in distinct situations. In practice, blending in does not necessarily result in legal or political consequences for the individual, or groups of individuals, because socio-political boundaries are very difficult to overcome (Leinonen, 2012: 214). Claims of participation are often ignored by majority groups or in policies if they do not correspond to common ideologies or interpretations of situations. Yet, the concept of blending in creates an opportunity, not only for the participants but also for other individuals with contested identities, to feel the moral right to claim participation and membership. The use of the approach of blending in enables the participants to create a sense of belonging in their interaction with others, which allows them to adopt various options of identification. Thus, blending in contributes to emphasise symbolic and "as real perceived" connectedness. At the same time, the participants' familiarity with various cultural behaviour forms and practices that refer to distinct cultural codes allows them to additionally form a sense of possessing plural allegiances and bonds.

►The familiar other: feelings of proximity and distance

Individuals with a mixed family background and with multiple languages challenge common forms of dichotomous thinking in that they are simultaneously members of various in-groups across multiple cultural, social and social boundaries. Depending on the context and their encounters with others, they have the option to acknowledge or resist categorisation, and also to do both, by becoming the "familiar other". In the case of the participants, I propose that they become the "familiar other"; someone who despite sharing cultural traits and customs is perceived as slightly "other" in the same entity. Language use and mentality are thus the most prominent markers of difference. The process of constructing a notion of the "familiar other" is very individual and differs from participant to participant.

I discussed the concept of the familiar other in an earlier paper. My paper on experienced multiculturalism and experienced cosmopolitanism (2011) describes how the participants deal with cultural diversity in routine everyday situations, with an emphasis on non-conflictual encounters. I suggest that the participants show an enhanced readiness to absorb and use new cultural differences given that they do not necessarily relate to notions of otherness and difference in a negative way. I argue that this is a crucial aspect for their daily processes of producing,transforming and deconstructing a contextualised sense of belonging. My paper explores the participants' ability to accommodate differing aspects of what is commonly perceived as the "familiar" or the "other" in diverse interactions, which relates to my previous discussions of the participants' notions of non-belonging, otherness and their ability relative to their diverse bonds in order to blend in.

In my paper (2011) I argue that the notion of being the "familiar one" is relational and highly individual. The concept of the "familiar other" is based on the participants' extended contact with cultural diversity and their ability to discern divergent attitudes and practices as a result of their personal experience of cultural pluralism. The participants possess multiple attachments which allow them to produce and reproduce themselves simultaneously as the same/familiar and yet different/other by sharing bonds and practices across multiple boundaries. The notion of being the "familiar other" materialises primarily in social interaction with others and also extends to the way that the participants think of themselves. It relates to other cultural concepts that involve notions of "otherness" and "in-betweeness", such as hybridity, cultural creolization, othering, or thirding (Bhabha, 2007: 310; Eriksen, 2007 a: 165, 173; Hannerz, 1996: 66).

After phases of nursing diverse dimensions of attachment to specific affiliations, Raphael claimed that he now prefers being the familiar other, a person who can stress familiarity if needed but who is also perceived as different. This approach lends him the potential to sense closeness and belongingness with multiple entities and places, but in a detached way. He is strangely familiar with the cultural practices of others, that is, they perceive him as familiar, but he is also considered as being distinctively different from them. Being the familiar other enables Raphael to belong to various, distinct in-groups at the same time, also depending on how he asserts his feelings of voluntary, symbolic and real membership. This also complies with William's understanding of constituting a "specific, unique category of [his] own." It allows him to conform to certain practices and expectations but at the same time to be uniquely different. The familiar other is a flexible state of mind that connects to the different bonds which a multicultural individual possesses in total. The concept relates to the experience of separate and distinct affiliations and allegiances, and at the same time additionally

creates a simultaneous feeling of proximity and distance.

The concept of the familiar other does not imply that the participants are detached from feelings of patriotism and loyalty (see Appiah, 1998: 95, 97). For some participants who chiefly understand themselves as global citizens and who feel detached from national ideologies, the discovery of defensive and patriotic behaviour may come as a surprise under changed circumstances. This was, for instance, the case for Jalmar whose new, expatriate girlfriend confronted him with stereotypes about the Netherlands that he had once shared with other circles of international and Dutch friends. During the first interview, Jalmar had referred to his "non"-national attitude and had accentuated his "global" connectedness due to his specific family situation and the fact that he had lived on various continents and had friends who shared an "international" background. He experienced his girlfriend's criticism of the Netherlands while residing in the Netherlands as disloyal, and as a personal attack on him and on cultural attitudes that he knew he was more familiar with than she was. This incident made him more defensive about certain aspects and attitudes concerning the Dutch lifestyle of which he had previously also disapproved (and occasionally still does). He laughed when he explained this, adding that he was still not used to his new patriotic attitude towards the Netherlands. He said that it was more common for him to feel he had the right to criticise Dutch politics and specific forms of behaviour he associated with Dutchness because of his position as an insider-outsider with an enlarged horizon stemming from his multiple contact points with various other cultural, ethnic and national entities.

The concept of the familiar other allows for a change of perspectives and a greater flexibility in expressing loyalty, sharing or rejecting (national, collective and cultural) narratives. Many participants confirmed that they saw it as their personal exclusive right to criticise cultural aspects, people and countries to which they have some personal connection, because they are both, familiar and yet detached enough to be able to do so. For several participants, this attitude enabled them to balance their plural affiliations, and reflect upon them critically, without considering it an act of disloyalty. They frequently denied that same right of criticism to complete strangers, however, who they judged as too unfamiliar with specific cultural practices to be able to comment on them. The idea of criticising one's own but defending the group against outsiders is universally known. Authors with a migration background have described similar contradictory feelings of distance and proximity towards both their countries of heritage and the countries where they were predominantly socialised (see for instance Kureishi, 1996: 81, 99). It becomes a psychologically more interesting phenomenon in the case of individuals with multiple allegiances, because of their plural attachments.

►Ironic nation-ness

Individual identity is constituted in terms of one's social, political and cultural relations to others and the outside world (Friedman, 1992: 853). In Europe and other Western countries in particular, we have been socialised to think in terms of exclusive racial, national and ethnic categories, related to historical conceptions of nation states. Individual and collective conflicts are bound to occur in societies that are overwhelmingly defined by political and social notions of national identity and by conceptions of "pure" linguistic and "authentic" cultural traditions (Appiah, 2006: 104-7; Bhabha, 2007: xvii; Hall, 2003: 296-7). While some dimensions of identity are mutually exclusive, their associated demands and expectations do not only extend to individuals who are visibly and audibly distinct because of their skin colour, nationality and speech. The participants exhibited great concern on issues of intolerance, which they frequently addressed in connection with discussions of nationalism and racism. On several occasions, the participants perceived the common Western notion of exclusive belonging as too restrictive with regard to their personal contexts. They referred to the fact that the knowledge of diverse languages incorporated them in different cultures, while their ancestry connected them to various ethnic groups and their citizenship to yet other national groups. The participants stressed that their multidimensional belonging required a more tolerant perspective.

My second paper (2011) discusses the concept of ironic identity with regard to the study's participants, which I understand to disrupt traditional notions of identity in practice. I proposes that the participants relate to their different dimensions of identification with an aura of detachment that simultaneously creates a feeling of inclusion and ambivalence. Their various cultural skills allow them to move across these boundaries and to simultaneously perceive themselves as both natives/insiders and strangers/outsiders. The ironic use of identity may allow the participants to perceive difference as a factor of communality. For some participants, this notion is coupled with a more tolerant perception of nation-ness in terms of nationhood and nationality. In my paper (2011), I further argue that the participants' personal and interethnic experiences result in a more tolerant and inclusive notion of national culture and of the meaning of membership in a particular community. Their open perception of nation-ness is not connected with a sense of rootless existence but, on the contrary, allows the participants to identify with their multiple attachments that link them to various entities across nation states.

As a result, the participants define the nation and its demarcation not only by the existence of other spaces but also by the proximity of strangers within that national space who are identified as close or more distant others (Ahmed, 2000: 100-101). They not only inhabit the borders of the nation and

contribute to demarcating its space, but they also actively participate in creating its culture. Although the participants rely on principles of sameness and difference in order to identify and contrast both antagonistic poles, they develop a different concept of multi-dimensional belonging. Ironic identity thus contributes towards developing an ironic understanding of nation-ness that is linked to notions of cultural cosmopolitanism.

Some participants hold two or more passports, and thus they become visible as having plural affiliations. Their citizenship matters less for reasons of political participation, however, than for establishing an emotional bond and boosting the participants' psychological and symbolic feeling of social inclusion. For instance, Céline attached great importance to becoming Swiss despite her German and Italian ethnic origins, and despite having resided outside of Switzerland since her young adulthood. She had grown up in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and looked for a way to justify the fact that she continued to speak French with her children. She also noted that her Italian relatives and other Italians did not regard her as being Italian due to differences in language skills and cultural practices, but sharing nationality gave her some sense of legitimacy in constructing her own notion of Italian-ness not necessarily towards fellow Italians but others. Similarly, Raphael attached a greater a symbolic significance to becoming German so as to feel justified in his use of German with his children rather than in terms of exercising actual political participation.

In this context, I had interesting discussions about the significance of holding a passport with the participants. Many claimed that a passport becomes important the instant they leave in order to reside somewhere else abroad. The possession of a passport does not denote the socio-political aspect of exercising citizenship but rather expresses an emotional connection to the country that has to be justified when abroad. For instance, Raphael maintains that he was not interested in having a German passport while still residing in Germany. On the contrary, he stressed his Jewish, Israeli and American attachments. Before he had a German passport, he would feel the need to correct others whenever they assumed that he was German, because he had no "legitimate" link to justify this. At the same time, he enjoyed the surprise of other Germans when learning that he was not German, which was regularly assumed because of his language skills and the mutual cultural connections. He described that he usually felt very flattered being mistaken for a German because he liked being thought of as an insider, just as he enjoyed the confusion he created when stating to Germans abroad that he was not at all German. It validated his perspective of being an outsider with insider knowledge. His moves to Israel and the US, however, necessitated other confirmation for himself that he was "somehow German" and that he should make the effort of investing in his bonds. His

German passport, although "only a paper", justified his involvement with Germany and allowed him to be more than "only" American and Jewish. Raphael is not a singular case; other participants also referred to similar experiences, which is an interesting aspect of their relation to citizenship and national belonging.

Thus, ironically, a passport, and by extension citizenship, becomes an important means for justifying why an individual nevertheless feels a sense of cultural attachment to a particular site whenever language skills, or cultural practices and behaviour fall short of demonstrating functional membership. It strengthens the individual's sense of allegiance, which may not always be perceived as legitimate by outsiders but corresponds to other features of communality the participants possess. Despite globalisation and increased interdependence, the meaning of ethnicity remains significant and demands a constant redefinition in relation to others (Forsander, 2001: 49-51). The participants displayed a specific dimension of identity, described elsewhere as transnational identity experience (Forsander, 2001: 50), which entitles belonging to a community that is not restricted by the borders of the country of residence. The notion of ironic nation-ness is not restricted to people who live in diaspora or who are mobile expatriates and belong to international business elites (Calhoun, 2002: 105, 108). It implies more tolerance and openness to all who are willing to engage with plural other cultures in order to obtain understanding and knowledge, which allows the experience of cosmopolitanism in everyday relations.

Ironic nation-ness is based on previous discussions of the participants' increased understanding that a diversity of cultural concepts exist in parallel. It allows the participants to re-enact and modify the extent of multiple, yet specific influences at particular times, and for particular purposes, and without creating feelings of exclusion, displacement or rootlessness. The participants demonstrate the ability to move between their allegiances but legal and functional governance patterns nevertheless continue to challenge their personal perception of belonging. They draw on selective allegiances within their greater network of ties, which does not exclude the existence of simultaneous notions of specific attachment and plural local, regional and national or global allegiances. The participants' awareness of multiple identities prevents them from being too close to a given ideology (see Saner 1986: 50) and enables the formation of a unique sense of belonging.

In a cultural context, the concept of cosmopolitanism is understood as both a transcultural phenomenon and a lifestyle that allows the experience of otherness/the other in multiple ways (Appiah, 2006: 97). Cosmopolitanism is often connected with ideas of rootlessness, movement and home-

lessness but it does not exclude a sense of belonging. Ironic nation-ness is a part of cosmopolitanism because it surpasses traditional conceptions of ethnicity, nationality and place that are frequently connected with exclusively singular belonging. Ang et al. (2006:32) present similar findings in their report and argue that the group of Australians under investigation identified themselves in terms of an ethnic group but not only in terms of that specific group. Likewise the participants show a more complex understanding of belonging that is not only hybrid. For instance, Jalmar explained that he is not only Dutch or Finnish but first and foremost regards himself as international and a citizen of the world. Considering himself to be cosmopolitan enables him to have much in common with other people, despite not sharing the same location or roots.

The majority of the participants did not consider themselves as cosmopolitans, however, which for them is too vaguely defined. Despite drawing on traditional boundaries, and an "as real perceived" framework of nationalities and ethnicities, the participants nevertheless relate to them differently. The participants use their diverse attachments not solely for the purpose of becoming immersed and feeling included but also to construct a sense of identity that consists of multiple identifications without losing local, regional and national identities (Held, 2002:57-8; Hannerz, 1996: 105; Block, 2006: 38-9). In essence, the participants create a more tolerant way of experiencing various allegiances by assuming deliberately or unconsciously an ironic identity that reflects the cosmopolitan experiences in their daily lives. Elsewhere this experience is also described as "practical tolerance" (Ang et al., 2006:39), which is characterised as a way of being more tolerant and open towards difference.

My paper (2011) shows that in the participants' cases, their experience of cosmopolitanism does not relate to a global-political process but to one which is highly individual in its nature. This process allows them to experience parallel and non-conflicting notions of multiple distinct local, regional and national attachments, depending on the situation and time of experience. As a result, cosmopolitanism is not a rigid disposition, but the participants demonstrate shifting attitudes. At certain periods of their lives they were more attracted to cosmopolitan ideas, at other times they sought closer connection to one particular ethnic, cultural and linguistic entity among the multitude of their bonds. Their greater sensitivity to issues of difference and otherness allows them to abandon or adopt specific cultural identifications depending on the situation. Ang et al. (2006:32-3) speak in this context about a "cool sense of citizenship", which includes personal interest towards cultural differences based on the experience of mobility and multiple networks. "Cool citizenship" or ironic nation-ness is not in conflict with a sense of national community but it may weaken its significance.

Ironic nation-ness is very multi-dimensional, detached and more tolerant in its effects. The participants did not perceive it as contradictory to possess several passports and citizenships, multiple local and regional identities in terms of ethnicities, languages and cultures that connect them to different spaces at the same time. The use of an ironic notion of nation-ness points to a more relaxed attitude towards issues of multiple belonging and otherness. It thereby contributes to create notions of a detached nationalism and patriotism that work against social tendencies of assimilation and segregation.

Many participants spoke in favour of having a European passport that does not state an individual's nationality and ethnicity but only discloses necessary aspects of identification, such as name, place and date of birth. Some were indeed interested in the possibility of exerting a "flexible" citizenship (Ong, 1999: 2, 19-20), which allows them to make choices about where they situate themselves according to their various work and other activities. John referred in this context to the possession of a "post-national identity". He does not consider himself as nationally attached but rather speaks of himself as a "sort of cross-cultural, but not cross-national, maybe more supra-national" individual. John claims that he "wouldn't mind being European" because of its comfortable label that allows for "be[ing] and not to be[ing] Belgian, English or whatever" at the same time. Similar to John, Fiona expresses the wish to be perceived as "European, just European" and not in terms of her national and cultural allegiances. To become European simplifies the issue for participants and allows them both to be "supra-national" and able to produce recognition of their multiple claims that is an expression of ironic nation-ness.

A European identity may not exist in reality (Kaelberer, 2012: 103-104; Kennedy, 2012: 18-19) but for some participants a European identity has become part of a self-chosen reality. For instance Céline claimed "I'm Europe!". She, similarly to other participants, uses the term "European" according to her personal definitions of what she thinks a European identity is. She relates to a culturally and linguistically diverse Europe of different states. This perception connects directly with her personal understanding of possessing culturally and linguistically versatile and multi-dimensional identifications.

Unlike cosmopolitan references to notions of being "international" or a "citizen of the world", a European identity alludes to a geo-political space. The imagination of Europe thereby offers the advantage to provide a socially acceptable way of nationally, culturally and spatially defining oneself as a person with multiple allegiances towards others. Thus, the reference to Europe fulfils basic hu-

man needs of constructing a coherent and unchallenged notion of belonging. An identification with Europe neither excludes national and local feelings nor notions of non-belonging or being international; rather it is part of a complex construction of identities with the aim of conceiving belonging that is less contested in social discourse. This does not imply that all people with a similar multicultural family background are European citizens or identify with the term “European”. They are not and they do not. Instead they can have a multitude of other identifications, which may be distinctive and multiple, hyphenated, hybrid, transnational, international, cosmopolitan or whatever one chooses. In each case, however, they are likely to share a sense of multicultural belonging.

6. MULTICULTURAL BELONGING

The research of multicultural belonging enhanced my own understanding of my personal situation, of what it means to be multilingual and multicultural. This work, however, is not based on my diverse experiences or possible dissimilarities between the participants and myself. Rather, I focus on comparing perceived similarities and dissimilarities among all participants despite existing socio-cultural and ethnic differences. The use of a selective and dynamic approach of insider-/outsiderness, both towards the people I interviewed and towards the content I analysed, assisted me in changing between various perspectives and discovering new aspects during my research process.

I would like to conclude this introductory paper by summarising the most important results of my research that explain what multicultural belonging is. Multicultural belonging consists of many different facets and my work describes them in relation to the particular situations of the study's participants. My discussion of the data suggests that the construction of belonging is situated in their life course. It connects with their specific experiences of transnational bonds, mobility and, foremost, their multiple allegiances. The participants' relationships with their wider social environment are crucial for the development of their sense of multicultural belonging. These experiences directly refer to the significance generally attached to the inextricable relationship that exists between language, culture and identity, which is of particular concern for individuals with a multicultural family background.

My findings show that that the study's participants identify with a number of different attachments that relate to multiple dimensions of social and cultural interaction. Their multiple allegiances are connected with personal choices of symbolic and as real perceived bonds. These bonds make it possible to construct a sense of belonging through multiple discourses, social bonds and cultural practices that are subject to constant modifications. The way the study's multicultural individuals conceive belonging relates to a process in which multiple identification, self and belonging arise as meaningful categories from the interaction with the significant other that is based on the relationship between self-image and otherisation, and the emotional value attached to it. If one aspect of the participants' everyday negotiations with their multiple affiliations concerns their immediate social interactions, language use and family bonds, another affects their general relationship to society in terms of their representation within communities and states. Thereby two dominant notions crystallise, that of (1) being the same by sharing familiar traits and connecting to specific cultural ideas and languages, and also (2) being the strange one who incorporates other cultural features, which are

ascribed to other collectives.

The study's participants experience a particular situation of simultaneously incorporating and relating to different, and possibly contradicting, attachments. Their emphasis on possessing multiple attachments on an equal basis offers a different perspective to issues of belonging that is commonly characterised by exclusive bonds. In particular family bonds and the knowledge of multiple languages allow the study's participants to conceptualise belonging as multi-sided, multi-dimensional and ambiguous as well as to refer to concrete attachments.

Family bonds play a significant role for constructing meaningful links across geographic distances, and so do the participants' different ways of socialisation during childhood. They assist in reinforcing the multicultural individuals' identifications and relationships with plural attachments based on their everyday contacts. The participants' particular mixed family situation provided a context in which they learned to (de-)construct notions of belonging through the use of various languages and the knowledge of different cultural practices and concepts (Anderson, 1999: 24). At the same time, the experience of various different dimensions of cultural interaction rendered the participants early conscious of notions of otherness, differences and similarities. Situations of social and cultural contact between the familial environment on the one hand and the dominant society on the other hand contributed to cultivate a sense of non-conformity and a notion of unique cultural pluralism.

Another major aspect of multicultural belonging concerns the participants' multilingualism, that connects with various cultural competences that go beyond their ability to speak multiple languages. Languages relate to identity constructions and are a means to establish legitimate and meaningful relationships with distinct groups and places across borders. Furthermore, the use and acquisition of multiple languages allow the participants to position themselves as someone who is a mixture and has a complex background. The participants are concerned for their language skills on a personal level in order to pass as an insider in various groups, which connects to diverse issues of personal expression, fluency and accents. Whereas diaspora groups are anxious about the purity of language and connect language use with the continuity of a linguistic and cultural group (Klaas, 2015: 12), the participants frequently associate their language use also with the deliberate mixing and changing of languages as a suitable form of emotional expression. My findings suggest that the regular use of different languages and exposure to a multicultural setting encourages self-identification as a multilingual and multicultural individual, but languages remain an ambiguous issue for the participants because of their potential to emphasise otherness and difference in social interaction.

The concept of belonging refers to the significance of our relationships with others in terms of constructing collective entities and specific in-groups that operate in relation to individualised perceptions of self. Despite their potential to create conflict, notions of borders and exclusiveness play an important role in group formations. The constant negotiation of the individual's personal sociocultural ties and associations are contrasted by rigid perceptions of cultural values and beliefs connected to collective identities that generate clichéd expectations about specific groups. My study shows that the participants actively deal with the different dimensions of their connections that increase their ability to change their perspectives from being an insider to an outsider, and back.

The participants' sense of belonging is thus shaped by the juxtaposition between their individual and family pluralism in terms of languages and cultural bonds on the one hand, and the traded ideas of exclusive belonging on the other hand. They experience and acknowledge the presence of boundaries in their social, political and cultural lives that accentuate differences as functional and indicate visible and invisible borders. Loyalty to multiple countries is perceived as highly controversial and often leads to restrictive policies on immigration and movement in the socio-political framework (Bhabha, 2007: 41, 55; Kendall et al., 2009: 93). Various institutions act as national agents and encourage belonging in terms of exclusive national, ethnic and linguistic affiliation. The study participants move within these spaces that are formed at the intersection where specific dimensions, interests and obligations, linguistic differences, exclusive claims and associated expectations meet. Their personal work of creating belonging is strongly influenced by the understanding of exclusive attachment, which they face in their everyday life's routine practices and encounters.

Frequently, possible controversy between their loyalties or other incidents that cast doubt on their alleged allegiances can be very unsettling for the participants and may trigger various associations of (non-)belonging. In their processes of constructing belonging, they relate to contradicting notions of not fitting in anywhere while at the same time having multiple connections. This renders the participants vulnerable to feelings of rejection and the dismissal of their claims to distinctive bonds. In particular everyday encounters that associate with specific expectations towards cultural attitudes or linguistic proficiency continue to pose problems for the participants. The responses from social surroundings are therefore crucial to the ways multicultural individuals perceive their belonging. External responses to notions of multiple identification may complicate matters, as they do not always take into consideration the affective importance of possessing multiple and interrelated bonds for the study's multicultural individual.

Similarly to the language competence and proficiency of multilingual speakers, each socialisation group and culture assumes a distinct function for the multicultural individual and need not be balanced. The participants relate to their various attachments in different ways. Depending on the context, they may use their ties independently or interrelatedly to develop notions of belonging and membership. For instance, many participants attach great value to holding several passports that is associated with concerns that go beyond issues of concrete socio-political participation. Rather, citizenship is understood as a means of expressing the participants' symbolic bond and loyalty to a specific ethnicity. The possession of a passport becomes a means to defend against possible contestation of their sense of cultural identification and the (continuous) use of a specific language.

The participants of the study perceive themselves as mixtures with distinct attachments who are able to relate separately to their different cultures and various languages in order to generate new connections. The possession of multi-dimensional bonds is an intrinsic aspect of the participants' lives, but the notion of cultural familiarity and otherness is not automatically given. Frequently, their process of identity formation results in a personal quest to make sense of their multiple bonds, which is interconnected with specific phases in life, such as their late teenage years, young adulthood or embedded in personally important biographic stages, such as the founding of families and progressing age.

Our expectations and associations do not only extend to people who are distinct in their origins and speech, which explains why the participants occasionally speak of feelings of homelessness and loneliness. Although these sentiments express the participants' intrinsic awareness of not sharing uncontested affiliations, they are not signs of social marginalisation. Rather, there is evidence that the participants have an essential desire to construct a coherent sense of belonging that incorporates multiple distinct individual and collective attachments. The dichotomy of difference and similarity continues to play a role but my findings show that the study's multicultural individuals use and dissolve their meaning as a divide in their practical and everyday life. The study's multicultural individuals frequently use manifestations of otherness as a means of establishing bonds instead of using them for creating notions of exclusion or division. Cultural difference is used as a means of dealing with their ambiguity and the participants use otherness to evoke a feeling of communality with various groups and other individuals who share this feeling. Nevertheless, the participants feel neither completely alienated nor attached. Rather, they show a combination of both attitudes which implies a different and broader perception of the common cultural concepts of inclusion and exclusion.

The findings of my study suggest that an inextricable relationship exists between the participants' multilingualism, their diverse cultural bonds and perceptions of self that are interconnected in multiple ways. While these different factors contribute to enhance their identification as multicultural individuals, they also contribute to obstruct the processes of constructing a coherent sense of belonging. Ethnic, cultural and linguistic identification is constructed by boundaries and notions of difference that delimit specific groups one from another, which makes the process of personal negotiation difficult for the multicultural individuals. Everyday interactions confront the participants with labels of otherness and difference, despite their experiences of possessing bonds that link them with different groups and places. As a result, the study's participants have developed various strategies that allow them to relate to notions of difference not only as a marker of exclusive distinction but also as a way to produce feelings of connection with multiple identity markers.

My study proposes that the participants are able to create their own space of cultural mixing and exchange by using concepts of otherness in a distinctively different manner that emphasises difference as means of creating communality, instead of perceiving it as a tool of dividing and separating places and entities. In their case, the mechanism of contrasting with others need not create conflicts but allow to acknowledge the equality and comparability of distinct groups and settings, while simultaneously emphasising the importance of differences and of boundaries (Eriksen, 1995: 428, 434).

The process of conceiving belonging is not static but allows alternation. The participants' conception of belonging is developed through the interplay of the two antagonistic and complementary experiences that allow the extension of cultural contact across boundaries while retaining them as markers of difference. The development of specific approaches enable the study's multicultural adults to actively engage with their multiple attachments and to move in flexible ways within, between and across these cultural boundaries. As a result, transnational networks primarily serve to boost the multicultural's personal feelings of inclusion and multiple allegiance rather than concrete economic and political purposes.

The participants display a high amount of flexibility in their relation with others by frequently changing perspectives, which changes their notions of inclusion and exclusion as well as experiences of distance and proximity. I suggest that the participants manage to juggle and negotiate their multiple affiliations by blending in and becoming invisible in selected entities according to the context, the people and their moods, without feeling the need to assimilate or to abandon their other equally important attachments. Nevertheless, the participants retain, sometimes purposefully, a cer-

tain amount of "otherness", which becomes noticeable in their interaction with others and in their attitudes and views. They thus become the "familiar other" who displays different, foreign and strange features, or who shows familiar features despite a differing background or socialisation. In their relationship to notions of national affiliations, the participants often present a detached and ironic nation-ness in their everyday interactions, which makes it possible to identify with several parallel attachments in terms of multiple places and entities.

The process of constructing multicultural belonging is very individual and dynamic. It incorporates new bonds as well as reacts to changes in the individual's life. The participants' sense of multicultural belonging also connects to a disposition for a mixed-family life-style. The majority of the study's multicultural individuals showed a preference for conveying to their children a shared experience of continuous cultural mixing and multiple language use. The experience of multicultural bonds is an intrinsic part of their identity and a result of their personal life-style that connects experiences of past and present social relationships. The creation of an imagined space that emphasises cultural contact, mixing and exchange, allows the participants to develop a balanced relationship between different experiences of intercultural encounters and meanings in everyday life that go beyond the functional and political dimension of borders and boundaries. This frequently results in ideas of symbolic allegiance and detached nationalism.

Recent studies suggest for multilingual speakers the emergence of a specific multilingual identity. Exposure to a large number of languages as a result of living in diverse countries leads to an entirely different self-perception and definition of language dominance than previously examined in other studies focusing on diaspora and other migration groups (Tannenbaum & Tseng, 2015: 13). Multilingual identity thus favours a "transnational perspective of hybridity and simultaneity" without restriction to geographical locations or ethnic affiliations (Tannenbaum & Tseng, 2015: 17). Although similar statements may be made about the relationship between the study's participants with their languages, the focus on multilingualism alone is limiting in that it does not take into account the importance of social relationships. The fact of being a multilingual speaker is important for the participants' process of constructing multicultural belonging but there are other factors, which are equally significant.

People relate to a multitude of aspects in creating a sense of emotional bonding. My work shows that the participants draw on several, apparently contradicting, concepts for conceiving their sense of belonging. Their conception of belonging challenges simplistic perceptions of binaries conveyed

by socio-political frameworks that allow for the development of shared cultural spaces across boundaries. I understand these cultural spaces as individually experienced zones in which individuals move, encounter and construct different modes of communality and distinction with various people, places and entities as part of their identity work and construction of belonging. These zones situate the participants in a "cultural borderland" that also determines belonging in relation to existing geo-political spaces but without confinement to actual place. This conception of cultural borderland embraces the use of different languages and equally relates to perceived cultural connections across borders that speak of regional loyalties, cultural competence and the sharing of affinity with certain groups and places.

My study attempts to show that the participants do not only experience feelings of in-between-ness. On the contrary, they also sense precise attachments. It is only through their extended social interaction that their multiple cultural allegiances become characterised as a sense of being torn between. Despite notions of being mixtures, which is directed linked to their emotionally loaded relationships with certain languages and cultures, the study's participants are neither hybrid nor super-national. My research suggests that they display features of cultural cosmopolitanism that is not connected to a rigid disposition but demonstrates shifting attitudes. I therefore argue that they possess a notion of multicultural belonging, which is ambiguous and strengthens different dimensions of allegiance and cultural competence. Multicultural belonging is not an exclusive but rather an unrestricted conception. It allows the participants options of occasional claims to exclusive membership while at the same time maintaining their intrinsic understanding of possessing other attachments and of being a "mishmash".

Multicultural belonging indicates cultural understanding in terms of possessing a variety of cultural perspectives that makes it possible to construct affinity. The participants associate belonging with a multidimensional competence that is not only attributed to speaking languages but refers to bonds that express their roots, their present and future connections. However, their sense of belonging differentiates from the ease that is usually associated with notions of belonging. The study's multicultural individuals need to make additional efforts in maintaining and negotiating old and new cultural bonds that determine their sense of multicultural belonging. Their attempts to represent and justify their multiple attachments as crucial aspects of their identification indicate a dynamic process of constantly and flexibly repositioning themselves as multicultural individuals in diverse forms of social interaction.

The construction of a multicultural belonging offers the study's individuals a new understanding of inclusion that no longer perceives exclusive bonds as contradictory to possessing multiple loyalties but as the foundation of their multicultural belonging. This perspective favours the acceptance of being and becoming a multicultural individual with a multi-dimensional, multi-sited and multicultural sense of belonging across different cultures, languages and places.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

I. Personal information

I.1 Names (first and family names)

_____

I.2 Year and place of birth _____

I.3 Nationality-/ies (if you have changed your nationality, please state original and current nationalities) _____

I.4 Please state town and country of residence _____

I.5 Do you have siblings? Yes □ No □

If yes, how many? _____

Age? _____

Please state your ranking order in the family:

First-born □ Second born □ Third born □ Other: _____

I.6 Parents

I.6.1 Please state your mother's nationality/-ies _____

Please state your father's nationality/-ies _____

I.6.2 Please state your family's country of residence during childhood

_____

I.6.3 Have you moved abroad with your parents before you started school?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please specify:

_____

I.7 Education:

I.7.1 Please state the country/ countries where you went to school

_____

I.7.2 Please state your secondary school _____

I.7.3 In what language(s) were your items mainly taught at school?

_____

I.7.4 Did you attend a bilingual school? Yes □ No □

I.7.5 Please state the highest type of your education:

secondary school □ vocational school □ university studies □

I.7.6 If you hold a university degree, please state your degree and subject

_____

I.7.7 Please state the country/countries where you studied

_____

I.8 Language skills:

I.8.1 What was / were the first language(s) you spoke?

_____

I.8.2 Mother tongue/best language(s): _____

Other languages (please indicate fluently-fair-basic):

	written	spoken	understanding

II Communication structure within and outside the family

II.1 In what language(s) is it the easiest for you to express yourself, your thoughts and opinion?

_____

II.2 How many languages do you use at your parent's home? _____

II.3 According to you, do you speak all family languages equally well? Yes □ No □

Which one(s) is/are stronger? _____

Which one(s) is/are weaker? _____

II.4 Languages spoken at home **as a child/teenager**

II.4.1 What language did you use when arguing with yourself if something wouldn't work or worked differently as you wanted it to work or if you had a sudden, unexpected and unpleasant experience?

_____

II.4.2 What language(s) did you use with your brother(s)/sister(s)? _____

II.4.3 What language did you usually use only with your mother? _____

II.4.3 How did you call your mother (e,g. Mama)? _____

II.4.4 What language did you usually use only with your father? _____

II.4.3 How did you call your father (e.g. Papa)? _____

II.4.5 What language(s) do/did you use with both parents present? _____

II.4.6 In what language(s) did your parents usually speak only with each other?

_____

II.4.7 What language(s) was/were spoken when the whole family was together, e.g. seated around the dining table or playing a game? _____

II.4.8 What language did you use with your siblings and your parents in presence of guests?

_____

II.4.9 Did you mix languages in your family when living at home? Yes □ No □

II.4.10 What language did you use with your parents and siblings when you were outside home, e.g. in a shop, a restaurant? Did you use another language than the usual one(s)?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please state what language: _____

II.4.11 Have situations occurred that you were translating for your parents or for guests or for others?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please state a typical example for such a situation and language use

_____

_____

II.5 Languages spoken with siblings and parents when meeting them **now**

II.5.1 Has any of change of language occurred in your family? Yes □ No □

If yes, due to what reason in your opinion? _____

II.5.2 Do you use **now** as an adult with one or more family members a different language than before when you were a child? Yes □ No □

If yes, please state the concerning family member (e.g. sibling, father, mother) and the change in language _____

II.5.2 Do you still mix languages in your family when visiting parents or meeting siblings?

Yes □ No □

II.5.3 What language(s) do you use now with your siblings and your parents in presence of your partner/s or guests? _____

II.5.4 Are still situations occurring that you are translating for your parents or for partners, guests or for others? Yes □ No □

If yes, please state an example for such a situation and language use

_____

_____

II.5.5 What language(s) do you now use when arguing with yourself if something doesn't work or works differently as you want it to work or if you have a sudden, unexpected and unpleasant experience? _____

II.6 Language refusal

Has there been a period in which you refused to speak one of your languages? Yes □ No □

If yes, what language did you refuse and for how long?

_____

II.7 How regularly do you speak with your relatives and friends in one of the family languages?

very often □ often □ sometimes □ never □

II.8 By which means do you speak with them?

During a visit □ by phone conversation/skype □ via email/internet □

II.9 Is it easy for you to switch from one language to another? Yes □ No □

II.10 Do you think you are gifted for learning or understanding foreign languages? Yes □ No □

II.11 If you don't have children, would you choose to raise them with several languages?

Yes □ No □

If yes, which language(s)? _____

Please only answer the question section II.13.1 – II.13.6 if you have children

II.13.1 In what country did you meet your partner? _____

II.13.2 Please indicate how many children you have in the age frame below

___0-5 yrs ___6-10 yrs ___11-20 yrs ___over 21 yrs

II.13.3 Have you been trying to promote one or both cultural backgrounds of your parents to your children? Yes □ No □

If yes, please state briefly by which means

_____

_____

II.13.4 In what language do you communicate with your partner/ the other parent of your children?

_____

II.13.4 What language(s) do you speak with your children? _____

II.13.5 Did you make a conscious decision to raise your children with this language?

Yes □ No □

II.13.6 If your children grow up in a multilingual family situation, how many languages do your children speak at home and in their closer surrounding?

one □ two □ three □ four □ more □

III Personal opinions and attitudes

III.1 How often are you together with your partner and children visiting one or both of your parents' countries of origin?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.1.2 How often are you visiting together with your children but without your partner one or both of your parents' countries of origin?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.1.3 How often are you visiting on your own one or both of your parents' countries of origin?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.2.1 If you have moved away from the country where you grew up, how often are you returning for visits with your partner and your children?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.2.2 If you have moved away from the country where you grew up, how often are you returning for visits with your children but without your partner?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.2.3 If you have moved away from the country where you grew up, how often are you returning for visits on your own?

twice or more times a year □ once a year □ once every second year □

less □ just on special occasions □ never □

III.3 Do you celebrate alone or with your children any special festivities which are typical for one or both of your parents' countries of origin? Yes □ No □

E.g., what festivities? _____

III.4 Do you prepare special food for yourself or your family that is typical for one or both of your parents' countries of origin? Yes □ No □

If yes, please give one or two examples: _____

III.5 **As a Child**

III.5.1 Did you visit with your parents any expatriate gatherings as a child? Yes □ No □

III.5.2 Did you attend in addition to your usual education a so-called Sunday-school in one of the language spoken at home? Yes □ No □

III.5.3 If yes, how regularly did you attend the school?
once a week □ once a fortnightonce a month □ less than that □

III.5.4 If yes, in what language did you attend Sunday-school? _____

III.5.5 What language(s) did you mainly speak with your friends? _____

III.5.6 As a child, how would you present yourself to strangers and what would you say when asked where you came from?

_____

III.5.7 Were there occasion when you presented yourself differently? Yes □ No □

III.5.8 As a child what would you say when you were asked to explain why you spoke different languages at home?

_____

III.5.9 As a child, how did you feel about being from a family where several languages were daily spoken?
Very positive □ positive □ neutral □ negative □ very negative □

III.5.10 As a child, was there a period when you preferred to grow up with just one language?
Yes □ No □
If yes, could you please indicate the period/your age? _____

III.5.11 As a child, did you ever think of moving later to one of your parents' home countries?
Yes □ No □

III.5.12 What associations do you have with your childhood home? Where and what was your home?

What was important for making home feel like “home”?

_____

_____

_____

III.6 **As an adult**

III.6.1 When referring to your home, which home do you think of?

_____

_____

III.6.2 Please complete following sentence: Home is_____

_____

III.6.3 Where is home for you now? _____

III.6.4 Has some change occurred since childhood? Yes □ No □

If yes, in what respect? _____

III.6.5 How would you define and describe home?

_____

_____

III.6.6 In your opinion, what makes you feel “ home at home”?

_____

_____

III.6.7 Is a notion of home equivalent with a notion of belonging? Yes □ No □

If not, how do these notions differ? _____

_____

III.6.8 Where do you feel the greatest sense of belonging?

_____

_____

III.7 How do you present yourself to strangers and what do you say when asked where you come from? _____

III.7.1 Are you presenting yourself always the same way? Yes □ No □

III.7.2 Are there occasion when you present yourself differently? Yes □ No □

III.7.3 Define yourself in terms of ethnic, national and/or linguistic identity, if possible.

_____

_____

III.7.4 When asked how do you explain to strangers and acquaintances why you speak different languages? How do you react to this question?

_____

_____

III.7.5 How do you feel about being from a family in which several languages are spoken?
Very positive □ positive □ neutral □ negative □ very negative □

III.7.6 As an adult, was there any age when you would have preferred to be predominantly monolingual? Yes □ No □
If yes, when? _____

III.7.7 How do you feel about people who speak only one language?

_____

III.7.8 Have you been living and working in one or both of your parents' home countries?
Yes □ No □

III.7.9 What language(s) do you mainly use with your friends now?

_____

III.8 How important are your family roots for the formation of your own identity?
Very important □ important □ not very important □ not important at all □

III.8.1 Is your identity closely related with your linguistic abilities or with your languages?

_____

III.8.2 Do you have a particular sense of identity as a multilingual?

_____

III.9.1 Do you feel equally accepted in all your countries of "allegiance" – parents' countries of origin and your country of socialization? Do you feel you belong?

_____

_____

III.9.2 Makes diversity of backgrounds feel you more comfortable?

_____

III.10 How do other react to your multicultural and multilingual family?
Please state the most common positive and the most common negative remarks.

_____

_____

III.11 **Use of media**

III.11.1 Please state if you use any media means to stay in touch with one or both languages of your parents

books □ films □ tv □ music groups □ none □
magazines □ dvd's □ radio □ internet / news sites □
Preference for what language/s? _____

III.11.2 How frequently do you read, watch or listen to media in one or both of your parents' tongues?

Several times or more a week □ once a week □ once a month □
once every couple of months □ less than that □ never □

III.11.3 Please state if you use any media means to stay in touch with the country where you mainly grew up

books □ films □ tv □ music groups □ none □
magazines □ dvd's □ radio □ internet / news sites □

III.11.2 How frequently do you read, watch or listen to media in the language of the country where you mainly grew up?

Several times or more a week □ once a week □ once a month □
once every couple of months □ less than that □ never □

III.12 Do you know other multilingual families? Yes □ No □

III.13 Do you meet them on a regular base? Yes □ No □

III.14 Regarding the Football World Cup, for which national team did you side or for which would you have had the biggest sympathy if all countries had participated?

_____

IV Social interaction with surrounding

IV.1 How long have you been living in your current country of residence? _____

IV.2 If you moved to your current country of residence, please tick the reason why you moved
work related reasons □ personal reasons □ other reason □

IV.3 Do you have the intention to move away from your current country of residence in the next five years? Yes □ No □

IV.4 How often do you use the language of your current country of residence in your private conversations?
always □ often □ regularly □ sometimes □ never □

IV.5.1 Are you in touch with any expatriate community? Yes □ No □

IV.5.2 If yes, please state which _____

IV.5.3 If yes, please state how often. always □ often □ regularly □ sometimes □

IV.5.4 Are your children belonging to some expatriate community? Yes □ No □
If yes, please state which _____

IV.6 How good is your knowledge about geography, history, culture and politics in one or both of your parents' countries of origin?
very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

IV.7 How good is your knowledge about geography, history, culture and politics in your country of socialisation?
very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

IV.8 How good is your knowledge about geography, history, culture and politics in your current country of residence?
very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

IV.9 How good is your knowledge of current politics and trends in your country of socialisation?
very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

IV.10 How good is your knowledge of current politics and trends in one or both of your parents' countries of origin?

very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

IV.11 How good is your knowledge of current politics and trends in your current country of residence?

very good □ good □ satisfying □ poor □ no knowledge □

V Personal comments

Do you have any personal statements or comments you would like to add?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking your time to fill out this questionnaire!