

# Children of Diplomats as Third Culture Kids (TCK)

Research Question: *When traveling between multiple nations, how do children of diplomats form their identities that reflects the process of frequent cultural adaptations?*

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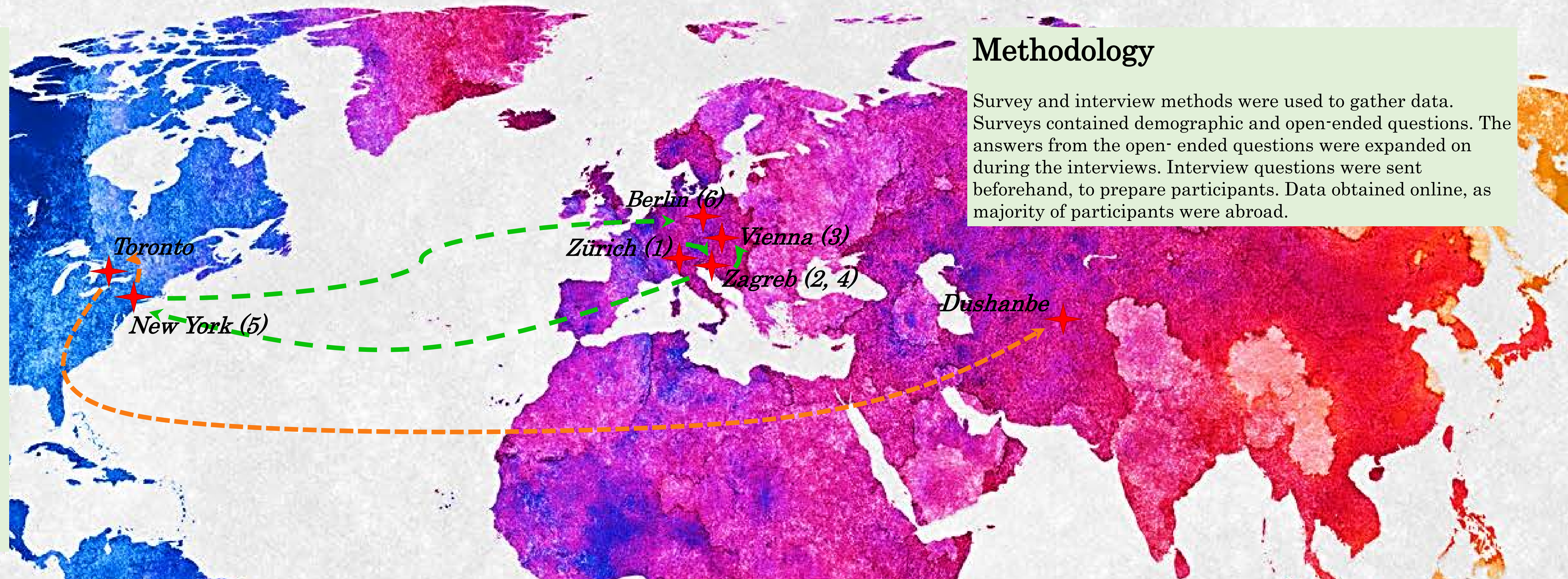
## Abstract

I undertook sociological research to probe the effects that residence in different cultural environments may have on TCK identity.

I gathered data through an online survey and in-depth interviews.

The results revealed some challenges of TCK lives; pursuing strategies of learning and unlearning of culture, the desire to “feel at home” at country of residence and origin. Upon returning home, face reverse culture shock and revision of identity.

TCK are privileged in accessing different cultures, but carrying this knowledge comes at a cost. There is potential to find a common language between different people, but also a challenge in reconnecting with one’s own.



## Methodology

Survey and interview methods were used to gather data. Surveys contained demographic and open-ended questions. The answers from the open-ended questions were expanded on during the interviews. Interview questions were sent beforehand, to prepare participants. Data obtained online, as majority of participants were abroad.

## Findings

**Petra** (from **Zagreb, Croatia**, country of origin to **N.Y., U.S.A.**, host country)

- Experienced culture shock which led her to modify her identity, this is referred to as *acculturation*.
- Her Croatian and American identities blended, which created a culturally hybrid identity, but it was not appropriate in all interactions.
- When a hybrid identity is not accepted, the alternative would be to switch between identities, a strategy known as *alternation*.

**Petra** (from **N.Y., U.S.A.** to **Berlin, Germany**) and **Tahminah** (from **N.Y., U.S.A.** to **Toronto, Canada**)

- Tahminah was coerced into using the strategy of *assimilation*, where she abandoned her previous American identity and focused solely on developing a Canadian self to facilitate entry into the workforce. This caused stress and led to identity confusion, resulting in her exit from Toronto.

**Tahminah** (from host country **Toronto, Canada** to **Dushanbe, Tajikistan** country of origin)

- Faced *reverse culture shock*, even with previous knowledge of culture. Needed to re-learn her culture, helping in forming her Tajik identity.
- Among the Tajik, she was perceived more like a tourist and taken advantage of.
- Physically matching her people while internally not able to share their values created tension. This represents the *hidden immigrant model*.

## Discussion

Participants are strongly influenced by peoples’ acceptance or rejection of them. In accordance with the type of feedback received, they apply an appropriate identity.

Attention should be brought to history of TCKs’ country of origin. Countries like Tajikistan, which were part of the Soviet Union, have undergone many changes and influences from other cultures. The individuals in these countries are already culturally hybrid to start with, their experiences maybe more complex.