

University of Luxembourg

IACCP virtual Conference – 27-31 July 2021  
Symposium Contribution # 576:  
Immigrants' Acculturation across the Lifespan

**Multicultural Identity Integration – the importance  
of the context of the family**

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Fonds National de la  
Recherche Luxembourg

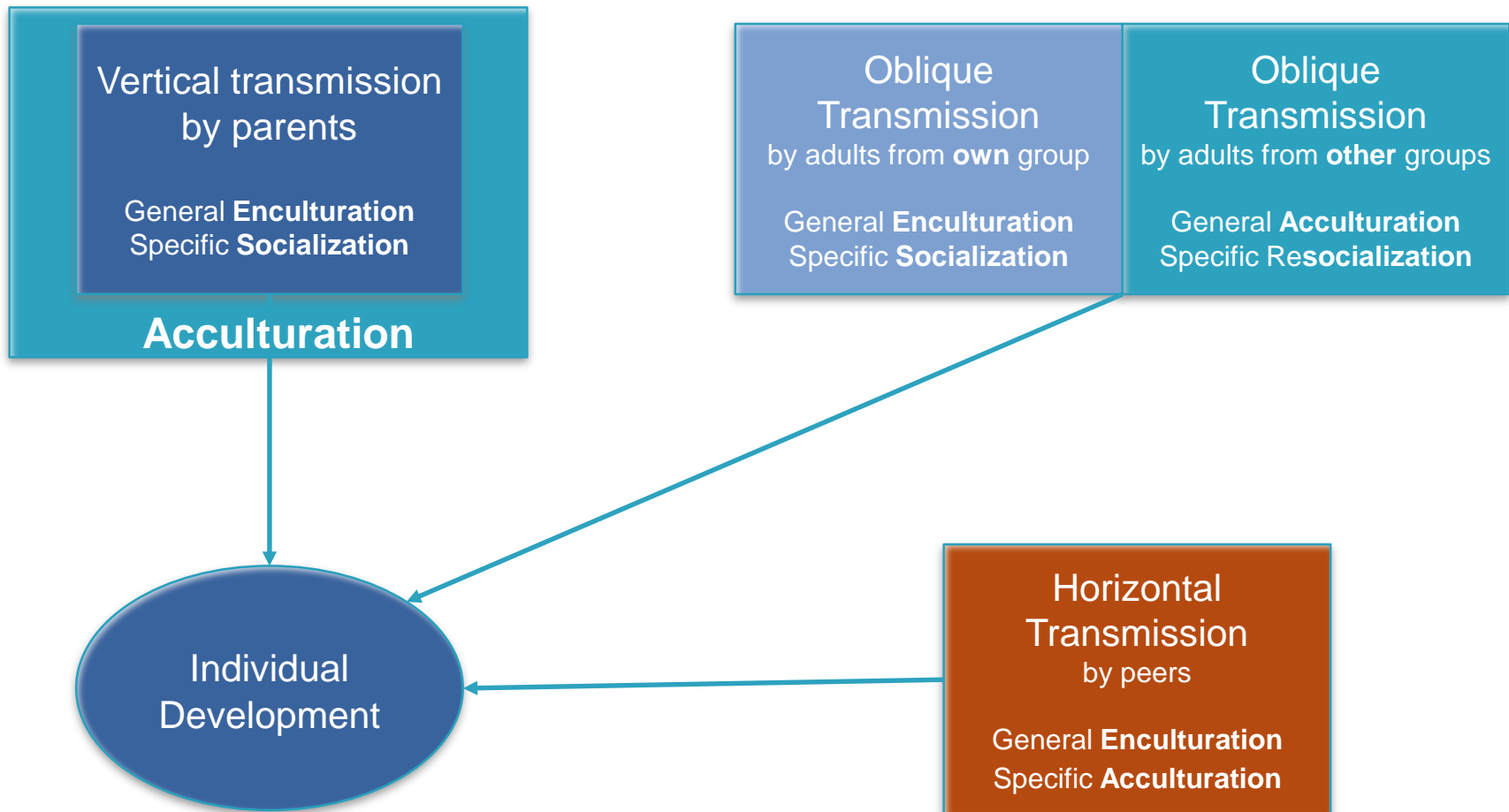


- Acculturation has been described as a **multidimensional** process consisting of the confluence of different cultural practices, values and identifications.
- A growing body of research focuses on identifications of persons growing up with **multiple cultural experiences** and how these influences are **negotiated** within themselves.

# Theoretical Background

# Value Transmission – Parents

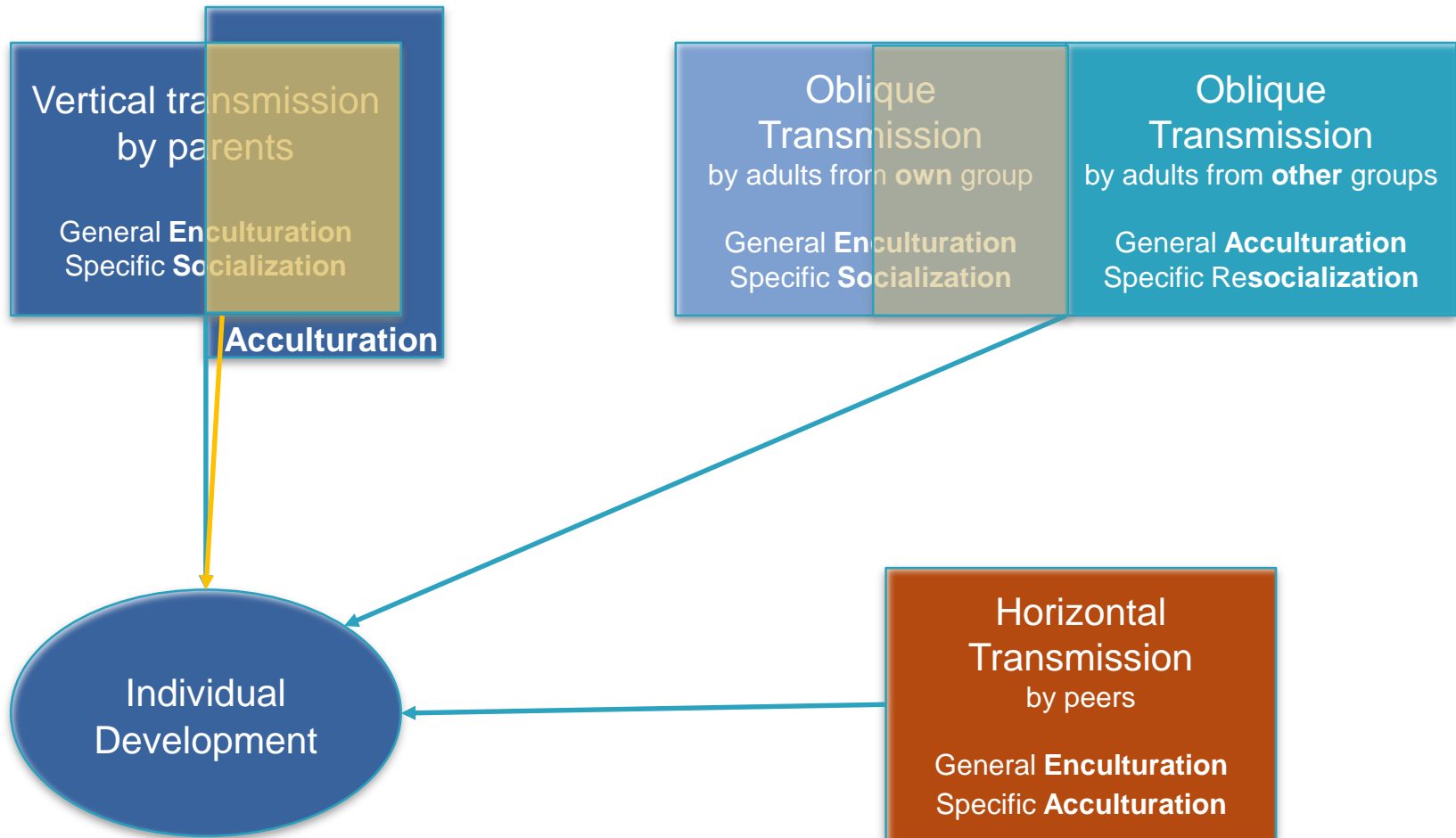
## Monocultural – different context



Adapted from: Tesch-Römer, C. & Albert, I. (2012). Kultur und Sozialisation [Culture and Socialization]. In W. Schneider & U. Lindenberger (Eds., Oerter/ Montada), *Entwicklungspsychologie* (7. Auflage, pp. 137 – 156). Weinheim: Beltz Verlag.

# Value Transmission - Parents

## Mixed-cultural - one parent different context



Adapted from: Tesch-Römer, C. & Albert, I. (2012). Kultur und Sozialisation [Culture and Socialization]. In W. Schneider & U. Lindenberger (Eds., Oerter/ Montada), *Entwicklungspsychologie* (7. Auflage, pp. 137 – 156). Weinheim: Beltz Verlag.

## Multicultural identity integration framework (Amiot et al., 2007; Yampolsky et al., 2013) :

- **Categorization:** People identify with one of their cultural groups over others
- **Compartmentalization:** People maintain multiple, separate identities within themselves
- **Integration:** People link their multiple cultural identities.

# Research Question:

Building on the multicultural identity integration research we were particularly interested whether participants

- identify with one cultural group over others (categorization),
- keep their influences separate (compartmentalization) or
- link their cultural influences (integration).

We also wanted to explore drivers for each outcome – in particular:

- Parental constellation (mono – vs. mixed parental)
- and cultural distance of country of origin of parents.

# Method



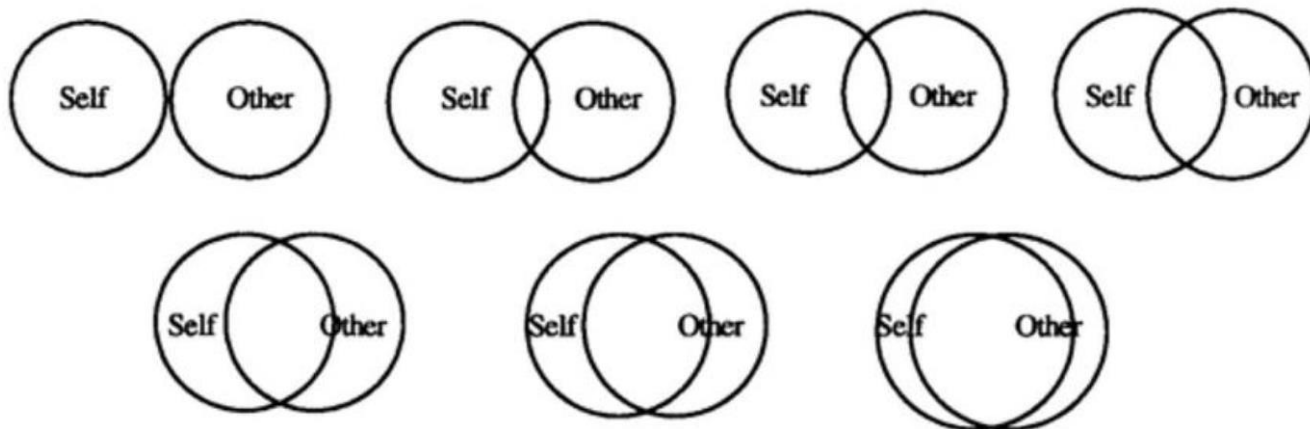
# Participants

- 8 Participants
  - All female
  - All grew up in Germany
  - Age range– between 21 – 25
  - Educated – all achieved higher education entrance qualification (Abitur)
  - **Country of Origin (CoO) parents:**

	CoO Mother	CoO Father		CoO Parents
<b>Mixed</b> -national parents			<b>Mono</b> -national parents	
1	DE	Ghana	5	Sri Lanka
2	France	DE	6	Russia
3	DE	Columbia	7	Hungary
4	DE	Chile	8	Luxembourg

- Socio-demographic questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews – (remote – Pandemic)
  - Opening question: Where are you from?
  - **Exercise 1:** Adapted Inclusion of Self in Other (IOS) – Scale (Aron et al. 1992):

Please circle the picture below which best describes your relationship



# Exercise 2 – Outline of a Figure

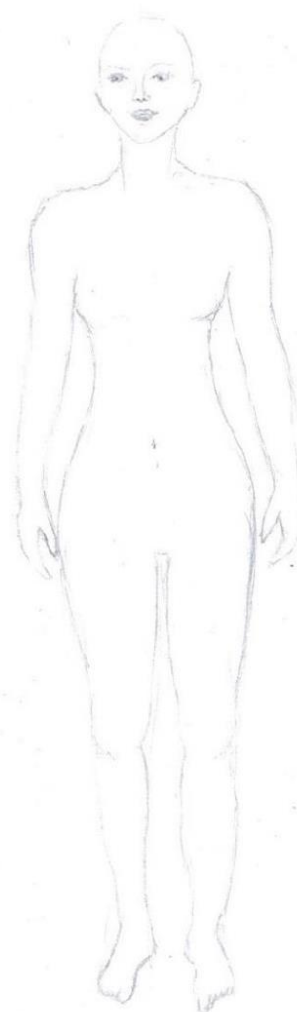
adapted from Brasad (2014)

## Instruction:

You see an outline of a person and have some pencils.

Choose a color that represents **Germany** for you and another color that represents your **other country of origin**.

Please color in which parts of the body represent your cultures of origin.



# Results

# Focus on 2 participants & exercises:

	CoO Mother	CoO Father		CoO Parents
<b>Mixed</b> -national parents			<b>Mono</b> -national parents	
1	DE	Ghana	5	Sri Lanka
2	France	DE	6	Russia
3	DE	Columbia	7	Hungary
4	DE	Chile	8	Luxembourg

# Participant 5

## Mono-cultural parents – Sri Lanka



- **IOS Scale:** The overlap – (die Mitte) – that is me.
- The middle is *"the negation, confrontation, so these are all points in life where the Tamil culture and the German culture somehow collide. Perhaps they clash in a positive sense, but then I try to pick out what I want from both cultures and integrate it into my life."*
- *"Personally, I don't even notice the differences any more [...] because I have picked out what I wanted and for me the things that are important to me are united. These are the commonalities. And that's why I see differences as being very, very minimal. I hardly notice any differences now."*

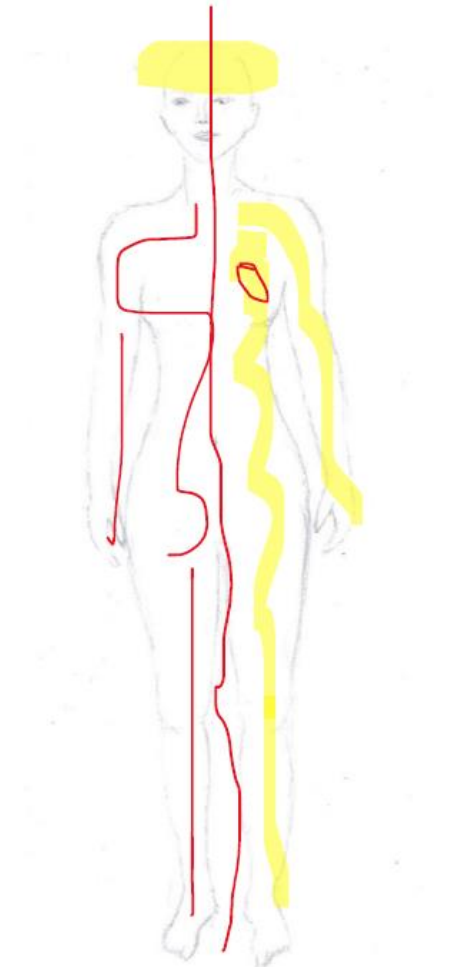
## Exercise 2: Outline figure



### Choice of colors:

*„**Red** – for Sri Lanka, as the flag is reddish.  
**Yellow** as yellow is also in Germany’s flag.  
Red and yellow are clear colours for me that  
fit togehter.*

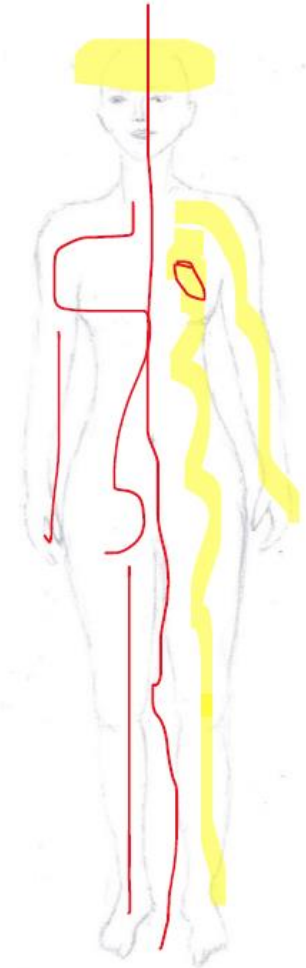
*They are contrasting colours, but red and  
yellow are also represented in both flags. ...  
They are contrasting colours, but at the  
same time, both colours are united in the  
flags.“*



# Outline Figure - Coloring in:

*„...I am half German and half Tamil, but a bit more German, especially in my attitude, in my head, attitudes and opinions – these are a bit more German. And then, of course, in the German part there is still something Tamil in it - the heart.”*

[... ich bin zur Hälfte fifty-fifty halt deutsch und tamilisch, aber bisschen mehr deutsch, vor Allem in der Einstellung halt, am Kopf, Einstellung, Meinung und genau, da ist es schon ein bisschen mehr deutsch. Und dann halt in dem deutschen Teil ist natürlich auch etwas tamilisches noch weiterhin drin, das Herz dann.]





# Outline Figure - Coloring in cont.

**I:** So you find that the heart is actually mostly German, but somehow framed in Tamil, so to speak?

**P5:** *Exactly, yes, that's a very good way to describe it.*

**I:** And you divided the two halves almost equally, except for the head, which is completely German and reflects your thoughts.

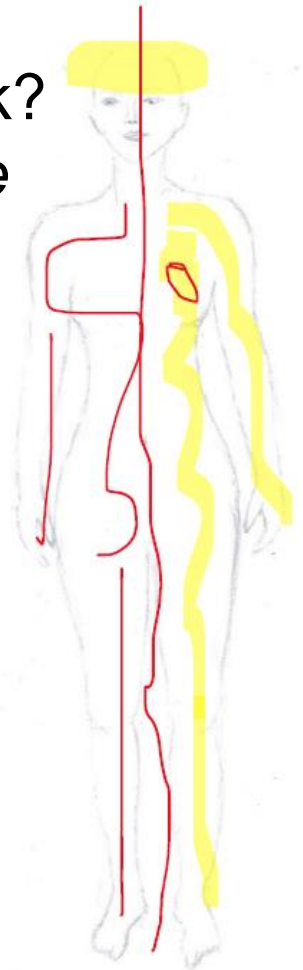
**P5:** *Exactly, yes, more German.*

[I: Also findest du, dass das Herz eigentlich größtenteils deutsch ist und aber irgendwie sozusagen tamilisch umrandet?

T: Genau, ja so kann man es sehr gut beschreiben.

I: Und die beiden Hälften hast du dann fast gleich aufgeteilt, bis auf den Kopf, der dann ganz deutsch ist und deine Gedanken widerspiegelt.

T: Genau, ja eher deutsch.]



## Integrated strategy

- Both parents promote **cultural maintenance** – sent P5 to the Tamil school and keep up Tamil traditions at home.
- Participant is fluent in Tamil and appreciative of Tamil diversity and culture
- **Peers** – from both cultural backgrounds
- Feels both – German and Tamil – **context independent**.

## Participant 2

### Mixed cultural parents – French German

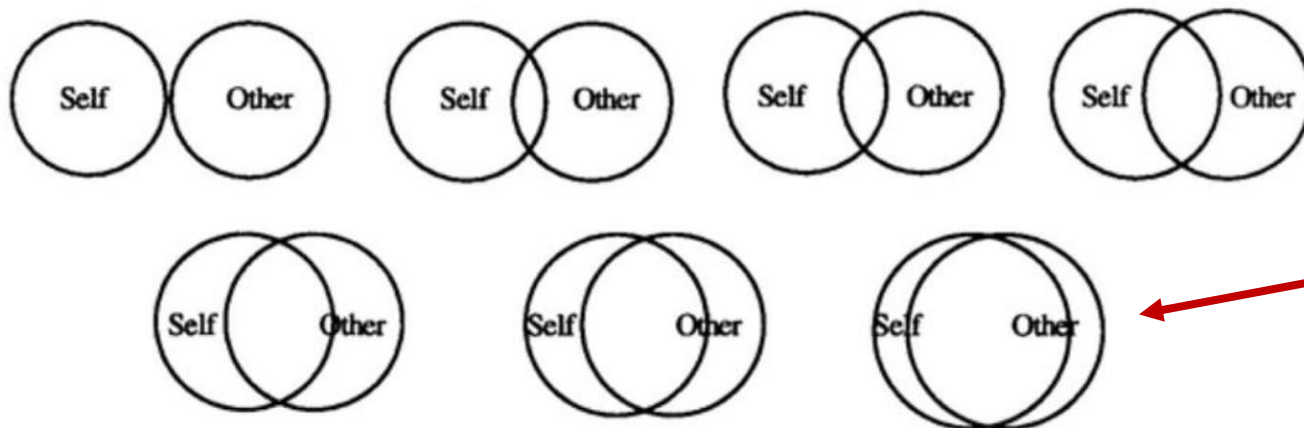


- Cultural maintenance – important for the French mother.
- The mother does not feel part of the German culture and wants to make sure that her children are brought up with the French culture.
- P2 speaks both languages fluently, but feels insecure in both languages.

# Exercise 1 - IOS Scale:

- *"The last one. Because I think that's super hard to separate. I think that would also just fit a person who has two parents, so because I'm a mixture and I'm not divided into two halves, so I have both, both sides have shaped me and made it a mixture."*

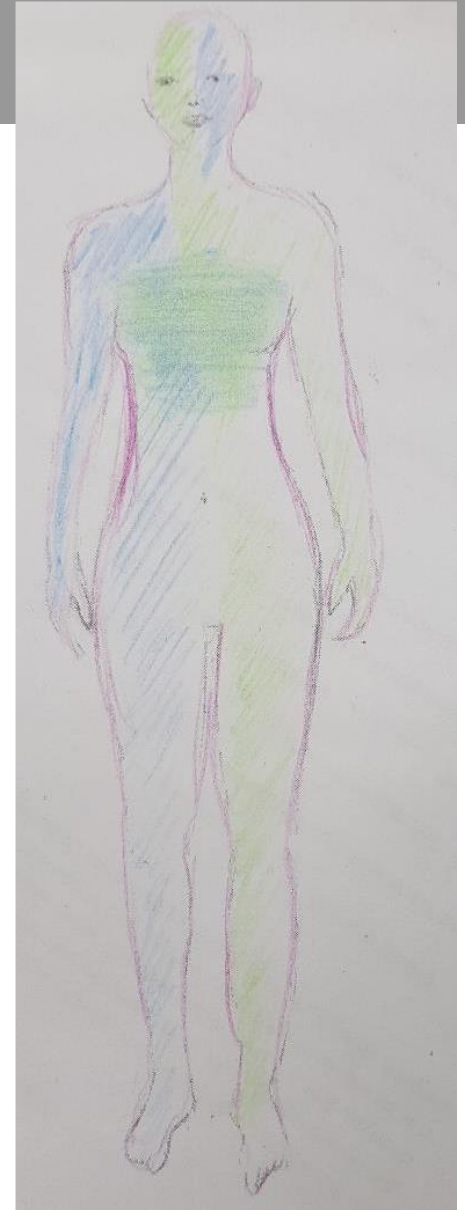
Please circle the picture below which best describes your relationship



## Exercise 2: Outline Figure (1)

### ■ Choice of Colour – France:

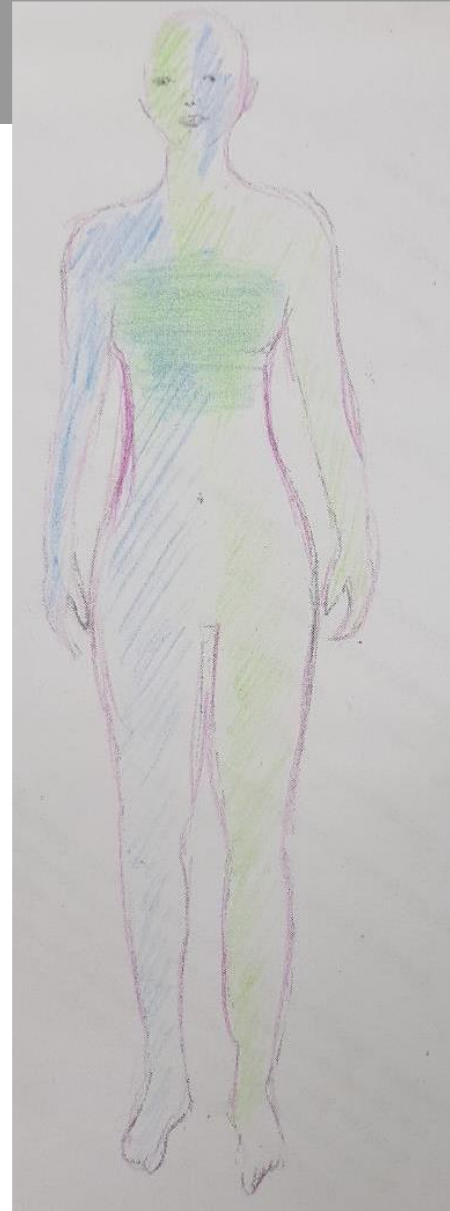
*“Hm, I think **blue** is like that, so it's France and it's so light and airy and also a lot connected with the sea, because we were always by the sea in France on holiday. So I think I also naturally associated it with the sea...”*



## Outline Figure (2)

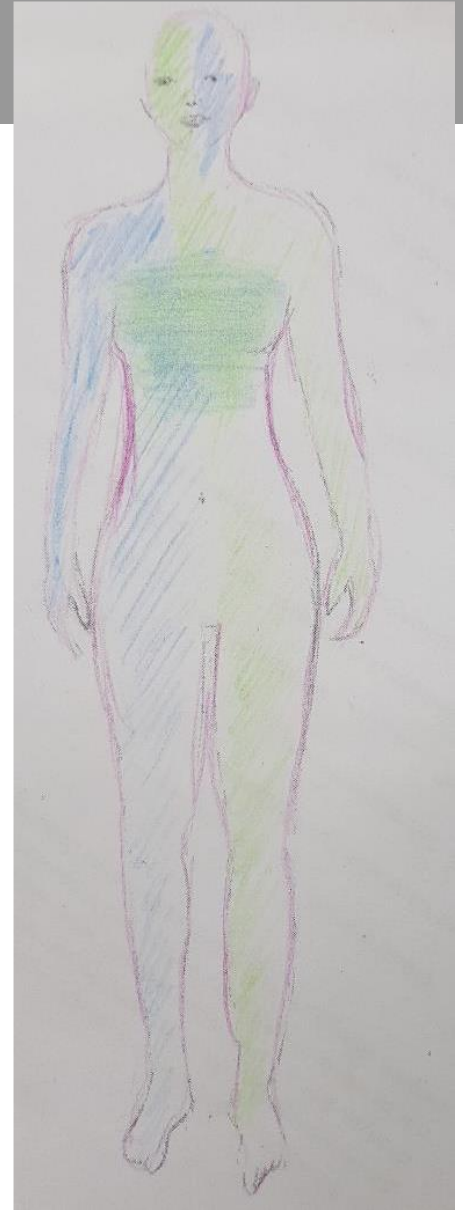
- **Choice of Colour - Germany:**

*“And **green** is Germany for me, because I think it has something very earthy, something very rounded in terms of culture, but also something very structured, so I also find so many things in Germany definitely beautiful and pleasant and it also has something very clear, something safe...”*



## Outline Figure (3)

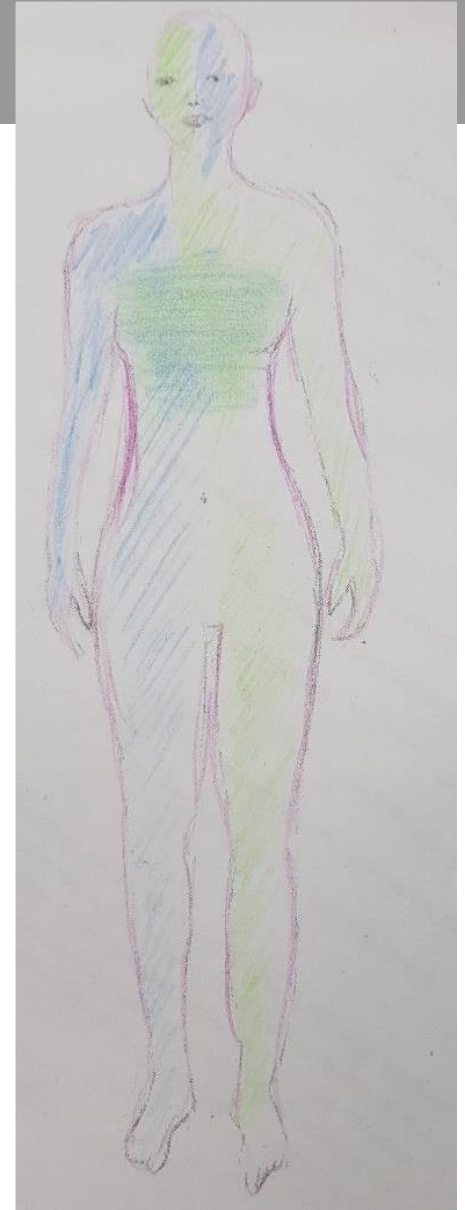
*“... and in the middle there's a bit of a mishmash, this purple is more like a shell [Hülle], because I think it is a kind of protection, because inside I don't really know what's going on.”*



## Outline – Figure (4)

Comment on shell [Hülle] continued:

**P2:** *“Well, from the outside you don't see the split that is sometimes in me, this insecurity, and from the outside I think you only see one thing. This cover is supposed to protect this ambivalence a bit and also somehow represent that I am still a human being and that I am ultimately not defined by culture, but by my character...”*





## Outline Figure (5)

**I:** And why did you paint this middle part or the chest area in both colors?

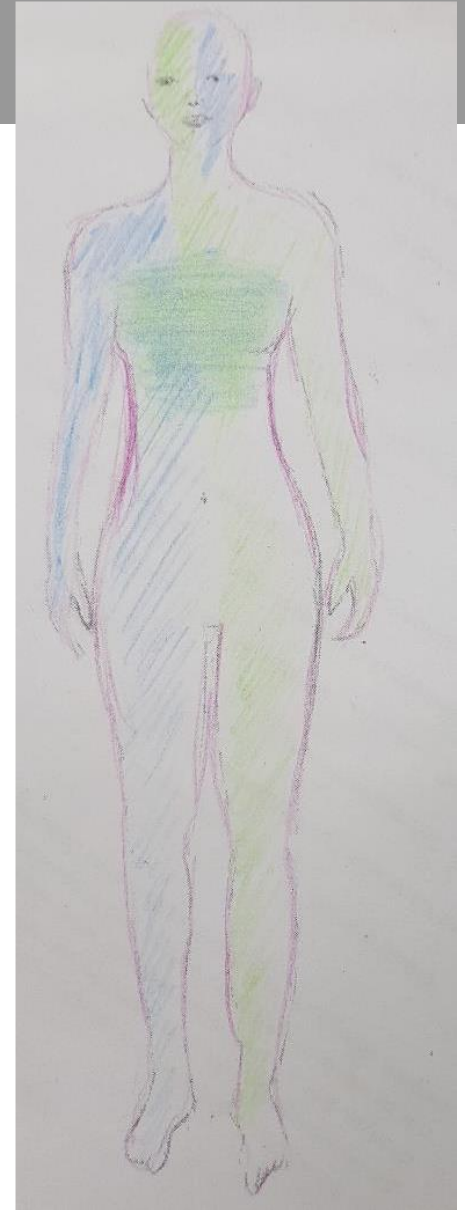
**P2:** *"I was thinking of heart or feelings."*

**I:** So you would say that your heart represents Germany and France?

**P2:** "Yes."

**I:** And how about the rest?

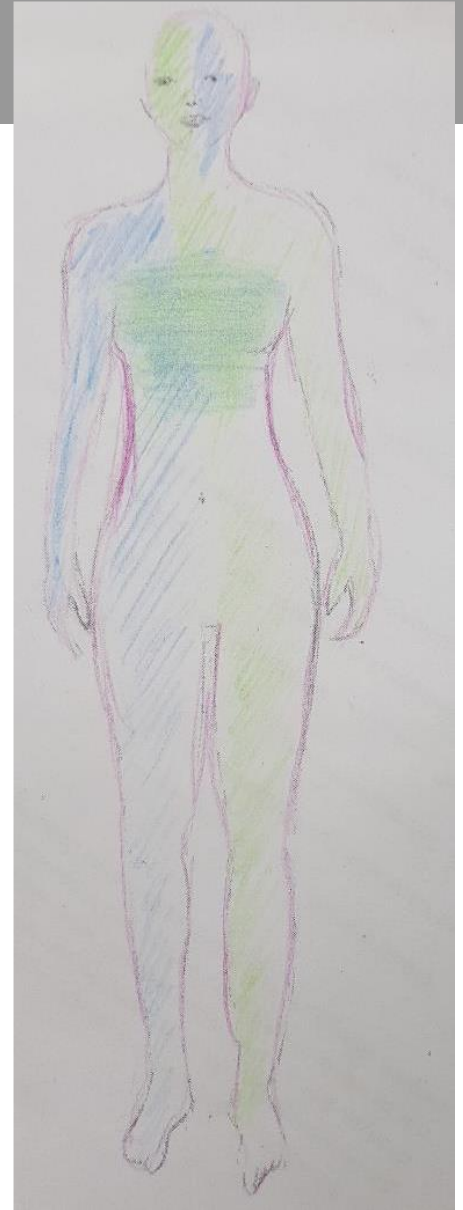
**P2:** *"I made it crossed, so here at the head it is like this and then it goes over to the other side."*



## Outline – Figure (6)

**I:** And why did you make it crossed and not just side by side?

**P2:** *“Because it all plays together. It is constantly changing. If I had simply divided them, then they would have been completely separate from each other and now they merge a bit or somehow cross each other. So theoretically I could have made another intersection. So partly it's this ambivalence [Zwiespältigkeit], that is why I deliberately made my face one side, one side, and then still crossed it like that.”*



## Participant 2 - Summary



- IOS Scale reply would suggest an **integrated strategy**, as she describes herself as a mixture, with both sides having shaped her.
- The outline exercise confirms this – as the cultural influences are deliberately coloured in **crossing** each other.
- Yet the outline exercise highlights the **ambivalence** and conflictedness.
- P2 accentuates the **differences** - and effectively **compartmentalizes** both cultures – actively trying to do both justice – and fearing to fail. An effortful process.

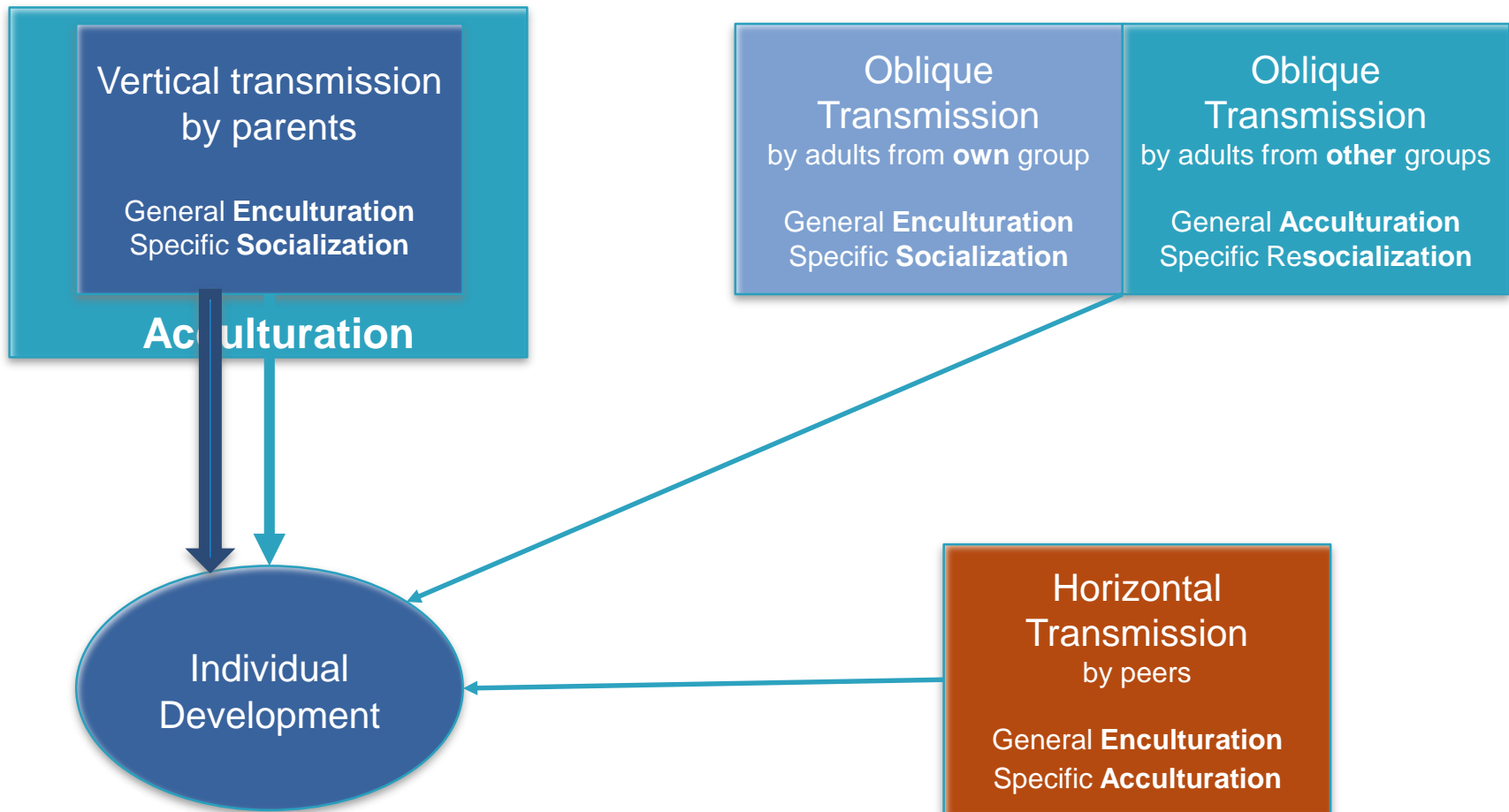
# Conclusion

- Both participants engage in an **active** negotiation process necessary to achieve bicultural integration, as postulated by Tadmor et al. (2006, 2009)
- Both feel that they are a **product of two cultures** and attempt to **link** their cultures.
- However – Participant 2 is more conflicted than Participant 5

- For Participant 5 – Dimensions postulated for **bicultural competence** are met (LaFromboise et al., 1993):
  1. Knowledge of cultural beliefs and values
  2. Positive attitudes to both groups
  3. Bicultural efficacy
  4. Communication ability
  5. Role repertoire (range of culturally or situationally appropriate behaviors or roles)
  6. Sense of being grounded (stable social networks)

# Value Transmission – Parents

## Monocultural – different context



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Also found among other participants with mono-cultural parents:

- Two cultures – perceived as resource/ enrichment
  - **Active** engagement with both cultural contexts
    - „Picking the best of both worlds“
  - Focus on **commonalities** between the cultures
    - „What is important to me is not so different“
  - Dimensions for **bicultural competence** are met.
- Facilitate harmonious integration.



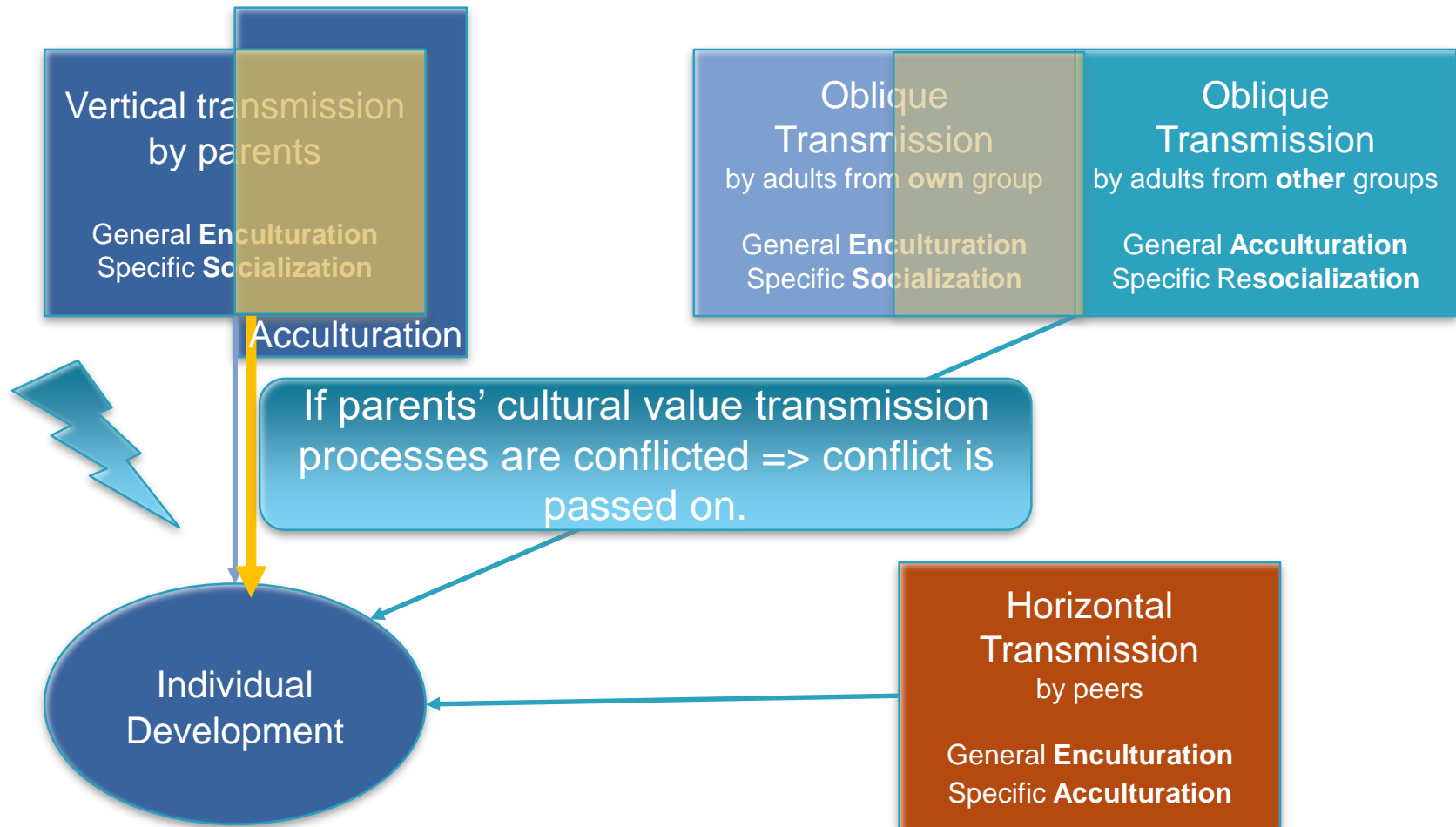
# Mixed-national parents (one acculturating)

Pattern found among „mixed“ national parent participants:

- Only 1 parent different cultural background – emphasis on cultural maintenance with *that* culture.
- If parents' cultural value transmission processes are conflicted => conflict is passed on.
- **Differences** become accentuated - experiences with both cultures become **compartmentalized**.

# Value Transmission - Parents

## Mixed-cultural - one parent different context



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# Pattern – mixed-national parents:

- Linkage (integration) is aspired – but the process is more effortful.
- **Differences** are accentuated – and failure to live up to cultural expectations is experienced.
- Integration is aspired – but **compartmentalization** is practiced – which is also experienced as stressful.
- The **outline exercise** made this active, conflictual negotiation process visible.

# Concluding observations:

- Participants **actively engage** in the **linking** of their cultural origins.
- **Integration** is aspired (as one is a mixture).
- If dimensions for bicultural competence are met – **cultural distance is secondary**.
- In the mixed-national samples – the parental transmission process was **conflictual** resulting in more effortful integration processes for participants.
- **Method:** All participants thoughtfully completed the **outline exercise** – which proved very useful in **visualizing negotiation practices**.



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Thank you to all our participants who shared with us their cultural negotiation practices.

This research was supported by a grant from the Fonds National de la Recherche, Luxembourg C16/SC/11337403/SWITCH/Murdock



Fonds National de la  
Recherche Luxembourg

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