



# Home between two cultures: Building cultural identity in Thai-Western families

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**Home between Two Cultures:  
Building Cultural Identity in Thai-Western Families**

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This bachelor's thesis explores how parents in Thai-Western families support the development of their children's bicultural identity, focusing on language use, cultural practices and parenting strategies. The study aims to provide insights for parents, educators and professionals working with multicultural families.

The theoretical background of the thesis covered definition of culture, cultural identity, biculturalism, cultural differences between Thailand and Western countries, language, bilingualism, and bicultural parenting practices. This study is grounded in Berry's acculturation model.

A semi-structured online survey was answered by parents of Thai-Western children, combining quantitative and qualitative questions to capture daily practices, language development, cultural engagement and parenting challenges. Data was analyzed using the qualitative content analysis and it revealed how parents support the weaker culture and language in daily life as well as identified differences and issues parents have faced while raising bicultural children.

The study concludes that majority of the parents find it important to support their children's identity development into both cultures and are aware of resources and effort required to reach it. Majority of the respondent's children are bilingual and their both cultures are present in daily life. Most used strategy from Berry's acculturation model is integration, which aims to maintain both cultures in daily life. Identified challenges consist of language barrier between parents and difficulties in integrating the less dominant culture into everyday life in satisfying amount.

Keywords: bicultural parenting, cultural identity, bicultural children, Thai-Western families

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## 1 Introduction

Globalization has made multicultural experiences common not only at the individual level through exposure to diverse cultural information, but also in interpersonal relationships, where interactions across cultures increase the likelihood of cross-national marriages. In such marriage form, known as binational families, partners come from different national backgrounds. (Chang, Hsu, Shih & Chen 2014, 1289).

The number of marriages between Thais and Westerners has been rising. Between 1990 and 2024, 10 133 marriages have been registered between Finnish and Thai nationalities (Statistics Finland 2024). During 2022, a total of 10 107 marriages were registered between Thai nationals and foreigners. The nationalities Thais married the most were British, American and German. (DOPA 2023). The current figure for married Thai-Western couples in Thailand stands at approximately 69 174. (Phuengsamran, Punpuing, Darawuttimaprakorn and Prohmno 2023, 802-805). It's good to acknowledge that in Thailand, marriages typically take one of two forms: the traditional Thai/ Buddhist marriage, and the officially registered marriage. Some couples opt for only a Buddhist ceremony, others choose the official registration, and some decide to have both. (TLO 2025). Therefore, numbers of married couples are based exclusively on registered marriages, while the number of couples married only through traditional ceremonies remains unknown. Estimation on non-married Thai-Western couples, or how many Thai-Western couples have children could not be found, but these numbers show that Thai-Western families are relatively common, and provide a rough indication of the potential number of children in Thai-Western families. Yet, there is not much information available on raising children into two completely different cultures, such as Asian and Western.

This thesis explores how parents in Thai-Western families support the development of their children's cultural identity in both cultural contexts. The aim is to gain insight into the methods, challenges and experiences of parenting bicultural children, to understand how parents promote both Thai and Western cultural values and traditions, to identify common challenges related to bicultural identity development and to explore the role of language, community and family practices in building cultural identity.

The topic caught my interest after completing two internships in Pattayan suomalaisen koulu (Finnish elementary school of Pattaya) in Thailand, spending total of 7 months in Pattaya's multicultural environment. Interacting with multiple bicultural people both at work and outside work made me wonder what the parents of children born into two cultures do to help them grow into both of their cultures.

Due to the time spent in Thailand, the topic was narrowed to Thai-Western families. Westerner as a concept is broad and unspecific, therefore it was further narrowed down to Europeans and North Americans. This distinction provides clearer focus, as these groups share cultural similarities, and helps to keep the scope of the topic manageable. Including both regions allows for a broader perspective and aligns with the availability of research on these populations without limiting the study to a single Western region. This helps to explore how cultural differences influence parenting and identity formation in Thai-Western families.

This is a research-based thesis, and the data was collected through a semi-structured survey, as the questionnaire provided the option to use both closed and open questions to collect data.

## 2 Theoretical framework

This thesis adopts Berry's acculturation model as its main theoretical approach. The framework explains how individuals and families adapt when two cultures meet while focusing on four strategies: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization.

The acculturation model examines two key dimensions: the extent to which individuals wish to preserve their heritage culture and identity, and the extent to which they seek participation in the broader society. These form four distinct acculturation strategies. *Assimilation* occurs when individuals show little interest in maintaining their original culture and instead seek full involvement in the dominant society. *Separation* represents the opposite—prioritizing the preservation of one's heritage culture while minimizing contact with the dominant group. *Marginalization* takes place when individuals neither maintain their cultural identity nor engage meaningfully with the larger society. *Integration*, in turn, involves maintaining one's cultural background while actively participating in the host culture. This approach tends to be most effective in societies that value cultural diversity as it allows individuals to sustain a strong connection to their origins while engaging confidently in the dominant culture. (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder 2010, 18; Berry 1992, 69-85).

In family context, this framework helps explain how parents manage cultural transmission. Parents in bicultural families may choose, consciously or not, one of these strategies when deciding which cultural values, languages and traditions to pass on to their children. For example, a Thai-Western couple could follow an integration strategy by encouraging their child to speak both languages and practice both cultural traditions. Topics like cultural adaptation and bicultural identity directly reflect to Berry's framework.

## 2.1 Culture

Culture can be described and compared in different ways, but no single comprehensive definition exists. However, some main themes are present in multiple definitions.

Kinnunen & Angel state that culture includes the knowledge and practices passed from generation to generation. This includes for example language, customs and daily habits. The culture shapes the way emotions are expressed. People tend to value the beliefs and principles linked to their cultural background, and that shapes their sense of what is normal or unusual, acceptable or offensive. (2010, 10).

Culture can be understood as having visible and invisible parts that can be compared to an iceberg. The visible part includes things we can see, like food, clothing and daily interactions. The invisible part is made up of values, norms and the concepts we use to think and express ourselves. Cultural practices are visible, but their deeper meaning is understood only by those within the culture. Rituals are shared activities performed for their social significance rather than necessity, like greetings, weddings or funerals. (Pedanet n.d.)

### 2.1.1 Cultural identity

Cultural identity and what shapes it can be understood and measured in several ways. Benjamin (2014, 53) states that “The concept of cultural identity is somewhat paradoxical, since “culture” refers to a broad set of practices and values shared by many, while “identity” points to something deeply personal and unique” whereas according to Adler, at the heart of cultural identity lies a self-image in which the individual’s sense of self and culture are intertwined into their overall view of reality. This self-image shaped by internalized roles, rules and norms serves as a guiding framework for both personal and social interactions. (2002, para. 12). As mentioned, scholars have approached the concept of cultural identity from different perspectives, emphasizing both its continuity and change. Hall states that cultural identity can be understood in two ways. One view sees it as a shared, stable core rooted in common history and ancestry providing continuity beneath changing circumstances. The other view emphasizes difference and transformation, seeing cultural identity as something dynamic shaped by history, ruptures and ongoing change; it is as much about becoming as being. (1990, 223-225). From this can be concluded that cultural identity is made from both shared traditions and personal experiences. It connects people to their cultural background but also changes over time as individuals grow and adapt.

Cultural identity is continuously shaped by interaction between the individual and their cultural surroundings. According to Bhugra, cultural identity is not something permanent. It develops continuously through the interaction between a person’s sense of self and the surrounding culture. There are multiple things that can shape cultural identity, such as

religion, rites of passage, language, dietary habits and leisure activities. Religious traditions often leave a lasting mark, they influence values and provide a sense of belonging even if not actively practiced later in life. Rites of passage help define how individuals are recognized and integrated within their cultural communities. Language serves as an important sign of identity as it shapes communication and social connections, sometimes influencing decisions to engage with other cultural groups. Food practices are an important reflection of cultural norms. Leisure activities, such as music, sports, literature and movies support cultural continuity, especially when living in a different cultural environment. Social and cultural attitudes tend to be slow to change. (Bhugra 2001, cited in Bhugra & Becker 2005, 21).

Cultural identity also consists of multiple dimensions that develop over time. Chen states that cultural identity, though understood differently across societies, generally shares five key features: developmental, spatial, distinct, relational and multifaceted. It develops over time through socialization as individuals gradually absorb cultural elements and shape their sense of self, continuously adjusting it based on social feedback until it becomes relatively stable. Cultural identity has a spatial aspect influenced by both physical place and an imagined space, which helps to endure it even when people move globally. Its distinctiveness comes from shared symbols and meanings, which create boundaries that define and reinforce the group. Relationally, cultural identity is formed through social interactions that connect individual and group identities. For example, Western cultures tend to emphasize individual autonomy, while Eastern cultures emphasize interdependency. Finally, cultural identity is multifaceted, operating at individual, interpersonal and group levels and involves cognitive, emotional as well as behavioral dimensions, often taking multiple forms such as ethnic identity. (2017, 3-4).

This suggests that cultural identity is dynamic and is shaped over time through social interactions and cultural experiences. It is both personal and collective, includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects, and can adapt to different contexts while retaining its core elements. This perspective is relevant for understanding bicultural families where individuals belong within two cultural frameworks.

### 2.1.2 Biculturalism

Biculturalism refers to the combination of two or more (multiculturalism) different cultures within an individual. It can arise from one or both of two main factors. The first is a sociocultural environment shaped by ethnogenesis, where both the heritage and the receiving cultures are recognized and valued. The second factor involves parents actively putting effort to get their children to engage with their heritage culture. A bicultural person blends elements of both their heritage and host cultures in terms of practices, values and identity. The bicultural context itself may also develop into something distinct from either original

culture, while still drawing on aspects of both. Biculturalism therefore involves not only acting in ways that align with both cultural contexts but also embracing the values of each culture and maintaining a sense of identification with both. (Schwartz & Unger 2010, 27-29). Significant portion of U.S. born ethnic and cultural minorities, such as second- and third-generation descendants of immigrants, typically engage with both their heritage culture and mainstream U.S. culture. (Phinney 1996, 920-922). This suggests that biculturalism is not limited to individuals born with a bicultural heritage, but also extend to those shaped by their environment like immigrants and their descendants, who grow up with both their heritage culture and the mainstream culture around them.

### 2.1.3 Cultural differences between Thailand and Western countries

According to Hall, cultures can be described within a range from high- to low-context, depending on how people share and interpret information. In high-context cultures much of the meaning is embedded in the physical setting, shared experiences and internalized knowledge. In low-context cultures, meaning must be conveyed largely through explicit messages. The context provides little support, therefore information is spelled out clearly to avoid misunderstandings. No culture is purely one or the other, but some lean toward one end. (1976, 91-101). Thai culture tends to be high-context, while Western cultures generally lean toward low-context. For example, American culture is relatively low-context, whereas German and Scandinavian cultures, though still low-context, depend more on shared context in daily interactions (Hall 1976, 91-101). This might be one of the most noticeable differences between Thai and Western cultures.

Thai culture relies deeply on respect and communication tends to be indirect to avoid conflicts. Thais use polite articles such as “krub” (for men) and “ka” (for women) at the end of sentences to soften the way they talk and to show respect. Words “khun” (neutral courtesy word), “phi” (older sibling) and “nong” (younger sibling) are used before one’s name as a sign of respect. (Scroope 2016). Respect is also shown through a *wai*, a Thai greeting where palms of hands are pressed together close to chest while slightly bowing (Arbay 2021, 681). According to Komin, Thais often rely on subtle or indirect ways to minimize the impact of potentially negative messages. They favor communication where only positive emotions and feelings are openly expressed. Confrontation is generally avoided to protect dignity and to “save face” of everyone involved. Causing someone to lose face and showing negative expressions are strongly avoided while smooth interactions are valued. (1991, cited in Sriring 2005, 10). Buddhism is the main religion in Thailand and is deeply ingrained in the culture (Srinok, Wongsuwan, Buppapan, Widesbrommakun, Thongdee & Ruangsana 2021, 1336-1337).

Western countries are often described as prioritizing the individual above the group, portraying people as independent, autonomous and self-sufficient. In contrast, many non-

Western societies place greater value on the group, seeing individuals as interconnected and mutually dependent. (Phinney 1996, 921). Kohls (1984, 4-5) states that Americans prefer complete honesty even while providing negative evaluations and consider those who do not behave the same as dishonest and untrustworthy. According to Olbertz-Siitonen & Siitonen, Finns differ from many other nationalities in their comfort with silence and their readiness to remain quiet during conversations. They are often described as people who do not feel the need to avoid silence or fill it with unnecessary information. (2015, 318). Raunio & Säävälä's study found that foreigners perceive Finns in the workplace as honest, punctual, diligent and responsible. They are careful about what they communicate. They speak up when necessary but rarely offer unsolicited feedback. Finns are cautious about asking for help but will provide help to others if asked. (2016, 49-56). German culture places a strong emphasis on directness, honesty and efficiency in communication. Conversations are typically straightforward, with little room for small talk. Punctuality and respect for rules and order are highly valued. (Expatrio 2024).

This implies that to reach fluent biculturalism, children in Thai-Western families should learn to adapt to and engage with both cultural norms and values. From Thai side comes expectations of respect, indirect communication and group-oriented behavior, while Western side emphasizes on independence, directness and self-expression. Growing up biculturally requires children to internalize and balance these sometimes contrasting approaches, shaping how they interact with family, peers and society. Being familiar with both cultures provides bicultural individuals great opportunities enabling them to live, work or study in either country, and to communicate fluently and comfortably with people from both cultural backgrounds.

## 2.2 Language

Language contains spoken, written and sign language. Due the nature of this thesis, mainly spoken language will be discussed. It is however good to acknowledge the existence and significance of other forms of language use. Some children learn to read well before preschool, while for others the process of learning to read and write is very slow and difficult (Lerkkanen 2020, 183; Siiskonen, Poikkeus, Aro & Ketonen 2014, 311).

When a child grows up in a typical, suitably interactive language environment and has no specific developmental challenges, their language abilities usually develop in line with other social and cognitive skills, such as memory and attention. The foundation of language use begins forming even before the child starts to speak, meaning that the basis for language development is established very early in life. Environmental factors can either strengthen or weaken this development. Regular conversation and reading with children play a particularly important role in supporting their language skills. (Loukusa, Mäkinen & Kotila 2020, 145-154).

According to Lyttinen (2014, 65) children typically say their first words between the ages of one and two. After that, their vocabulary grows rapidly—from just a few words to more than 200, depending on the child. By the age of four, their speech is almost fully understandable. By the time a child reaches six years old, they usually have a vocabulary of more than 10 000 words.

Language plays a central role as the main tool for interaction. Through speech, people communicate their ideas, emotions, intentions and needs. It creates a dynamic exchange in which people both express themselves and respond to others. What individuals say and the way they say it provides insight into who they are, while their reactions also shape self-understanding through the reactions they receive. In this way, communication not only reveals personal identity but also defines the nature of relationships between people. (Bonvillain 2020, 1). According to Risager, language and culture are often portrayed as inseparable, with many scholars stating that they are intimately linked or even identical. The common view of language and culture as inseparable can be problematic as it tends to oversimplify their relationship. While acknowledging that language and culture are clearly linked in many aspects, she emphasizes the need to critically examine this assumption and explore the complexity of their interaction rather than taking their inseparability for granted. (2006, 1-2). From this can be concluded that language is more than just a means of communication. It is a central aspect of how people express who they are and how they connect with others. Language both reflects and shapes identity and social relationships. It shows that communication is deeply tied to how individuals understand themselves and the world around them.

Bonvillain (2020, 42) provides an interesting example of how concepts are viewed differently in different languages and how the words used reflect how the speaker expresses and reflects to the world through their cultures:

“English speaker: I must go there.

Navajo speaker: It is only good that I shall go there.

English speaker: I make the horse run.

Navajo speaker: The horse is running for me”

These kinds of differences can be noticed in many languages. In Thailand, one can often hear the phrase “กินอะไรหรือยัง? (kin khao reu yang?)” as a greeting, despite its literal translation being “Have you eaten rice yet?”. In Finnish one might say “mitä kuuluu?” to ask how one is feeling, even though it literally means “What is heard?”. In Farsi loved ones can be called “جگر (jigar)” and “نفسم (nafasam)” yet these literally translate as “liver” and “my breath”. Similarly, in German, greetings such as “Wie geht’s, wie steht’s?” is used to ask how someone is doing, but it’s literal meaning “How is it walking, how is it standing?” is quite different

from the intended social meaning. These examples show the cultural and idiomatic nuances embedded in different languages and cultures.

### 2.2.1 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is known to offer numerous benefits. It is a valuable inheritance a child receives from their parents. Through their parents' languages children connect with their cultures and learn to understand the ways of behaving in different cultures, as well as their own roots. Bilingualism promotes strong, close relationships with both parents and extended family while supporting the child's balanced and holistic development. For bilingual people one language may take on greater importance than the other in different stages of life, and this balance can shift throughout the years. (Angel 2015, 4-10). Young children typically understand language before they can express themselves verbally. Children exposed to two languages may first speak in only one language while still comprehending both, or they may use words from both languages initially but gradually favor one as their speech becomes more complex and structured. (Döpke 1992, 3). This highlights that a person's relationship with their languages is dynamic. It develops alongside their cognitive, emotional and social growth, and can shift in response to their environment, experiences and sense of identity. Angel continues that unlike monolinguals, bilinguals find it harder to identify with just one language and their sense of self is often tied to two or more languages. In families of two cultures, parents should decide which languages to use with their child. A child does not choose bilingualism on their own, it is a commitment parents must consciously make and actively support. In families where each parent speaks a different native language, children are exposed to two or more languages since birth. To support bilingual development, it is generally recommended that parents speak their own native language with their child. (2015, 4-10). Such strategy is known as One Parent, One Language (OPOL) method.

The strength of the OPOL approach lies in its clarity; each parent consistently exposes the child to a specific language. When the languages are closely tied to the parents' identities, it not only enhances linguistic skills but also deepens emotional bonds and cultural connection. However, challenges arise when a parent is assigned a language they do not naturally use, such as a non-native or unfamiliar heritage language. In these cases, communication can feel forced, deep conversations become harder and even discipline can seem harsher, turning a potential language learning opportunity to barrier to connection. (Wong 2015).

Lee, Shetgiri, Barina, Tillitski & Flores found out in their study that parents indicated their bilingual children would have greater opportunities in life, such as access to better jobs. One identified barrier was that children resisted learning a second language because they found it more difficult than their primary language. (2015, 508-512). This speaks volume on how much

parents need to invest for the child to be able to become bilingual, while successful bilingualism also depends on the child's own effort and willingness to participate.

According to Pearson, the key to raising bilingual children is ensuring the development and maintenance of the minority language. While the majority language is usually naturally acquired through interaction with the surrounding community, active effort is needed to secure the minority language within the family and home environment. (2007, 399). Angel states similar idea; although it is often assumed that children will automatically grow up bilingual in bilingual environment, in reality consistent exposure is essential. Each language must be heard and used for at least four hours a day for the child to truly absorb it. The most genuinely bilingual individuals are those who have spoken two languages from early childhood, acquiring them naturally through close social relationships and everyday interaction, usually with parents and siblings. In such cases, both languages become an inseparable part of their identity and social life. (2015, 4-7). From this can be understood that constant exposure to both, but particularly the weaker language is the most efficient way to help children grow up bilingual.

According to Angel, successful bilingualism requires invested time, commitment and deliberate actions from parents. The family should continuously consider ways to support both languages, especially the weaker one. The family might spend all their vacations in the country of the other parent to maximize the child's exposure to that language. Parents should also explore opportunities for the child to use the language outside the home, such as interactions with other children and families through hobbies and community activities. Additionally, they should actively seek information and resources to support language learning and stay informed about opportunities for language learning in clubs, daycare and school. (2015, 8). Kinnunen & Angel (2010, 32) suggest doing the following to support bilingualism: Read books and watch movies with your child in your own languages. Repeat words often and speak a lot. Listen to music in both languages and sing together. Play games, they can easily be adapted to any language. Find out if there are activities in your area in the language your child hears less. Meet other bicultural families and support your child to have friends from both cultures. Stay in touch with distant relatives and friends through calls, videocalls and internet. Consider your environment and the opportunities it offers to support your child's language development. Visit relatives, invite friends over and celebrate traditional holidays. Learn about language development stages. Be proud of your own languages and cultures, that way your child learns to value them too.

### 2.3 Bicultural parenting

Each bicultural family is unique and different (Oikarinen-Jabai 2004, 71). Successful family life in a bicultural setting requires openness and the ability to respect and value both, one's own culture and the culture of a partner, including the use of different languages (Lähteenmäki 2004, 68). According to Kinnunen & Angel, blending cultural backgrounds and parenting styles requires parents to communicate openly and reach mutual agreements. There is no single right way to parent, each family can define its own approach to raising children. A child growing up in a bicultural family draws on both parents' cultural backgrounds to shape their identity while also developing a unique sense of self. (2010, 18-21).

Even when parents agree on how to pass on their cultural heritage and language at home, the child remains an active participant with their own will. They may not follow parents' plans as intended, but instead create their own way of relating to culture and language. The extent to which the child's "third culture" is influenced by both parents depends largely on the child. They may follow unfamiliar customs and speak another language out of necessity, but it is the child's own sense of value and importance that determines how deeply these traditions and the language are internalized and embraced. Not just parents, but extended family members and friends play a significant role in how a child's cultural identity takes shape. (Lähteenmäki 2004, 67-68). From this can be understood that parents as well as extended family, friends and immediate community have a huge impact on how a child develops their cultural identity. As Lähteenmäki states, factors such as the parents' ethnic background, the behavior of the surrounding community, religious beliefs, cultural environment, family members' personalities and the child's age all shape family practices and influence the child's behavior. During puberty children often prefer to identify with the culture of their peers and may even distance themselves from their parents' backgrounds altogether. (2004, 67-68). Lee, Shetgiri, Barina, Tillitski & Flores found similar theme in their study on parent's experiences, teenagers were often reluctant to participate, feeling self-conscious about speaking the other language and worrying about how it would be perceived by their peers (2015, 508-512). This shows that a child's cultural identity is not shaped solely by parental influence but is also affected by surroundings and peer relationships as the need for social acceptance can outweigh parental efforts. Ultimately the child's own choices and experiences determine how their identity evolves and which aspects of culture they grow up to embrace or reject.

A study by Lainiala & Säävälä on blended families suggests that fathers in bicultural marriages may require more support in their parenting role than those in monocultural marriages. It might be more difficult for these men to find their place as fathers if their wives adhere too strongly to parenting practices rooted in their own cultural background. (2012, 83). According to study by Lee et al., parents sought guidance on raising bilingual children from many

sources such as personal experience, other bilingual families, relatives and professionals like teachers and pediatricians. They trusted these resources and used a variety of tools to support language learning such as bilingual education, books, television programs, websites, toys and informational materials from pediatric offices. Parents also reported that there is a lack of accessible information to help them make informed decisions about supporting bilingualism in their children. (2015, 514-515). This study focuses on bilingualism, but it is reasonable to assume that parents use similar sources for guidance and support when raising children in bicultural families more broadly. It also shows the lack of information targeted to supporting bilingualism and biculturalism.

In survey by Lainiala & Säävälä, many participants emphasized that values and approaches to parenting should be discussed in advance, before having children. Several respondents also highlighted the importance of getting to know each other well before deciding to have children. According to the results, 29 percent of respondents reported having disagreements regarding child-rearing. This suggests that cultural differences between partners do not necessarily cause more friction in parenting matters than in marriages in general. (2012, 83-84). Many others, too, recommend discussing parenting styles and values before a child is born. In an article by Familia ry, bicultural young adults shared their thoughts and experiences on being raised as bicultural. One suggested that “parents should already consider during pregnancy on how biculturalism might influence their child’s self-image. It is important to discuss matters such as which holidays to celebrate, what parenting styles to use and whether the child will be raised bilingual. It is a misconception to assume that a child will automatically become “half of each culture” just because the parents come from different backgrounds. Identity is shaped by many factors. Parents must accept that the child may identify more strongly with the surrounding majority culture, adopting its customs and language. However, parents can still influence how both cultures are represented at home and how they become part of the child’s self-understanding and worldview.” (2016). This gives valuable insight into raising bilingual children, as it comes from someone who grew up in a bicultural environment and can reflect on how parental decisions, everyday practices and cultural exposure shape a child’s identity, language development and sense of belonging in both cultures.

Another article by Familia ry shares bicultural young adult’s experiences on how both cultures were shown in daily life in their childhood. Food often played a central role in maintaining cultural traditions. Many recalled that rice was a constant part of family meals. Some remembered that their parent rarely using a knife and fork, preferring instead to eat with a spoon and fork or with their hands. Family celebrations were another space where both cultures met. Many families celebrated the holidays of both parents’ home countries. In some families, traditions were blended into shared celebrations. Alongside shared traditions and values, stories from the foreign-born parent’s childhood and home country played an

important role. These stories, along with childhood games, rhymes and fairy tales, were thought as significant ways of passing on cultural heritage. (2015). This shows how daily practices are important ways for bicultural families to preserve and transmit both cultural heritages. It also illustrates how children integrate these influences into their identities naturally through shared experiences.

#### 2.4 Previous research

The identity of a child growing up into two very different cultures has been studied relatively little. More research exists on immigrant children and bicultural couples. There are some theses available on the topic.

Appolis (2012) investigates in her thesis how intercultural families in Finland support their children's development while navigating two cultures. Findings showed that successful upbringing relies on cooperation and motivation between parents, prioritizing the child's best interests over forcing cultural practices. Parents emphasized introducing children to the non-Finnish parent's culture through friendships and independent connections with relatives.

In her thesis, Komppa (2017) explores how parents in bilingual families perceive their daily life. The study examines how bilingualism shows in family routines, the division of household responsibilities and the dynamics of parenthood and partnership. The research highlights that bilingualism is generally viewed positively, with both languages actively used in family interactions. Challenges identified include communication issues between parents, and the study emphasizes the importance of shared routines and quality time spent together.

Nyonga's (2016) thesis examines the challenges mothers face when raising children in multicultural relationships in Finland. In findings, challenges such as language differences, cultural values, parenting roles and religious beliefs were mentioned. Despite these challenges the mothers emphasized the importance of open communication and mutual respect in navigating cultural differences. The research highlights positive aspects of multicultural parenting, including the enrichment of children's cultural identity and the development of adaptability and openness.

Research by Dezhn, Setayesh Manesh, Zebardasti, Parsadost & Derakhshandeh (2024) explores how bicultural families support the development of children's identity, emphasizing the importance of secure attachment relationships between parents and children as a foundation for healthy identity formation. It also explores how consistent parental involvement combined with active engagement in cultural practices and experiences helps children gain cultural identity. Extended family members and community networks are identified as significant influences in reinforcing cultural knowledge and identity.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions

The aim of this thesis was to explore how Thai-Western parents support their children's bicultural identity by exploring parenting strategies, challenges, and the influence of language, community and family practices.

The research questions were:

- In what ways do Thai-Western parents integrate both cultures into their children's daily lives?
- What strategies do parents use to support the development of the weaker language in bicultural children?

The objectives of this thesis were:

- To understand what parents do to support their children to gain cultural identity and knowledge on their both cultures
- To help bicultural children grow up connected to both of their cultures by giving parents and professionals a peek into what other parents do to support their children's identity in everyday life and what struggles they've faced doing so.

This supports understanding the needs and experiences of bicultural families and helps to guide culturally sensitive practices in supporting bicultural identity development in children. Cultural identity development, bilingualism and the integration of differing cultural values can affect children's social, emotional and educational well-being. Understanding how parents actively support bicultural identity provides insight into the resources and strategies families need to succeed. The link between social services and bicultural families is that social workers often work with multicultural and bicultural families and need knowledge about the challenges these families face and the practices they use to effectively support children's development. It also helps to identify areas where families may need guidance or support. This way culturally sensitive parenting programs and resources can be developed to promote the healthy development of children in multicultural contexts.

#### 3.2 Data collection

Research is the process of gaining knowledge and building understanding by gathering facts and interpreting them to form a clearer picture of the world around us and within ourselves. Research can be used to categorize, describe, explain, evaluate, compare, correlate, predict and control. Two or more of these objectives can be combined in a research project. (Walliman 2011, 8-15). In this thesis, the aim was to describe and compare the survey results.

Descriptive research gathers data through observation, aiming to identify what is typical or expected, and to determine what is likely to occur again under similar conditions. By comparing two or more contrasting cases, researchers can identify similarities and differences, which helps deepen understanding of the phenomena under study. (Walliman 2011, 8).

The choice of data collection method depends on the research objectives, quality requirements, content, sampling, desired response rate and costs. The selected method also affects the speed of obtaining responses and the time needed for designing and implementing the questionnaire. Common data collection methods include various types of interviews, postal surveys, electronic and web-based surveys, observation and situational data gathering. (Statistics Finland 2025). Questionnaires are an effective tool for collecting quantitative data and can also capture qualitative insights. This approach, commonly referred to as a survey, allows structured questions and gathering responses without direct interaction with each participant. As a data collection method, questionnaires are highly flexible, offering a structured format that is convenient for respondents while enabling quick management to a large sample across wide geographic areas. (Walliman 2011, 97).

In this thesis, data was collected through semi-structured survey via E-lomake. The questionnaire included structured quantitative questions as well as open-ended qualitative ones which allowed respondents to express their thoughts more freely.

There are two primary roles for semi-structured studies; understanding current needs and practices, and assessing the impact of new technologies in practice. In semi-structured qualitative studies the themes that occur from the data may differ significantly from the researcher's expectations, with participants' individual personalities and situations playing a major role in shaping the course of the study and its outcomes. (Blandford 2013, 3-4).

Including open-ended questions to a questionnaire can uncover perspectives and information that might not have considered in advance. On the downside, answering open-ended questions takes more effort and time than selecting from structured answer options, which may lower respondents' motivation to complete the survey. (Luoto 2009, 1648). Therefore, open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire in moderate amount.

Data refers to pieces of information that serve as the raw material for research, which uses them to draw conclusions about given topic. Data can be categorized based on their characteristics; essentially, whether they can be summarized to numbers or described only in words. This distinction shapes how data are collected, recorded and analyzed. (Walliman 2011, 65-71).

When studying a large group, it is usually impractical to collect data from every individual due to time and cost constraints. Instead, researchers select a smaller, representative group, hoping the data reflect the larger population. If the sample accurately represents the whole, conclusions drawn from it can be generalized. This process of choosing a small group from a larger group is called sampling. In surveys, a key question is how well the sample represents the entire population, how closely the characteristics of the selected small group match those of the whole group. (Walliman 2011, 93-94). Participants for this thesis survey were recruited via social media, personal contacts and networks. According to Budiu & Morgan (2021) around 40 participants is ideal amount for responses.

The survey was completed by parents of bicultural (Thai and Western) children. Parents were asked to fill the survey together if possible. The survey questions were designed based on relevant literature, previous studies and the objectives of this thesis. The survey was tested beforehand by a family member and his wife, who have Finnish-Vietnamese children and therefore were able to assess the quality of the questionnaire from perspective of raising bicultural children. The feedback assured that the survey is clear, easy to follow and did not take too long to answer. Therefore, no changes were made on the survey.

Survey was open for 3 weeks during autumn 2025. The survey was run electronically and anonymously, ensuring that no participant's identity could be revealed from the data. The survey was provided in Finnish and English.

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

A well-designed questionnaire should be clear, compact and visually easy to follow, with questions arranged logically from top to bottom and grouped by topic. Questions should be of moderate length, use simple and precise language, and include response instructions when needed. Maintaining respondent privacy and keeping completion time reasonable (15-20 minutes for online surveys) are important. Proper layout, visual separation of questions and coherent ordering of topics help ensure higher participation and accurate data collection. (Finnish Social Science data archive n.d.)

A well-designed questionnaire is essential for conducting an effective survey and should be guided by the research questions. To ensure clarity and reliability, the questionnaire should be tested with a pilot group, which helps identify ambiguous or confusing questions that might lead respondents to skip questions. A good questionnaire is clear, relevant and replicable. Careful planning of the processes for sending, receiving and storing the questionnaire is important for fluent data analysis. Participation can be encouraged by keeping the questionnaire short and readable, providing written feedback after the study, making it personal and highlighting the research organization and potential societal benefits in the cover letter. (Luoto 2009, 1647).

The questionnaire was conducted using E-lomake, as it allows for efficient online data collection, easy management of responses and ensures the safety and privacy of participants. The questionnaire included the following questions (the survey can be found in Appendix 1, and the cover letter in Appendix 3):

- The family is Thai and \_\_\_\_  
Options: American, British, Danish, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, Other (specify)
- What is the native language of the non-Thai parent?  
Options: Danish, Finnish, French, German, English, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, Other (specify)
- How many children are there in family?  
Options: 1, 2-3, 4 or more
- The child/children are \_\_\_\_  
Options: Under 7 years old, 7-18, adult
- The child/children have lived majority of their lives in \_\_\_\_  
Options: Thailand, Home country of the other parent, Other (specify)
- The current country of residence is \_\_\_\_  
Options: Thailand, Home country of the other parent, Other (specify)

These questions map out the basic information about the family, including the family's cultural background, the non-Thai parent's native language, number and age of children, where the children have lived most of their lives and the family's current country of residence.

- Child/children speak \_\_\_\_  
Options: Thai, Native language of the other parent, Other (specify)
- In what language parents communicate with the child/children?  
Options: Both parents speak only their native language to the child/children, Both parents try to speak their native language only but other language is used sometimes, All speak thai, All speak the other parent's native language, Other (specify)
- If the child/children speak language of both of their parents, how is the weaker language supported?  
Options: Language spoken on daily basis at home, Actively interacting with relatives and others who speak the language, Child has friends who speak the same language, Duolingo or other language learning apps, Other language studies, Books in weaker language, Movies and tv shows in weaker language (either sound or subtitles), Other (specify)

- Do you feel like the child's/children's language skills are stronger in the language spoken in your country of residence?  
Options: Yes, Both languages are equally strong, Not sure, No
- Have your child/children gone through phases where they refused to speak the weaker language or otherwise strongly expressed reluctance or dislike towards the culture?  
Options: Yes, no, not sure
- How did parents react to that and how did the child/children become motivated or interested again?  
Open answer

These questions explore the child's language use and development within the family. They cover which languages the child speaks, how parents communicate with the child, ways the weaker language is supported, explored language proficiency to the country of residence and experiences with language or cultural disinterest.

- How important is it for the parents that the child/children maintain both cultural identities?  
Options: Very important, Somewhat important, Not very important, Not important at all
- How are both cultures brought up in daily life?  
Options: Eating habits, Celebration of holidays from both cultures (such as Christmas or Songkran), Education on both cultures, Cultural hobbies (music, dance etc.), Community/cultural events, Religious practices, Language use, Other (specify)
- Do you feel like the child/children identify more in one of the cultures?  
Options: Yes Thai culture, Yes other parent's culture, Not sure, No
- What do you think is the reason for it?  
Open answer
- How is the weaker culture supported?  
Options: Education on the culture, Speaking in the language, Visiting the country regularly, Interacting with people from same culture, Participating in cultural events, Eating traditional foods, Following cultural etiquette and manners in daily life, Other (specify)

These questions explore how parents perceive and promote their children's bicultural identity. They cover the importance parents place on maintaining both cultural identities, the ways both cultures are incorporated into daily life, whether the child identifies more with one culture, parents' views on the reasons behind this, and how the weaker culture is actively supported.

- Have you got external support for bicultural parenting? (Example) Parenting groups, online communities, friends in same situation.  
Options: Yes often, Yes sometimes, Rarely, Never
- Did you discuss about parenting styles and how your different cultures might affect raising children before the child/children were born?  
Options: Yes we educated ourselves on raising bicultural children as well as we could, Yes but only in general terms not in detail, Partially we discussed some aspects, No we did not discuss it before the child was born
- How do you handle differences in parenting values between the two cultures? (Example) negotiate and discuss, alternate depending on context, adopt one culture's values primarily.  
Open question
- What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced raising a bicultural child/children?  
Open answer
- Do you have anything else you wish to share?  
Open answer

These questions aim to understand the external resources parents use and the difficulties they encounter in raising bicultural children. The final question gives parents an opportunity to share any additional thoughts or experiences related to bicultural parenting.

### 3.3 Analysis

The method used is content analysis. According to Neuendorf and Kumar (2015, 1) content analysis includes text analysis, systematic study of recorded speech or written text and studying unwritten message content such as images, nonverbal behavior and sounds, and is one of the most used methods. Qualitative content analysis is very similar to thematic analysis, and the two terms are often used interchangeably (Vuori 2021, s.1).

Much of valuable information cannot be expressed numerically. People's opinions, emotions, ideas and beliefs can only be expressed through words. Since this type of data reflects qualities rather than quantities, it is referred to as qualitative data. Because words cannot be processed mathematically, they require different methods of analysis. Qualitative data cannot be precisely measured or counted and are typically expressed in words rather than numbers. They describe human activities, beliefs, customs and other aspects of society and culture that cannot be quantified. Despite being non-numerical, qualitative data are highly valuable as it offers insights into human behavior and social life. (Walliman 2011, 71-73).

Since the questionnaire included both open and closed questions, main approach to examining the data was qualitative. The quantitative data from closed-ended questions was used descriptively to provide context and support the qualitative findings. More specifically, statistics such as frequencies and percentages were presented to summarize the responses, highlight patterns and provide a general overview of the data.

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is a method for systematically examining qualitative data by categorizing material within a coding frame. Its purpose is to describe the meaning of data in relation to specific aspects defined by the research question, rather than capturing every possible interpretation. This focus distinguishes QCA from other qualitative approaches, as it narrows attention to selected dimensions of the material. While this means some richness is left unexplored, it also prevents researchers from becoming overwhelmed by the large volume and complexity of qualitative data. The coding frame can be adjusted if new relevant aspects emerge during analysis, therefore allowing QCA to remain both structured and flexible. (Schreier 2024, 11-15). Due being systematic, structured process to summarize text into a smaller set of categories, content analysis is a great data reduction technique if used correct. It is considered useful in managing large amounts of data. (Stemler 2001, 5).

Codes can be classified as either deductive or inductive. Deductive codes are predefined and derived from theoretical frameworks, previous studies, research questions, data collection categories or the chosen unit of analysis. In contrast, inductive codes arise directly from the data itself, reflecting analytical insights that emerge during close engagement with the material, often during an initial stage known as preliminary coding. While some studies rely solely on either deductive or inductive coding, content analysis typically combines both approaches. This involves using deductive codes as a starting point to engage with the data, while utilizing an inductive process to discover new codes and to refine, modify or remove the initial deductive codes as needed. (Forman & Damschroder 2007, 48).

During analysis, main categories were first established to capture the core aspects of language and culture relevant to the study. Through careful reading and interpretation of the data, new subcategories were added to represent parents' routines, practices and experiences. A table is included below to show an example of how the main categories and associated subcategories were created, along with examples of original statements drawn from the data.

Table 1 : Example of the coding frame

Main categories	Subcategories	Original statement
Cultural differences and parenting	Cultural differences in childcare, Different expectations, Role of parent-in-law	“Respecting my Thai mother in laws' views when my first child was very young. Very different practices in looking after babies!”
Challenges in bicultural parenting	Miscommunication between parents, Language barrier between parents	“The other parent does not understand what is being said to the child in the other language and may then promise or do something different from what was just agreed or instructed with the child.”
Cultures in daily life	Cultural identity, Influence of the country of residence, Continuous exposure to one culture	“The culture of the country of residence is, of course, more present in daily life.”
Language use and support	Daily use of both languages, Presence of weaker language in country of residence, Role of community	“I think what has helped is that both Thai and English is spoken in Thailand. Whether we go to restaurants, shops etc... So I feel that being in the country that actively speaks both languages has helped my daughter”
Children’s cultural identity	Impact of country of residence, Importance of visiting the other country, Influence of age and time	“They probably identify more with Finnish culture because they have always lived here. But now that they're both in lower secondary school and we've been to Thailand all the time, as they grow up, I think they're starting to become more interested in Thai culture as well.”

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

According to TENK (2019, 7-14), research in Finland is guided by core ethical principles: researchers must respect human dignity and autonomy, protect cultural heritage and biodiversity and ensure that the research does not cause significant harm or risks to individuals, communities or other subjects. Researchers are always responsible for the ethical conduct of their work, and ethical review must be completed before data collection begins.

For participants, ethical guidelines ensure voluntary involvement: individuals have the right to decline participation, withdraw at any point without negative consequences and revoke their consent as easily as it was given. They must receive clear and accessible information about the study's aims, methods, risks, benefits and handling of personal data. Obtaining informed consent from participants is an essential ethical requirement in research involving humans. All consent must be properly documented. (TENK 2019, 8-9).

Researcher must consider how they will protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, as it is reasonable for participants to expect a certain degree of anonymity when joining a study (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo 2017, 351). When managing personal data, researchers must follow the principles of careful planning, accountability and follow legal framework. The management of data should address potential risks for participants and all practices must align with data protection regulations as well as institutional guidelines. Decisions related to data processing need to be clearly documented and justified, ensuring they can be reviewed afterwards by relevant authorities. (TENK 2019, 11). Upon completion of the thesis, data was be securely anonymized and later on destroyed following Laurea's guidelines.

When interpreting study results, researchers should follow ethical standards by presenting conclusions as accurately as possible and avoiding over-interpretation or misrepresentation of the data (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo 2017, 352).

All participants received clear information about the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. The questionnaire did not collect any personal identifiers such as names or contact details, ensuring full anonymity. Only general background information (for example, nationality of the parents and age group of the children) was be gathered to support the analysis while minimizing the risk of identification. To further reduce the risk of identifying participants, country names with only a small number of respondents were excluded from the analysis. All responses were handled confidentially. The collected data was stored securely and was accessible only to the researcher. Data management followed the plan outlined in the data management plan, which is included in Appendix 2. Survey questions were designed to avoid sensitive or distressing topics. All results are presented honestly and respectfully, without misrepresentation or overgeneralization. These measures ensure that ethical principles are

applied consistently throughout the research process from the planning and data collection to the analysis, reporting and storage of data.

### 3.5 Reliability

Evaluating reliability is a crucial part of all research, including qualitative studies. In practice it means ensuring that readers can trust the credibility of researcher's work, that used methods have produced sufficiently reliable data about the phenomenon studied. Reliability implies that findings accurately reflect the reality of the subject and are not random, imagined or coincidental. (Hakala 2024, chap. 8.). In qualitative research, the researcher constantly reflects on their choices, assesses both the thoroughness of the analysis and the trustworthiness of the work. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative analysis relies primarily on the researcher's own judgment, personal experience and theoretical knowledge. As a result, the main criterion for reliability in qualitative research is the researcher themselves. Therefore, valuating reliability applies to the entire research process. This is why qualitative reports are typically more personal and reflective, and incorporate the researcher's own reasoning and insights. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, chap. 5). While analyzing the results, careful attention was paid to avoid focusing solely on topics of personal interest, and instead maintaining a strict focus on the research questions and the study's objectives.

As Van Teijlingen & Hundley (2002, 33) state, piloting research instruments, such as questionnaires, is an important step in ensuring the quality of a study. It can highlight potential issues in advance, such as elements of the project that may not function as planned, procedures that might be overlooked or instruments that are poorly suited or unnecessarily complex. Therefore, the survey was piloted to ensure that the questions were clear, appropriate and capable of producing reliable data.

While the sample size of responses is sufficient for qualitative research, it is acknowledged that these responses may not fully represent the broader population of Thai-Western families. The aim of this study is not statistical generalization, but rather to gain in-depth insights into parents' experiences and perspectives. Qualitative research prioritizes richness and depth of understanding over representativeness, allowing the study to explore different patterns and themes within the data, even if the findings cannot be assumed to apply universally.

It is worth acknowledging that responses submitted in Finnish were translated into English, which may have resulted in some nuances being lost, despite the translations being carried out carefully to preserve the original meaning.

## 4 Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, structured according to the key categories that emerged from the data during the analysis. These categories reflect the main aspects of language, culture and parenting practices among Thai-Western families.

A total of 33 responses were collected, 20 of which were from Thai-Finnish families. Other represented nationalities included, for example, American, British and Canadian. With each family having between one and three children, the results correspond to an estimated 51-69 children in total. The children's ages ranged from early childhood to adulthood.

Both numerical and qualitative data are included in the results. Quantitative results from the closed-ended questions are presented descriptively to provide context and support the qualitative findings. Qualitative data from open-ended responses are analyzed within the categories developed during content analysis. It includes participants' statements to show patterns and diversity in experiences.

### 4.1 Cultures in daily life and supporting the weaker culture

Majority of respondents reported that both cultures are brought up daily through eating habits, use of language, celebrating holidays from both cultures and by educating the children on both cultures. Many had also included cultural hobbies and events as well as religious practices in their life. One respondent brought up example of including the less present culture in daily life:

*“We teach him Thai language, and ways e.g. wai greeting. We mainly live in Finland and the child adopts Finnish customs, because the environment directs to it.”*

When asked what is done to support the weaker culture, food and language were brought up again. Other used methods were visiting the other parent's home country regularly (many respondents specified yearly visits), interacting with other people from same culture and following cultural manners daily as well as providing education about the weaker culture. Thai schools and nursery schools were also mentioned by some.

Majority of the respondents put great effort into supporting the weaker culture and actively promote its presence in daily life. Only one of the respondents did not support the weaker culture in any specific way.

### 4.2 Cultural differences and parenting

Some respondents reported having faced cultural differences in raising children. Parents did not seem to have challenges with these differences, they were solved with communication

and respecting each other's cultures. In many families the culture of the country of residence was treated as primary culture.

*"It is easier this way, when parenting is similar to what is generally practiced in the surrounding society, which prevents conflicts arising from differences in perspectives"*

*"Finnish culture and traditions take priority since we live in Finland and the child's future will be here"*

*"[We handle differences] according to local ways. In Thailand, the things that are valued here come naturally, since everyone knows the local customs and the parent-child relationship emphasizes parenting rather than friendship. While in Finland, we follow practices somewhat in line with modern Finnish ways, but it is by no means a permissive or friendship-based approach to parenting."*

As said, discussing was the most brought up way to handle cultural differences in raising children. Some reported that despite coming from different cultures, similar parenting views are shared and there has been no issues regarding different cultural parenting styles. Some stated that there's few non-negotiable points but other than that both parents perform parenting in their own way.

*"We discussed the drive behind certain parenting practices when deciding whether or not to implement them. We found that some were rooted in culture but others were from personal family dynamics. When making our own family, it helped to examine what was valuable to each parent and respect the others parenting choices."*

*"We try to make and value our family's own customs and traditions, etc. Which pleases both parents and our values/culture."*

One difference that was raised in multiple answers was the role of parent in laws. Despite parents themselves having mutual understanding and agreement on how to solve differences in parenting practices, especially the Thai side of the family was reported to have differing views in raising children. Some of these families live in Thailand and some in the other parent's home country. Based on results the parent in laws impact seems to be stronger in families residing in Thailand.

*"Promoting independence early on is a very western ideology and child's Thai father and grandmother did most everything for the child. For example, spoon feeding and changing his clothes well into late toddler age."*

*"[What has been difficult is] respecting my Thai mother in laws' views when my first child was very young. Very different practices in looking after babies!"*

*“[What caused difficulties was] Thai family having different opinions on raising our child. But ultimately, it is parent’s choice.”*

Overall, based on the results, there are cultural differences such as different parenting approaches in raising children in Thailand and Western countries, but parents were able to solve them through discussion and mutual respect.

Four of the respondents reported having often sought external support for bicultural parenting. 14 respondents had never sought external support. Others had sought help either sometimes or rarely.

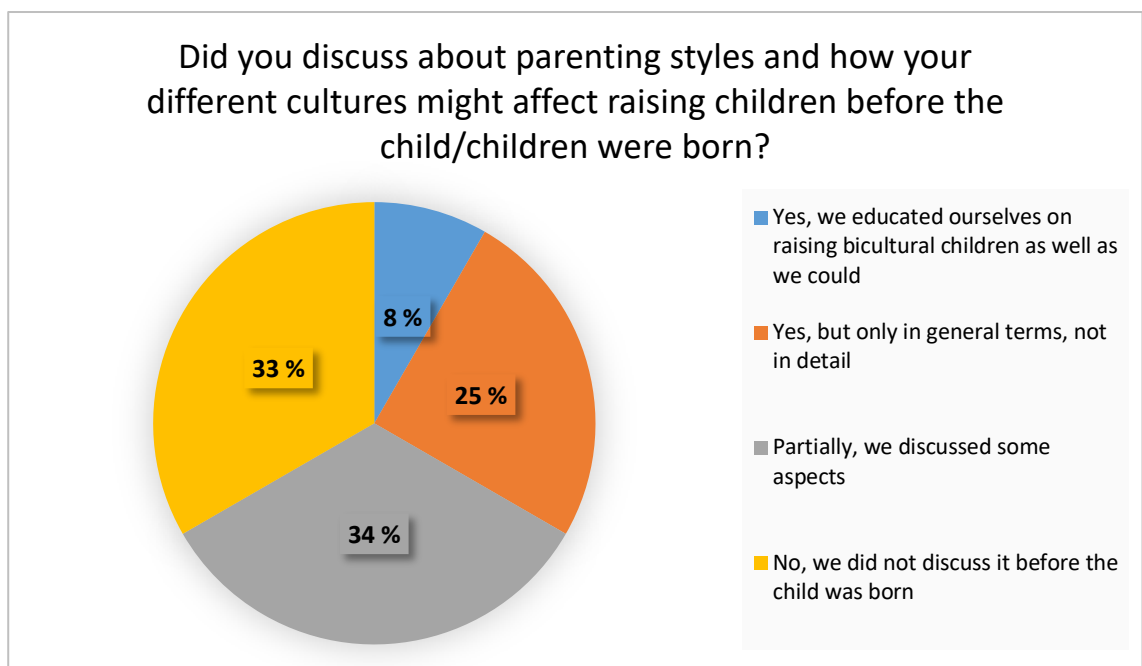


Figure 1: Discussion about parenting styles before child was born

As the figure above shows, there are differences in how each family discussed possible effects of their cultures regarding raising children. Three respondents educated themselves as well as they could beforehand, while 12 respondents did not discuss the topic at all before the child was born.

Many respondents emphasized how pleased they are with raising bicultural children, and how they can see the positive impact of being bicultural in their children.

*“Raising a bi-cultural child is amazing. He has a heightened sense of curiosity from being exposed to multiple cultures from a young age. He is very open minded and inclusive to different ideas, foods and even religions.”*

*“Biculturalism is a valuable experience for the family, and I believe it is also beneficial for the child. Two to three languages, two home countries and two very different families. This promotes openness in thinking, understanding and social skills. In one country, people are more reserved, while in the other, life is lived communally with the extended family”*

#### 4.3 Children’s cultural identity

Majority (20) parents considered it very important that their children maintain both cultural identities. Ten parents viewed this as somewhat important. Two respondents felt it was not very important, and one parent reported that it was not important at all.

One of the survey questions explored whether the parents felt like their child identifies more in one of the cultures. Seven of the respondents felt like their children identify more as Thai, while 16 of the respondents believed their children identify more with the other parent’s culture. Five respondents were unsure whether their children identify more with one culture, and five stated that their children do not identify more strongly with either culture.

*“I think it’s due to the fact that since the current residence (and will be in the future) is in Thailand, the other parent’s culture is somewhat useless to practice. Although when I see some spark or interest (from online sources), I let them ask me and gladly share them what they want to know (but only if they ask).”*

Possible reasons given for the stronger identity in one of the cultures by majority of respondents was the country of residency and therefore the consistent exposure to the surrounding culture, as well as local friends and school. Other given reasons were child spending more time with one of the parents and therefore adopting their culture more deeply. A few respondents also mentioned language use; if one of the parents did not enforce their language, the child became more immersed in the other language and through that, the culture. Language will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

*“They probably identify more with Finnish culture because they have always lived here. But now that they’re both in lower secondary school and we’ve been to Thailand all the time, as they grow up, I think they’re starting to become more interested in Thai culture as well. For example, now they’ve seen Bangkok when they’re older, that it’s a great big city with great job opportunities. Now when they’re older, they’ve genuinely started to understand the great aspects of Thai culture during these 4-week holidays, which they might have not realized while living in Finland, even though the Thai parent has a wide circle of friends through whom they have seen the culture. Actually being in Thailand and seeing things firsthand can open one’s eyes better.”*

*“As someone who has interacted with a numerous Thai-Western families over the years, both inside and outside of Thailand, I believe that cultural identity of the children is highly influenced by who the primary caretaker is.”*

There were a few exceptions where a parent felt that their child identifies more with the other parent’s culture, even though the child is surrounded by the dominant culture of the country of residence. This appears to be linked to the presence of the primary caretaker, mostly concerning younger children who were not yet of school age, and the language used in the family.

*“[They identify more with other parent’s culture because] children spend more time with mother. As Thai father is fluent in English, children grew up hearing/speaking English at home. Children also don’t look like their Thai peers at school.”*

#### 4.4 Language use and support

Nine families use One Parent, One Language method with their children. In 13 families parents aim to speak only their native language, but use other language from time to time. In one family parents speaks Thai only, and in six families parents speak the other parent’s language only. The rest of the families use mixture of English, Thai and/or other parent’s native language.

26 respondents reported that their children speak some level of Thai, and one specified that one out of three of their children speaks Thai after learning it by themselves. 30 reported that their children speak the native language of the other parent. 8 respondents stated that additionally their children speaks English (which is not the other parent’s native language, therefore resulting the children to be trilingual).

21 of the respondents stated that their children’s language skills are stronger in the language spoken in their country of residence. Seven stated no to same question, and one respondent was unsure. Six felt like both languages are equally strong. One respondent stated that since the child’s Thai side of family are not very talkative the child learned the mother’s language first, even though it is the non-dominant language.

When asked if the children had gone through phases where they refused to speak the weaker language or otherwise strongly expressed reluctance or dislike towards the culture, ten responded yes, six were not sure, and according to 17 responds the answer is no. Those who answered yes were asked a follow up question; how did parents react to that and how did the children become motivated or interested again? In few responses there were occurring themes of patience, reassuring the child, not forcing and giving them time for the interest to return. The rest or the responds stated different approaches such as telling the child that the

parents cannot continuously translate to each other and the child needs to learn to speak with the other parent too. One respondent mentioned that it was helpful when both languages were present in daily life, not just at home but also in the surrounding environment. Sometimes the other parent lacked the interest to promote the weaker language.

*“Mother’s Thai is weak [despite living in Thailand] so family language is English. Father [is] reluctant to support Thai language by reading books or playful interactions in Thai to promote the language.”*

*“I think what has helped is that both Thai and English is spoken in Thailand. Whether we go to restaurants, shops etc. However, for myself, I grew up in England. And had a reluctance to speak Thai as no one in England spoke Thai, only English. So I feel that being in the country that actively speaks both languages has helped my daughter.”*

*“We all speak English because it wasn’t worth the fight with the child while she was growing up.”*

*“This refers only to the elder child, who after becoming a teenager, had refused to speak the mom’s other language (English) and unfortunately is continuing until present. He, however, can still understand basic English words when spoken to.”*

The most used methods for supporting the weaker language were speaking the language at home on daily basis and actively interacting with relatives and others who speak the language. Other used ways to support the weaker language were the child having friends who speak the language, either reading or listening to books, and watching movies and tv shows either in the language or with subtitles. School, nursery and language tutor were also mentioned, as well as listening to podcasts. One respondent reported their regret on not prioritizing learning the weaker language since early age.

#### 4.5 Challenges in bicultural parenting

Parents were asked to name some of the biggest challenges they’ve faced while raising bicultural children. Many mentioned difficulties for the child to learn the other language, bringing the other culture into daily life enough, and not seeing the daily reality of the other country. Some could see their child having confusion about their identity.

Many of the challenges reported were connected to parents not sharing a common language, requiring more intentional communication and increasing the likelihood of misunderstandings. One parent identified the incapability to help their children with homework due the language barrier. The respondents who speak the language of their partner mentioned it’s a good thing to have a “backup” language.

*“Implementing English when speaking directly to my son is challenging at times because the home language is Thai. I need to switch constantly between Thai and English depending on if my son is in the conversation or not.”*

*“The other parent does not understand what is being said to the child in the other language and may then promise or do something different from what was just agreed or instructed with the child.”*

*“After making decisions and restrictions, informing the other parent is sometimes forgotten, since it has to be translated into English.”*

One respondent stated that they as parent are not fully familiar with the culture in the country of residence, they’re missing the “other layer” of the culture and that causes difficulties from time to time. The role of extended family was brought up by few respondents again. One respondent mentioned differing opinions on what is acceptable for children regarding diet and food.

*“What has been difficult is my Thai family having different views to us.”*

*“[Difficulties include] cultural differences in raising children, but usually only during months spent in Thailand when the Thai family is also involved in life.”*

11 respondents mentioned not experiencing any difficulties, which they linked to communicating openly before issues emerged, and choosing the most fit cultural practices from each culture.

## 5 Conclusions & discussion

Majority of the respondents found it important to support their children in developing their identity into both cultures. The results were quite aligned with information available on supporting bicultural children’s identity. Nearly all parents used well-recognized practices to support their children’s connection to both cultures such as using both languages daily and bringing both cultures into daily life through food, cultural events and holidays, relatives, literature and media. Results show that parents are aware that children do not automatically adopt both cultures; rather, consistent exposure to each culture is necessary for them to develop connection into both of their cultures.

A large number of parents in this study put considerable effort into supporting their children in improving their weaker language by using it daily, helping them to interact with others who speak the language and visiting the country regularly. As Kinnunen & Angel (2010, 32) state,

all these are recommended ways to support bilingualism in children. Friends, books, movies, podcasts and attending school or nursery in the weaker language were also recognized in this study as effective ways to support language development. Surprisingly low number of families strictly follow the One Parent One Language method, although the study shows that most families aim to use it, and treat the other language more as a backup.

According to the study, the most significant challenges in raising a bicultural child are supporting the child to learn both parent's languages and bringing the weaker culture into daily life in satisfying amount. In such situations, the role of external support increases as they have the opportunity to inform parents about factors important for supporting biculturalism. Assistance and useful information that parents may not have considered can be gained for example from parenting groups, parent training programs, peer support groups, experts by experience, language schools, youth workers or professionals at health care, daycare centers, schools or child protection services. As mentioned before, parents in the study by Lee et al. (2015, 514-515) noted that it can be difficult to find accessible guidance on raising bilingual children. Although such information does exist, it is not always easy to locate, and the available resources might be specific to certain countries. Familia ry is an organization in Finland that provides a wide range of support and guidance for bicultural families, available in both Finnish and English, including online services. UK-based charity Bilingual Family offers guidance, such as a guidebook for both parents and educators on raising bilingual children. Bee Bilingual is an international community for bilingual and multilingual families and educators, and offers free resources and practical guidance to support children's bilingual development.

For families residing in Thailand there is a wide range of international schools where teaching is provided in English, some following British or American curriculums. Some international schools offer teaching in other languages, such as RIS Swiss Section, which provides German-language education from kindergarten to secondary school, and Lycée Français International de Bangkok, which offers French-language studies from kindergarten to high school. In Pattaya, Pattayan suomalaisen koulu (the Finnish elementary school of Pattaya) supports language development in both Finnish and English. Another opportunity for maintaining Finnish is Suomikoulu Banskou in Bangkok, which supports the Finnish language skills of Finnish-speaking children living in Thailand and helps preserve Finnish culture and traditions. All these options support the linguistic aspect, but through friends made in school, it also leads to a community of families who share similar cultural background. This can strengthen children's connection to their heritage and offer parents a supportive network for bicultural family life.

Another challenge identified in this study was the risk of miscommunication when parents do not share a common language. In such situations, one parent may be unaware of instructions

or agreements made with the child, which lead to inconsistencies in parenting practices. The previously mentioned support services and resources can help families address also this kind of issues.

It should also be mentioned that based on the results raising a child in a bicultural family is experienced as highly rewarding and it brings great amount of joy to the parents. Identified positives were children growing up open minded, having heightened social skills and learning to embrace their both languages, cultures and families.

Interestingly, many parents reported experiencing few or no difficulties in raising children despite the two different cultures. One parent stated that both Western and Thai cultures in their opinion are among the more flexible cultures in the world, which makes conflicts or issues less likely to arise. There could be some truth to that. As mentioned before, Thai culture places a strong emphasis on respect for others, avoiding conflict and being flexible, and Westerners tend to value independence and direct communication. When the direct communication valued in Western culture is combined with the flexibility and conflict-avoidance of Thai culture, and both parents apply both of these principles in their interactions, parents have the opportunity to create a strong and effective parenting approach. It can also be assumed that individuals who enter bicultural relationships are naturally more flexible, anticipate potential conflicts or differences, and actively seek to work on possible issues.

To return to Berry's acculturation model, majority of the respondents lean towards the *integration* strategy, which involves maintaining one's cultural background while actively participating in the dominant culture (Berry 1992, 69-85). One of the respondents is purely using the strategy of *assimilation* where they show no interest in maintaining the Thai heritage of the child and instead seek full involvement in the dominant culture. Another respondent leans towards *assimilation* but provides information and education on the weaker culture if child expresses interest towards it. Integration appears to be the most effective strategy for supporting a child in developing a sense of identity within both cultures, as it aims to maintain both cultures.

After analyzing and reporting the results, it was noticed that the survey could have included a question asking parents to identify the positive outcomes that two cultures and two languages bring to their children to balance the discussion of challenges. Although such a question was not included, a few parents still mentioned positive aspects in the open comment section. Another question that could have been added is identifying what kind of external resources and support parents used for bicultural parenting.

Feedback from the survey's open comment section affirmed that focusing on this research topic was valuable and meaningful, reinforcing my belief in its relevance to social services

and its potential to support bicultural families. The fact that the survey received more responses than anticipated indicates that the subject resonates strongly with parents of bicultural families. I personally gained deeper insight into bicultural family dynamics, the challenges and opportunities they face, and the ways culture, language and extended family can influence children's identity. The research process deepened my understanding of biculturalism, bilingualism and different practices in supporting children's cultural identity forming. This knowledge will directly impact my future professional practice by increasing my sensitivity to the unique needs of bicultural families. In a professional context I can use these insights to provide more culturally responsive guidance that compliments diverse family practices and encourages for policies and programs that support bilingual and bicultural children. Moreover, the research experience strengthened my skills in data collection, analyzing process and reflection. Overall, the thesis has not only enhanced my understanding of bicultural family life but also equipped me to apply this knowledge in ways that can improve services, support families effectively and lead to positive outcomes for children growing up in bicultural environments.

#### 5.1 Further research and development ideas

As this topic is quite large and complex, research of it can be developed to many directions. These could include focusing in the role of language use, or the impact of extended family members in developing a connection to both cultures in more detail. Additionally, studies could be made on bicultural children themselves, their experiences, struggles and thoughts on growing up bicultural. Since the majority of respondents were from Finland, country specific research could also be worthy to be able to focus on nuances of specific culture and it's effects on raising bicultural children.

During the survey, I received feedback suggesting that the questions should have addressed whether the father or the mother serves as the primary caretaker, as the respondent felt like primary caretaker has the biggest influence on how child develops their cultural identity. This could serve as another idea for further research on the topic.

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Unpublished

The first unpublished reference

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Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

English:

### Background questions

The family is Thai and \*

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American | <input type="checkbox"/> German          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British  | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Danish   | <input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finnish  | <input type="checkbox"/> Swedish         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |

What is the native language of the non-Thai parent? \*

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Danish  | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finnish | <input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French  | <input type="checkbox"/> Swedish         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> German  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English |  |

How many children are there in family? \*

- 1  
 2-3  
 4 or more

The child/children are \*

- Under 7 years old  
 7-18 years old  
 Adult

The child/children have lived majority of their lives in \*

- Thailand  
 Home country of the other parent  
 Other (specify)

The current country of residence is \*

- Thailand  
 Home country of the other parent  
 Other (specify)

### Language

Child/children speak \*

- Thai  
 Native language of the other parent  
 Other (specify)

In what language parents communicate with the child/children? \*

- Both parents speak only their native language to the child/children  
 Both parents try to speak their native language only but other language is used sometimes  
 All speak Thai  
 All speak the other parent's native language  
 Other (specify)

If the child/children speak language of both of their parents, how is the weaker language supported? \*

- Language spoken on daily basis at home
- Actively interacting with relatives and others who speak the language
- Child has friends who speak the same language
- Duolingo or similar language learning apps
- Other language studies
- Books in weaker language
- Movies and tv shows in weaker language (either sound or subtitles)
- Other (specify)

Do you feel like the child's/children's language skills are stronger in the language spoken in your country of residence? \*

- Yes
- Both languages are equally strong
- Not sure
- No

Have your child/children gone through phases where they refused to speak the weaker language or otherwise strongly expressed reluctance or dislike towards the culture? \*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes, how did parents react to that and how did the child/children become motivated or interested again?

### Promoting bicultural identity

How important is it for the parents that the child/children maintain both cultural identities? \*

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all

How are both cultures brought up in daily life? \*

- Eating habits
- Celebration of holidays from both cultures (such as Christmas or Songkran)
- Education on both cultures
- Cultural hobbies (music, dance etc.)
- Community/cultural events
- Religious practices
- Language use
- Other (specify)

Do you feel like the child/children identify more in one of the cultures? \*

- Yes, Thai culture
- Yes, other parent's culture
- Not sure
- No

What do you think is the reason for it?

How is the weaker culture supported? \*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education on the culture                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in cultural events                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in the language                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating traditional foods                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting the country regularly            | <input type="checkbox"/> Following cultural etiquette and manners in daily life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with people from same culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)  |

## Other

Have you got external support for bicultural parenting? (Example) Parenting groups, online communities, friends in same situation.

\*

- Yes, often  
 Yes, sometimes  
 Rarely  
 Never

Did you discuss about parenting styles and how your different cultures might affect raising children before the child/children were born? \*

- Yes, we educated ourselves on raising bicultural children as well as we could  
 Yes, but only in general terms, not in detail  
 Partially, we discussed some aspects  
 No, we did not discuss it before the child was born

How do you handle differences in parenting values between the two cultures? (Example) negotiate and discuss, alternate depending on context, adopt one culture's values primarily.

\*

What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced raising a bicultural child/children? \*

Do you have anything else you wish to share?

Thank you

### Thank you!

I sincerely thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute valuable insights to understanding parenting and cultural identity in Thai-Western families.

Proceed

Save

Prefilled form URL

Finnish:

### Taustakysymykset

Perhe on Thai- \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amerikkalainen | <input type="checkbox"/> Saksalainen    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brittiläinen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Italialainen   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tanskalainen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Norjalainen    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suomalainen    | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruotsalainen   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ranskalainen   | <input type="checkbox"/> Muu (tarkenna) |

Mikä on ei-thaimaalaisen vanhemman äidinkieli? \*

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tanska   | <input type="checkbox"/> Italia         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suomi    | <input type="checkbox"/> Norja          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ranska   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruotsi         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saksa    | <input type="checkbox"/> Muu (tarkenna) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Englanti |   |

Kuinka monta lasta perheessä on? \*

- 1  
 2-3  
 4 tai enemmän

Lapsi/lapset ovat \*

- Alle 7 vuotta  
 7-18 vuotta  
 Aikuinen

Lapsi/lapset ovat asuneet suurimman osan elämästään \*

- Thaimaassa  
 Toisen vanhemman kotimaassa  
 Muu (tarkenna)

Nykyinen asuinmaa on \*

- Thaimaa  
 Toisen vanhemman kotimaa  
 Muu (tarkenna)

### Kieli

Lapsi/lapset puhuvat \*

- Thaita  
 Toisen vanhemman äidinkieltä  
 Muu (tarkenna)

Millä kielellä vanhemmat kommunikoivat lapsen/lasten kanssa? \*

- Molemmat vanhemmat puhuvat lapselle/lapsille vain omaa äidinkieltään  
 Molemmat vanhemmat pyrkivät puhumaan vain omaa äidinkieltään mutta toista kieltä käytetään joskus  
 Kaikki puhuvat thaita  
 Kaikki puhuvat toisen vanhemman äidinkieltä  
 Muu (tarkenna)

Jos lapsi/lapset puhuvat molempien vanhempiensa kieltä, miten heikompaa kieltä tuetaan? \*

- Kieltä käytetään päivittäin kotona
- Aktiivinen vuorovaikutus sukulaisten ja muiden kieltä puhuvien kanssa
- Lapsella on ystäviä jotka puhuvat samaa kieltä
- Duolingo tai muut kieltenoppimisovellukset
- Muut kieliopinnot
- Kirjat heikommalla kielellä
- Elokuvat ja TV-ohjelmat heikommalla kielellä (joko ääni tai tekstitys)
- Muu (tarkenna)

Koetko että lapsen/lasten kielitaito on vahvempi siinä kielessä, jota puhutaan asuinmaassanne? \*

- Kyllä
- Molemmat kielet ovat yhtä vahvoja
- En ole varma
- Ei

Onko lapsi/lapset käyneet läpi vaiheita, jolloin he kieltäytyivät puhumasta heikompaa kieltä tai muuten osoittivat vahvaa vastahakoisuutta tai mielenkiinnon puutetta kulttuuria kohtaan? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En ole varma

Jos kyllä, miten vanhemmat reagoivat ja miten lapsi/lapset saivat motivaation tai kiinnostuksen takaisin?

## Kaksikulttuurisuuden kehittäminen

Kuinka tärkeää vanhemmille on, että lapsi/lapset ylläpitävät molempia kulttuuri-identiteettejä? \*

- Erittäin tärkeää
- Melko tärkeää
- Ei kovin tärkeää
- Ei lainkaan tärkeää

Miten molempia kulttuureja tuodaan esille arjessa? \*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ruokailutottumukset   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yhteisö-/kulttuuritapahtumat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juhlapyhien vietto molemmista kulttuureista (esim. Joulun tai Songkran) | <input type="checkbox"/> Uskonnolliset tavat          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Molemmista kulttuureista oppiminen                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Kielen käyttö                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kulttuurillisidonnaiset harrastukset (musiikki, tanssi jne.)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Muu (tarkenna)               |

Koetko että lapsi/lapset samaistuvat enemmän jompaan kumpaankin kulttuuriin? \*

- Kyllä, thaimaalaiseen kulttuuriin
- Kyllä, toisen vanhemman kulttuuriin
- En ole varma
- Ei

Mikä mielestäsi on syy siihen?

Miten heikompaa kulttuuria tuetaan? \*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kulttuurista oppiminen                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Osallistuminen kulttuurillisiin tapahtumiin          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kielen puhuminen                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Perinteisten ruokien syöminen                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Säännölliset vierailut maassa                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Kulttuurietiketin ja -tapoihin noudattaminen arjessa |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vuorovaikutus saman kulttuurin ihmisten kanssa | <input type="checkbox"/> Muu (tarkenna)                                       |

## Muut kysymykset

Oletteko saaneet ulkopuolista tukea kaksikulttuuriseen vanhemmuuteen? (Esimerkki) Vanhempainryhmät, verkkoystävät, ystävät tai tuttavat samassa tilanteessa \*

- Kyllä, usein
- Kyllä, joskus
- Harvoin
- Ei koskaan

Keskustelitteko vanhemmuudesta ja siitä, miten erilaiset kulttuuritaustanne saattavat vaikuttaa lasten kasvatukseen ennen lapsen/lapsien syntymää? \*

- Kyllä, Pehdyimme parhaamme mukaan kaksikulttuuristen lasten kasvatukseen
- Kyllä, mutta vain yleisellä tasolla
- Osittain, keskustelimme joistakin asioista
- Ei, emme keskustelleet asiasta ennen lapsen syntymää

Miten käsittelette vanhemmuuden arvoeroja kahden kulttuurin välillä? (Esimerkki)  
Neuvotteleminen ja keskustelu,  
Käyttäytyminen tilanteesta riippuen, Pääosin yhden kulttuurin arvot läsnä arjessa \*

Mitkä ovat olleet suurimpia haasteita kaksikulttuurisen lapsen/lasten kasvatuksessa? \*

Onko jotain muuta, mitä haluatte jakaa?

## Appendix 2: Data management plan

### DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Author(s):	Viima Ignatius
Title of thesis:	Home between two cultures: Building cultural identity in Thai-Western
Working life representative: (organisation/project/person)	-
Date:	09.10.2025

#### 1. General description of the data and ensuring the quality of the data

Select the data collection methods you plan to use and the type of data you plan to collect. Data quality is assured by ensuring that data is not inadvertently modified, and that the original data content is retained.

The original data are stored separately before being analysed.:

Interview (e.g. audio, video, transcribed text)	
Observation (e.g. photo, video, transcribed text, observation matrix)	
Survey (e.g. electronic form, paper form, spreadsheet)	E-lomake
Workshop (e.g. image, audio recording, video, text)	
Other	

#### 2.5. How do you manage the rights to the material you use, produce and distribute?

- These issues are described in the agreement with the working life representative.

#### 2.6. Informing participants, consent to participate and possible further use of the material

If the thesis involves people participating in activities such as interviews, observations, targeted surveys or workshops, the participants must be informed about the purpose and methods of the thesis. Participants should also be informed if the thesis material is to be used for further research or as part of marketing material after completion of the thesis, and if the thesis material is to be stored openly in a data archive or otherwise made openly available.

If no other persons are involved in the thesis, go to the section 3.

#### Select the information method

- I will use [Laurea's Information for thesis participants template](#), where appropriate, as a separate document or as part of the survey cover sheet.
- Other method (describe below)

Participants in the thesis must be asked for their consent to participate and, if necessary, for consent to the processing of personal data for the purposes of the thesis.

#### Select the method of consent request

- I will use the [Laurea's Thesis Participant Consent Template](#), where appropriate, as a separate document or as part of the questionnaire.
- I will ask orally for consent at the beginning of the interview to be recorded
- I will ask for consent to process personal data as part of the participant consent form.
- Other method (please describe below)

### 2. Ethical principles, legislation and processing of personal data

#### 2.1. Personal data and data protection

Personal data can be direct (e.g. name, personal identification number, e-mail address, facial image) or indirect (e.g. voice, telephone number, a specific characteristic or a particular hobby).

If you collect personal data, note also the consent to the processing of personal data as part of the participant's consent (see section 2.6).

Does your data contain direct or indirect personal data?  
(If there is no personal data, go to the section 2.4)

No

- I have ensured that there is no sensitive personal data.

#### 2.2. Primary responsibility for the processing of personal data, i.e. the controller

If personal data are included in the thesis data, the controller responsible for processing the personal data must be identified. Make sure that the controllership and the processing of personal data have been agreed with the working life representative if necessary.

I work independently and I am the data controller

#### 2.3. Notifications required for data protection

- I will use [Laurea's thesis privacy notice template](#)
- I will use the working life representative's privacy notice.

#### 2.4. Research settings requiring ethical prior assessment in bachelor theses

- I have ensured that the research approach of the thesis does not require prior ethical review.

### 3. Documenting the data

#### 3.1. Documentation of the data

At least separate notes shall be made on the steps and variables of the data processing. The documentation of the material describes how the thesis material was produced, what it contains and how it was processed.

I write in a separate document the changes made, the steps of the analysis, the meanings of the variables

#### 3.2. Organisation and integrity of the data

Keep the original material separate from the material used during the thesis so that you can return to the original if necessary.

Be aware of the life cycle of the data from the beginning of the thesis process, and be prepared for situations where the data may change unnoticed, e.g. recording, transcription, conversion to another file format, storage, etc.

### 4. Storage and security during the thesis process

#### 4.1 Where is the data stored and backed up during the thesis process?

- Laurea OneDrive
- Public cloud service (no confidential data or personal data)
- Own computer
- External hard drive (note! protect data!)

#### 4.2 How do you ensure that no outsiders have access to the data?

- I only store data in the places that correspond to the Laurea's data classification.
- If I am doing my thesis in a public place: I will make sure that outsiders cannot see my computer and I do not discuss confidential matters.
- I lock my computer whenever I am not using it, and I do not leave my equipment unattended in public places.
- If I share information: I will take care of access rights to files and information that I share and share information securely, only to those who need it.
-

## 5. Material after completion of the thesis: destruction, preservation or possible further use and opening

In accordance with Laurea's guidelines, the thesis material must be destroyed 6 months after publication of the thesis. Unless otherwise agreed, personal data must be deleted immediately after completion of the thesis. Please also note that participants must be informed of any further use of the data.

### 5.1 What will you do with the data once the thesis is completed?

- I will destroy the paper material with a shredder or take it to a security kiosk
- I will erase the external storage medium
- I will take the electronic material to the trash bin of my computer or Onedrive and empty the trash bin
- I will use an overwriting program
- I will hand over anonymised data to the working life representative
- I will open the material for further use according to the instructions of the thesis supervisor

## Appendix 3: Cover letter at the beginning of the survey

English:

### Information

---

#### **Dear participant,**

You are invited to participate in a thesis with the aim of exploring how parents in Thai-Western families support the development of their children's cultural identity in both cultural contexts. We have assessed that you are suitable to participate in the thesis because you are either Thai or Westerner and have a bicultural (Thai-Westerner) child/children. In this study, the term **"Western"** is narrowed to **Europeans and North Americans**.

We kindly ask parents to fill in the questionnaire together as a couple, if possible, so that both perspectives are included. However, it is also completely fine for one parent to answer alone.

This information sheet describes the thesis and your contribution to it. By participating in this survey, you give your consent to analysis and publishing.

#### **Volunteering**

Participation in the thesis is entirely voluntary. You can also withdraw or suspend your participation at any time without giving a reason. If you drop out, the data and samples collected about you up to that point may be used as part of the thesis material.

#### **Purpose of the thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to gain insight into the methods, challenges and experiences of parenting bicultural children, to understand how parents promote both Thai and Western cultural values and traditions at home, to identify common challenges related to bicultural identity development and to explore the role of language, community and family practices in building cultural identity.

#### **Methods and measures used in the thesis**

Participants in this thesis are asked to complete an online survey, which includes structured and open questions. It will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. The survey can be answered from any location convenient to the participant.

#### **Costs and reimbursement**

There is no cost for you to participate in the thesis. There will also be no separate compensation for your participation.

#### **Communicating the results of the thesis**

The thesis will be published openly on the Theseus database.

#### **Disposal and possible further use of the thesis material**

The material will not be further used or made available to others. The data will be destroyed no later than six months after the thesis has been completed.

**Consent of the participant in the thesis**

I have been asked to participate in the above mentioned thesis, the purpose of which is to explore how parents in Thai-Western families support the development of their children's cultural identity in both cultural contexts.

I have received and understood the information about the thesis. I have received adequate information about the thesis, its purpose and implementation, my rights and the possible benefits and risks of participation. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received adequate answers to all my questions about the thesis.

I have been informed about the collection, processing and disclosure of personal data that may be involved in the thesis and have had the opportunity to consult the thesis' privacy statement.

My participation in the thesis is voluntary. I have not been pressured or tempted to participate in the thesis.

I have had sufficient time to consider my participation in the thesis.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw this consent at any time without giving any reason. I am aware that if I discontinue my participation (I may continue to do so at a later stage), the data collected up to the time of discontinuation may be used for the purposes of the thesis.

I have been informed about and agreed to the possible further use or storage of the thesis data in a data archive.

I confirm my participation in this thesis. \*

I confirm my consent to the processing of my personal data as described in the privacy policy. \*

## Finnish:

## Tietoa opinnäytetyöstä

Hyvä osallistuja,

Sinut on kutsuttu osallistumaan opinnäytetyöhön, jonka tavoitteena on tutkia kuinka vanhemmat thaimaalais-länsimaisissa perheissä tukevat lastensa kulttuuri-identiteetin kehittymistä molempiin kulttuureihin. Olemme arvioineet, että olet sopiva osallistumaan työhön, koska olet joko thaimaalainen tai länsimaalainen ja sinulla on kahden kulttuurin (thaimaalais-länsimainen) lapsi/lapsia. Tässä kyselyssä termillä "länsimaalainen" viitataan tarkemmin eurooppalaisiin ja pohjoisamerikkalaisiin henkilöihin.

Pyydämme vanhempia täyttämään kyselylomakkeen yhdessä jos mahdollista, jotta molemmat näkökulmat tulevat huomioituiksi. On kuitenkin täysin sallittua, että vain toinen vanhemmista vastaa kyselyyn.

Tämä tiedote kuvaa opinnäytetyötä ja osallistumistasi siihen. Osallistumalla tähän kyselyyn annat suostumuksesi tietojen analysointiin ja julkaisuun.

## Vapaaehtoisuus

Osallistuminen opinnäytetyöhön on täysin vapaaehtoista. Voit peruuttaa tai keskeyttää osallistumisesi koska tahansa syytä ilmoittamatta. Mikäli keskeytät osallistumisen, sinusta siihen mennessä kerättyjä tietoja voidaan käyttää osana opinnäytetyöaineistoa.

## Opinnäytetyön tarkoitus

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on saada tietoa kahden kulttuurin lasten kasvattamisesta, sen tuomista haasteista ja kokemuksista, ymmärtää kuinka vanhemmat edistävät sekä thaimaalaisia että länsimaisia kulttuuriarvoja ja perinteitä kotona, tunnistaa yleisimpiä haasteita kaksikulttuurisen identiteetin kehittämisessä sekä tutkia kielen, yhteisön ja perheen käytäntöjen roolia kulttuuri-identiteetin rakentumisessa.

## Opinnäytetyömenetelmät ja toimenpiteet

Tutkimukseen osallistujia pyydetään täyttämään verkkokysely, joka sisältää sekä strukturoituja että avoimia kysymyksiä. Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie noin 15–20 minuuttia. Kysely voidaan täyttää mistä tahansa osallistujalle sopivasta paikasta.

## Kustannukset ja korvaukset

Osallistumisesta opinnäytetyöhön ei aiheudu kustannuksia. Osallistumisesta ei myöskään makseta erillistä korvausta.

## Opinnäytetyön tuloksista tiedottaminen

Opinnäytetyö julkaistaan avoimesti Theseus-tietokannassa.

## Opinnäytetyöaineiston hävittäminen ja mahdollinen myöhempi käyttö

Aineistoa ei jatkokäytetä eikä sitä avata muiden käyttöön. Aineisto hävitetään viimeistään kuusi kuukautta opinnäytetyön valmistumisen jälkeen.

## Lisätiedot

Jos sinulla on kysyttävää opinnäytetyöstä, ota yhteyttä opinnäytetyön tekijään tai ohjaajaan.

## Opinnäytetyön tekijän ja ohjaajan yhteystiedot

## Opinnäytetyön osallistujan suostumus

Minua on pyydetty osallistumaan yllä mainittuun opinnäytetyöhön, jonka tarkoituksena on tutkia, kuinka vanhemmat thaimaalais-länsimaisissa perheissä tukevat lastensa kulttuuri-identiteetin kehittymistä molemmissa kulttuurisissa konteksteissa.

Olen saanut tiedotteen opinnäytetyöstä ja ymmärtänyt sen. Tiedotteesta olen saanut riittävän selvityksen opinnäytetyöstä, sen tarkoituksesta ja toteutuksesta, oikeuksistani sekä osallistumiseen mahdollisesti liittyvistä hyödyistä ja riskeistä. Minulla on ollut mahdollisuus esittää kysymyksiä ja olen saanut riittävän vastauksen kaikkiin opinnäytetyötä koskeviin kysymyksiini.

Olen saanut tiedot opinnäytetyöhön mahdollisesti liittyvästä henkilötietojen keräämisestä, käsittelystä ja luovuttamisesta ja minun on ollut mahdollista tutustua opinnäytetyön tietosuojaselosteeseen.

Osallistumiseni opinnäytetyöhön on vapaaehtoista. Minua ei ole painostettu tai houkuteltu osallistumaan opinnäytetyöhön.

Minulla on ollut riittävästi aikaa harkita osallistumistani opinnäytetyöhön.

Ymmärrän, että osallistumiseni on vapaaehtoista ja että voin peruuttaa tämän suostumukseni koska tahansa syytä ilmoittamatta. Olen tietoinen siitä, että mikäli keskeytän (voin jatkaa sitä myöhemmin) osallistumisen, keskeyttämiseen asti kerättyjä tietoja voidaan käyttää opinnäytetyöhön.

Olen saanut tietoa opinnäytetyön aineiston mahdollisesta jatkokäytöstä tai tallentamisesta data-arkistoon ja hyväksynyt tämän.

Vahvistan osallistumiseni tähän opinnäytetyöhön. \*

Vahvistan suostumukseni henkilötietojen käsittelyyn tietosuojaselosteessa kuvatulla tavalla \*

#### Appendix 4: Survey calls in Facebook

English:

Hi there!

I'm Vilma, a Social Services student at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. I am currently writing my thesis on how parents in Thai-Western families support the development of their children's cultural identity in both cultural contexts.

If you are a parent of a Thai-Western child (in this study, "Western" refers to Europe and the USA), I'd love to hear your story! This is your chance to share your experiences about raising bicultural children. Your contribution would be incredibly valuable.

The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. All responses are processed anonymously, and the thesis will be published on [www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)

You can access the survey through the link below. The deadline to respond is November 12th. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me anytime. Thank you so much for participating, your experiences really matter!

In English: <https://elomake.laurea.fi/lomakkeet/23275/lomake.html...>

In Finnish: <https://elomake.laurea.fi/lomakkeet/23275/lomake.html...>



Finnish:

Hei!

Olen Vilma, sosionomiopiskelija Laurean ammattikorkeakoulusta.

Teen parhaillani opinnäytetyötäni siitä, kuinka vanhemmat thaimaalais-länsimaalaisissa perheissä tukevat lastensa kulttuurisen identiteetin kehitystä molempiin kulttuureihin.

Jos olet thaimaalais-länsimaalaisen lapsen vanhempi (tässä tutkimuksessa käsitteellä "länsimäinen" tarkoitetaan Eurooppaa sekä Yhdysvaltoja), haluaisin kuulla kokemuksistasi! Tämä on mahdollisuutesi jakaa kokemuksiasi kaksikulttuurisen lapsen kasvattamisesta. Vastauksesi olisi erittäin arvostettu.

Kyselyyn vastaaminen kestää noin 15 minuuttia. Kaikki vastaukset käsitellään anonyymisti ja opinnäytetyö julkaistaan osoitteessa [www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)

Kyselyyn pääset alla olevan linkin kautta. Vastausaikaa on 12.11. asti. Jos sinulla on kysyttävää, voit laittaa minulle viestiä milloin tahansa. Suuret kiitokset osallistumisestasi, kokemuksillasi on valtavasti merkitystä!

Suomeksi: <https://elomake.laurea.fi/lomakkeet/23275/lomake.html...>

In English: <https://elomake.laurea.fi/lomakkeet/23275/lomake.html...>

