Constructing National Identity: Adult Third Culture Kids from the Larger Geneva, Switzerland Area

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Abstract

This exploratory research concerns national identity construction among adult third culture kids (ATCKs) from the Geneva, Switzerland area – TCKs are children who have spent a significant amount of time outside of their parents’ culture(s). Participants had spent two or more years in the Geneva area during their developmental years without possessing Swiss or French citizenship. Identification with the Geneva area above other areas or countries was a commonality among all nine participants, a result at least partly due to its international community and the languages shared there. Participants constructed three national identities: an “ascribed national identity” (AI), “self-ascribed national identity” (SAI), and a “self-reflective national identity” (SRI). Greater comfort with one’s international identity was associated with putting the most importance on one’s SRI, followed by having an equal SAI and SRI. Overall, participants showed a tendency toward a more stable SRI than most past research suggests ATCKs to have.
As globalization becomes an increasingly integral part of our lives and more businesses international, more children than ever – for work-related reasons – are growing up in countries outside of their parents’ countries of citizenship and often moving around a lot between different countries. While growing up and later in life, these children face several difficult issues, most notably concerning national identity, although other issues, such as problems forming relationships, have also emerged as relevant in past research.

Some will call these children Global Nomads, but they are most commonly known today as Third Culture Kids (TCKs), and later as Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs). Precisely defining these terms has been difficult since Third Culture Kids tend to come from so many different backgrounds, and the definition has evolved over time. The first, as defined by Dr. Ruth Useem, who coined the term TCK, was: “Children who accompany their parents into another society” (Pollock & Van Recken, 2009). Since then, the definition has evolved to be more complex, as it has in the following definition by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Recken, who mostly pioneered the TCK profile:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person, who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in the relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009)
Separate from their definition, Pollock and Van Reken, have also added two important characteristics they believe shape all TCKs’ lives: “Being raised in a genuinely cross-cultural world,” i.e., genuinely living in different cultures, rather than only watching, studying, or analyzing different cultures, and “being raised in a highly mobile world.”

Before delving into the definition’s implications for TCK’s sense of national identity, which is the subject of this study, it is important to also understand what is meant by “Third Culture” – especially since another way to define Third Culture Kids could easily be “persons who grow up in and create the Third Culture.” People will often confuse the term and believe it simply means that a person has grown up among three cultures – understandably so, since TCKs have often grown up among three or more – but a person may have grown up between only two cultures and still be a part of the Third Culture, which is actually any product of two or more cultures combining to make a new one. At a very basic level, the Third Culture is created when a child grows up with the parents’ culture, “the home culture,” and combines it with their “host culture” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This is an unconscious process that happens naturally as the child grows up.

Although different cultures may be combined to create the Third Culture, it has been observed and generally accepted that the resulting Third Culture leads to more than just a composite culture, but actually leads to commonalities among all TCKs, even ones who have no shared cultures. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) define Third Culture as a product of the home and host cultures, but more specifically as the product of an international mobile life that leads to shared commonalities among its members.
TCKs and National Identity

TCKs spend a significant amount of their developmental years – if not all of them – outside of their parents’ country of origin, i.e., their passport country. Many TCKs are born in a different country from that of their parents but do not get the host country’s citizenship – either because their parents chose not to, or the host country doesn’t give its citizenship from birth – in which case the parents’ citizenship is automatically assigned. Whether TCKs were born in a “host country” or in the “home country,” the significant amount of time spent outside the parents’ culture leads to problems with identity development (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009), observed across the board (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). More specifically, the problem is developing an identity that fits into the regular identity “mold” non-TCKs expect others to have, which includes a clear national identity. Most TCKs do not have a clear national identity and have a lot of trouble answering the question: “Where are you from?” not only because they either don’t know what to answer or their answer is too long, but also because they can’t answer the question as confidently as other people can (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Research on TCK identity shows that for the most part, TCKs will “negotiate” their identity and form ways of thinking about it as a combination of the different cultures they have taken part in and experiences they have had (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, Hoersting & Jenkinds, 2011). When describing their national identity, TCKs will often incorporate more than one country in their speech and sometimes explain in what context these countries have affected their identity. For example, some TCKs will include the countries they find most useful when describing their national identity and further include how old they were when living there, for how long, and sometimes for what reason. Raquel C. Hoersting and Sharon Rae Jenkins (2011)
also mention the term “Cross-cultural Identity” (CCI), which is defined as any “citizen of the world” identity, which the “TCK” identity falls under. This identity allows them to become part of a group with similar backgrounds and experiences, providing a sense of “belonging,” which otherwise can be very hard to achieve and has been theorized to be negatively affected by how often a TCK moves around growing up and to still affect most TCKs through adulthood (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

Ascribed (AI), Self-Ascribed (SAI) and Self-Reflective (SRI) National Identities

Denis Sindic (2011) tries to provide new terminology to define the identity TCKs are essentially given at birth, as well as the other “negotiated” identity Hoersting and Jenkins mention. He comes up with two different names for each: the Objective Identity – the one given at birth – that he also names “National Identity,” and the Subjective Identity – the one TCKs use to define themselves – that he also names “Psychological Citizenship.” Although these terms are helpful, can also be misleading or confusing, and the TCK community might feel insulted by the idea that the identity they give themselves is considered subjective, when it is actually often an objective explanation of their circumstances. An example for such an identity would be: “My parents are American, but I grew up in Germany until I was 12, and then moved to France where I have lived since then.” It is a much longer explanation than answering simply “American,” but it isn’t any more subjective.

Additionally, this research has found that several TCKs have more than two identities and will sometimes separate this “Subjective Identity” into two different identities. The first being an identity they use to explain themselves to others, and the second an identity they use introspectively when explaining their national identity to themselves. There seems to be little to
no literature separating the two, which is probably a consequence of not all TCKs separating them to begin with. But this research has found it to definitely be an existing phenomenon.

These three identities – Sindic’s “objective identity” followed by two versions of his “subjective identity”/Hoersting & Jenkins’ “negotiated identity” – were named, for the purpose of this research, in a manner that is hopefully respectful of the TCK experience by using a language that validates their opinions and emotions. Ascribed Identity (AI) is the first new term from this research and describes the national identity the child was ascribed at birth and had no control over. Self-ascribed National Identity (SAI) describes the national identity participants use when describing it to others. It is self-ascribed because, like an ascribed identity, it is expressed externally, only in the form of speech rather than a birth certificate. It also allows the listener to create a new framework to identify the TCK by, essentially re-ascribing an identity to the TCK under the TCK’s terms. The third term, Self-reflective National Identity (SRI), describes the national identity participants use when they describe it to themselves, which may or may not be different from their SAI. It is self-reflective because it is usually the product of much self-reflection and contemplation. The concept of dissonance in this research will refer to discrepancies and differences between these three identities.

Although some participants separated their SAI from their SRI, others seemed to try and have them be the same. A theory behind this behavior might be that some participants were making their SAI and SRI equal in order to try bringing together their real self – who they actually are and how they feel – with their looking-glass self, which is how they think they are perceived by others. It was found that concerning dissonance there were mainly three groups: one with high-levels of dissonance, another with mid-levels and another with low-levels. The mid-level dissonance group achieved less dissonance by trying to produce the greatest amount of
congruity possible between their SAI and SRI, while the low-level dissonance group did not worry much about congruity. The group with high levels of dissonance seemed to find congruity very difficult to achieve finding this frustrating and sometimes expressing feelings of helplessness due to their identity being mostly outside of their control. Others, especially one participant, seemed to feel frustration over this desire for congruence since it doesn’t seem applicable to them. This later occurrence is described in Pollock & Van Reken’s (2009) book as a system-based anti-identity, where a TCK “fights [the] system to preserve [themselves],” i.e., purposefully and maybe completely refusing to have an SAI and perhaps not trying to form an SRI. Consequences associated with this anti-identity are usually a total rejection of regular frameworks that tend to actually lead towards greater frustration and postponed identity formation. Ultimately, though, if the person sheds their anti-identity and works on forming an SRI, they can “[begin] to develop a real self and [move] between and in systems at will” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), a transition which the participant seemed to be in the process of completing at the time the questionnaire was filled out.

**The PolVan Cultural Identity Model**

Back in the early 1990s, Pollock and Van Reken (2009) created a Model, the PolVan Cultural Identity Model, which describes cultural identity in relationship to the surrounding culture according to one’s external qualities (the way we look) and our internal qualities (the way we think) and whether we look/think differently or as others do within the culture surrounding us. The result is four different cultural identities (see Table 1): Foreigner (look different, think different), Hidden Immigrant (look alike, think different), Adopted (look different, think alike), and Mirror (look alike, think alike).
According to where a person is on the cultural identity model, it is believed their experiences will be different. Hidden Immigrants mostly feel frustrated because people expect them to think like they do, and the Adopted feel frustrated because they are constantly thought of as different when they feel the same. This research looks into how these factors may play a role in national identity and the amounts of dissonance in TCKs. When it came to external qualities, though, not only physical appearance but also language fluency was considered since this second feature is also an external characteristic that affects how others react to us. Under consideration was also the idea that if a city or place is very international and ethnically diverse, then physical differences due to ethnicity (as opposed to way of dress) will be less likely to affect one’s position in the Cultural Identity Model. This is in line with Gal Ariely’s 2012 study on globalization, whose results suggested that globalization was negatively related to conceptions of ethnicity as related to membership in the nation.

**The Case of the Larger Geneva, Switzerland Area**

There is perhaps no other city in this world today with such a large percent of the population living in as large an area and belonging to the Third Culture. As of 2000, Geneva was home to 184 nationalities out of the 194 possible ones at the time (Statistique Genève, 2005),
which probably makes it one of the largest “melting pots” in the world. In 2013, foreigners represented 41% of the Geneva population (Statistique Genève & République et Canton de Genève, 2014) and according to Geneva International Cooperation, which handles the census of the international population of Geneva for both the Bureau de la Genève internationale de la République et canton de Genève (the Bureau of the international Geneva of the Republic and the canton of Geneva), the total population of the canton of Geneva – the Canton the city of Geneva belongs to –is 476,006, of which 41% are non-Swiss, representing 190 different nationalities. These numbers do not include anyone having chosen to live in another Swiss canton or in France because of cheaper and better available housing, nor does it count dual-citizens or those who became citizens at a later age (for example, foreigners naturalized after the age of 16-17—after most of their developmental years). In 2010, almost 3,040 foreigners—1.7% of foreigners at the time—were naturalized, and about 4,400 have been naturalized each year from 2000 to 2009—2.4% of foreigners in 2009 (Statistique Genève & République et Canton de Genève, 2011). To get a better idea of how international Geneva is, one can see how only dual-citizenship and naturalization can skew the percentage of foreigners in Geneva. We can do this by looking at the statistics from the year 2000, which show that only 45.6% of Geneva residents possessed only a Swiss passport. This means 54.4% were either not Swiss or Swiss and something else (Statistique Genève, 2005). This leads us to believe that the real number of foreigners spending their days either working or going to school in Geneva (including those living in France and in other cantons) exceeds 50%.

The larger Geneva area, recently named “Grand Genève” (literally translated “large Geneva”) in 2012 (Grand Genève Agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise, n.d.a), has been defined as a 2,000 km² (about 1,243 square mile) territory that includes the cantons of Geneva
and Vaud, as well as the French departments of Ain and Haute-Savoie (Grand Genève Agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise, n.d.b). Thus defined, the larger Geneva area houses 918,000 habitants and has been significantly growing over the years with an over 31% population increase since 1990, and more specifically a 39% increase in its French area, 22% in the canton of Geneva and 55% in the canton of Vaud (Grand Genève Agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise, n.d.c). Among its population, 68% are employed in the canton of Geneva (Grand Genève Agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise, n.d.c) – demonstrating its significance to the area. Finally, illustrating the international importance of the city and the mobility of its inhabitants, the number of passengers at the Geneva International Airport has increased by over 73% within the past 10 years (Grand Genève Agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise, n.d.c)

Due to the Geneva area’s great diversity and high number of members of the Third Culture, it is predicted that TCKs will be able to identify with the city or area and not only identify within a CCI, i.e., identify as members of Geneva, Switzerland, or France, regardless of citizenship, and not only as “Citizens of the World.” It is also predicted that ethnicity will not be a barrier or create increased dissonance due to the high amount of ethnic diversity in the area.

**Investigator’s Context**

My own experience as an ATCK definitely impacted the research question and the perspective taken while doing the research – I wanted to know how other ATCKs had dealt with having a national identity that did not fit the regular national identity schema, or if they even had one. I also wanted to research whether Geneva ATCKs, who grew up in a very international community, can more easily form a national identity than what previous research suggests. I also really wanted to hear their own perspective, thinking it could shed a light on how we could all think of our national identity outside of regular national identity schemas.
I was born in Brussels, Belgium to an American mother with mostly Scottish, English, and Swedish roots, and a Peruvian father with indigenous roots and physical characteristics. From birth, I was already surrounded by three cultures and languages.

Although technically biracial, to others I appear Caucasian with dark features, allowing me to blend into most European countries, North America, and several Latin American countries, including Peru – although to a lesser degree. Around the age of one, I moved with my family from Brussels to the Canton of Geneva where my mother had gotten a job at an international organization. When I was five years old, although only moving 30-40 minutes away from the city of Geneva, we moved to France in the department of Ain and have not left since. I went to French public school until the age of 10 when I was moved to an international school in the canton of Geneva, but still stayed in a French-Swiss schooling system. I had already been taking advanced English lessons, but at the international school they became more regular, and advanced classes in Spanish were added later as well – I spoke fluently and without accent in French and English and was mostly fluent in Spanish with a small accent. Most of my peers (both from my school and other schools) were similarly diverse and had grown up most of their lives in the larger Geneva area.

I was most strongly influenced by French, Swiss, American, and Peruvian culture. Starting the first year I was born, my family traveled twice a year to the U.S. (in the Midwest) where I had family, and once every two years to Peru for the same reason as of the age of nine. My father’s sister also lived with us and took care of me until I was five and a close friend of my mother’s in Chicago played an important role in my life. I was also always kept in a predominantly French/French-Swiss school system, and from the ages of five till 11 spent time after school with my nanny, who was always French from the larger Geneva area.
At the age of 19, I gained French citizenship, which came as a huge relief. My life had been in France and in the Geneva area, and if I had not received the citizenship, coming back would have become very difficult – even with an American passport. At the time, I had been increasingly realizing that being “from Geneva” and/or “French” played a greater role in my identity than being “American,” even though being American, Peruvian, French and “Genevan” were all a part of who I was. Negotiating between the four when thinking of my national identity proved difficult.

When I moved to the Chicago area at 19 I had not expected the transition to be as difficult as it was and was in shock. I felt depressed and misunderstood and dreaded meeting new people and having to answer questions about where I was from. The worst, I thought, was that my answer surprised people since my accent was American and my physical characteristics fit as well, yet inside I did not feel the same at all. I later understood that the reason this bothered me so much was that nobody really asked me, growing up in the Geneva area, where I was from – or at least not with the same intention. In Geneva, I’d always felt that it was assumed I probably spoke several languages fluently and that my parents could or were even likely to be foreigners, but that I had probably spent my whole life in the Geneva area and was therefore from there. In that context, the question “Where are you from?” usually held the meaning of “Where are your parents from?” and therefore did not really identify me, but rather my parents, my roots, i.e., my context. I did not feel the same way about the question when it was asked in the U.S.

I later learned about the term “Third Culture Kid” and found out that my experience was shared by many others. What I also realized was that so many others I knew were TCKs; not only that, but I thought of how many characteristics describing TCKs seemed, in my opinion, to mirror the overall Geneva culture and how that was probably due to the very high number of
international people and TCKs in that area. My complex identity as an international person became my simple identity as someone “from Geneva,” and once I felt comfortable telling people that, and not minding too much whether they knew my whole story or not, my issues surrounding my national identity seemed to dissipate and almost disappear.

My questions about my own national identity and all the negotiating that happened not only within myself but when I discussed it with others (both TCKs and non-TCKs) led me to have a great interest in how other TCKs from Geneva negotiated and constructed their own national identity. That interest ultimately led to this study.

Methods

Participants

Participants included nine adult third culture kids (ATCKs) from the larger Geneva area, of which three were male and six female. All were between 21 to 23 years old ($M_{age}=21.7$) when they first completed the survey. However, several respondents answered follow-up questions over the next year to clarify previously answered questions.

To be eligible for the study, participants needed to be over the age of 18, have lived in the larger Geneva area (including neighboring France) for at least three years between the ages of 13 and 18, have neither originally Swiss or French parents, and have been born without a Swiss or French passport, and finally, if naturalized, could only have been after the age of 12.

Participants were chosen using a convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling method that cannot be generalized to the population and consists of accepting anyone whom the researcher can find (Weiss, 1995). As Robert S. Weiss explains in his book *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1995), convenience samples will often be used when the studied population is “unusual […] and, in
addition, not listed anywhere,” as was the case in this study. The study is also exploratory and not causal, allowing the use of a non-representative sample since the findings are not meant to provide causes but rather suggest trends among the sample group that merit consideration and further investigation in the larger population.

In order to try to have as much diversity and representativeness in the sample as possible, purposeful sampling was used alongside convenience sampling. Robert C. Bogden and Sari Knopp Biklen (2003) describe purposeful sampling as “[choosing] particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” and includes “actively [seeking] cases that […] may not fit into the formulation” (Robinson, 1951), i.e., the developed theory. For this research, this meant trying to find participants from different backgrounds who were likely to have different experiences on the subject of national identity, i.e., with different countries of original citizenship, different racial backgrounds, different moving patterns (some participants had to have moved around more than others), and different genders. This meant that while looking for participants, potential participants who were different in some way or other from the rest were more likely to be asked through several different channels whether they were willing to participate in the study and were followed up on more often to ensure they did not forget to complete the questionnaire due to a busy schedule.

**Materials and Procedures**

The study used an interpretivist paradigm as its guide throughout the research process. Interpretivism is a theoretical framework pertaining to qualitative research that takes the view that the participant’s own way of experiencing their social world is what matters (Glesne, 2011) and tends to be accompanied with the belief that reality is “socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (Glesne, 2011). Research stemming from interpretivism has the primary goal of
trying to understand the participant by studying their “interpretations of [a particular] social phenomenon” (Glesne, 2011, p. 8).

In the case of this study, a questionnaire was built consisting of 11 closed-ended questions and 15 open-ended questions (see Appendix B) meant to identify the participants’ own interpretation of their identity. Questions were formulated in such a manner as to find answers to how the participant interprets their identity within both a regular (i.e., non-TCK) national identity framework and outside of that framework. To do this, the participant was asked about their identity in a variety of ways, using different words, such as “national” vs. “area” or “national identity” vs. “place identify with the most,” in order to elicit responses from participants that would illustrate the many ways in which they think of their identity in relation to place/locality. This subsequently led to the appearance of an “ascribed identity”, “self-ascribed identity”, and “self-reflective identity,” which were not concepts set out to be found when questions were created but rather surfaced from participants’ answers as they were analyzed.

Alongside questions meant to provide understanding regarding the different ways they interpret their identity, questions were added to try to find out what they attributed their national identity to, as well as their sense of belonging to any locality. These questions allowed the researcher to better understand the participants’ thinking process when constructing their identities.

Potential participants and people who may have known potential participants were contacted and asked to participate in the study through the means of E-mail, Facebook or, if possible, face-to-face. Potential participants all received the consent form (see Appendix A) and questionnaire electronically on Facebook through a Facebook group (see Appendix C for
description), where the documents were openly available, and/or through Facebook inbox messaging/chat, where the documents were directly sent.

Questionnaires were not filled out face-to-face for two main reasons. First, the nature of the sample – one where participants were spread out in locations far apart and in different countries – meant it would not be possible in the allocated time period to see all participants. Therefore, for consistency reasons alone, questionnaires were filled out independently. Secondly, it was a concern that the researchers' presence or answers to questions might wrongly, or at the very least inconsistently, influence participants’ answers. Facebook was chosen as the main way to contact participants because of the general ease it provided to contact a large number of people who would fit the participant description and people who might know others who did. It was also far easier to use Facebook rather than E-mail as Facebook profiles are less subject to change and more often checked, especially in the case of the generation pool potential participants were being taken from.

**Data Collection**

Over the course of a year, questionnaires were sent out to potential participants. Those who filled them out took anywhere between a day or several months to fill them out and get them back to the researcher, although the actual act of completing the survey seemed to have been done by all participants in a short period of time.

Participants who filled out the questionnaire were requested to send them back to the researcher either through E-mail or Facebook inbox/chat – rather than sending them through the Facebook group or on the researcher’s Facebook wall – to preserve anonymity. All participants chose to use Facebook inbox/chat, which later also served as a means to ask participants to re-answer incomplete answers or for clarifications regarding others. These clarification questions
were asked in a manner trying to be as non-leading as possible, i.e., trying to influence the participants’ answers as little as possible (see Appendix D for clarification questions).

**Data Analysis**

Filled-out questionnaires were analyzed using a thematic analysis with the interpretivist paradigm in mind. Thematic analysis is defined by Glesne (2011) as the use of analytical techniques – most importantly coding – to search through data for themes and patterns that can then be used to compare participants, participants’ background, etc. Constant case comparison, borrowed from grounded theory, was specifically used in this study as a means for thematic analysis. This concept, which “[takes] on the mindset of looking for how each [case varies] in terms of such things as events, participants, settings, or word use” and often “[looks] for subtle difference in similar cases” (Glesne, 2011) was found to be the best way to analyze the data while keeping to interpretivism, i.e., trying to understand the participants own interpretation of their experience and situation.

In this study, themes were inducted during coding through the careful reading of all participants’ answers. Answers were first read per participant several times in order to reach a better understanding of each participants’ personal story. Then, to facilitate coding, questionnaire answers were grouped per question being answered in order to view trends and differences between and within questions. For example, all answers for the question “Which country do you identify with the most?” would be grouped together. To keep being able to view trends and differences between participants’ whole stories, answers were always kept in the same order according to participants, who were all assigned a number.

As Gery W. Ryan & H. Russell Bernard (2000) explain in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, themes are often identified before, during, and after data collection and those
identified before can come both from the literature and the “investigator’s own experience with the subject matter.” Both the literature and the researcher’s own experience guided the first two readings of questionnaire answers, which helped in the finding of major themes. The second step in the analysis involved word and phrase counts, which were used to find themes regardless of whether they appeared in the literature or in the researcher’s experience. These words and phrases were therefore identified and a summary was then written (see Appendix E), for each separate question, naming themes and the number of participants who mentioned those themes. These themes were then organized into tables and graphs according to participant or word/phrase (see Tables 2, 3 and 4, and Graph 1) in order to better visualize and analyze the data. To preserve anonymity but facilitate data analysis, aside from a number, participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Creating tables as described is considered a helpful tool in constant case comparison (Glesne, 2011) and is used not only for better visualization, but also to prompt questions about the data and the relationships observed from the coded information (Glesne, 2011). In the case of this study, if data did not seem to fit into a table in a manner that seemed to correctly reflect participants’ answers – as was the case in first drafts of Table 3, which had yet to include the concept of a separate SAI and SRI – both tables and questionnaire answers were further analyzed in order to find themes that might have been overlooked. In the case of Table 3, it led to the realization that some participants had a separate SAI and SRI, which led to a change in the table and a reorganizing of data. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher focused on finding similarities and difference between participants, who were accordingly grouped together or separated.
Results

Ascribed National Identity (AI)

Participants’ AIs, as shown in Table 2, were their passport countries, which in these cases are their parents’ passport countries. Already within ascribed identities, difficulties for participants can be noted: three participants possess more than one ascribed national identity corresponding to countries they have spent different amounts of time in. We also see variations among all participants, with some being born in their ascribed country and others not, as well as varying ages at which they left said country and varying numbers of cumulative years spent there regardless of how long they stayed after birth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Ascribed Identities (AI)</th>
<th>Born in Ascribed Country (AC)</th>
<th>Age when left AC</th>
<th>Cumulative yrs in AC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alysa</td>
<td>American, Greek, Haitian</td>
<td>Yes (U.S.A.)</td>
<td>5 yrs old</td>
<td>5 yrs U.S.A.; only visits Greece; never went to Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12 yrs old</td>
<td>cum. 16 yrs in U.S.A. (4 yrs uni**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorri</td>
<td>American, Iranian</td>
<td>Yes (U.S.A.)</td>
<td>1 yr old</td>
<td>cum. 12 yrs in U.S.A. (was back at age 2 for 7 yrs + 3 yrs uni**); only visits Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 yrs old</td>
<td>cum. 4 yrs in U.S.A. (1 yr uni**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>only visits Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 yrs. uni**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katharina</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6 months old</td>
<td>only visits Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>only visits Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>Peruvian, Italian</td>
<td>Yes (Peru)</td>
<td>1 month old</td>
<td>cum. 9 yrs in Peru; only visited Italy twice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Names have been changed  
**uni: resided there for university
Self-Ascribed National Identity (SAI)

Factors affecting how participants described their national identity to others depended mainly on two things. For some, it depended on their comfort level naming only their AI: six did not feel comfortable only naming it, and two felt comfortable doing so (yet not implying they actually identify most with that country). For another, it depended on their comfort level telling their whole life’s story.

One participant said they always used a short version of their life’s story (i.e., naming more than one country, but keeping it concise; for example, “My parents are American, but I grew up in Geneva.”) and three others seemed to imply that they always did this as well. The five others seemed to rely on context, mostly naming how the question is asked and whether the person asking the question asks for further explanation. One said they usually say they’re from Geneva, but if asked further, they will explain where they were born and exactly where they grew up in the Geneva area.

When telling their concise life’s story, four named Switzerland as “the place they grew up,” three named France (one names both France and Switzerland), and two specifically named Geneva. All but one identified their AI first, followed by “where they grew up” or “where they spent most of their life.” The one other participant would either ignore his AI or name it later depending on context. The ninth participant consistently said they do not tell their concise life’s story and would only name their AI instead because of a low comfort level telling their whole life’s story. The participant expressed a lot of difficulty understanding their identity for themselves, and they perhaps haven’t found a way to make a “concise” life’s story yet, meaning they would have to tell the longer version instead, which maybe makes them uncomfortable. It is reasonable to believe that provided with the right context this participant would tell others their
“longer” life’s story since they ultimately do explain it in the questionnaire and name “Switzerland” as the place they grew up and the country they identify with most. Another participant, who has the longest “concise” life’s story and named Geneva specifically, also named “Lima” and “DC” at an equal level in their explanation to others, saying they grew up “between” these cities. Later though, this participant said they most identified with both Geneva and the U.S. but ultimately more so Geneva because of its international community – this explanation, in contrast, does not place Geneva, Lima, and DC at the same level.

**Self-Reflective National Identity (SRI)**

Self-reflective identity (SRI) evaluates how participants think of their own identity at an internal, self-reflective level. Graph 1 (displayed below) lists factors participants named as influencing their identification with an area (why they do or do not identify with it) and how they explained their feeling more or less integrated in one country rather than another.

**Graph 1**

*Factors Influencing Identification With Country/Area*

![Graph 1](image-url)
Most factors are consistent with the literature, but language proficiency appeared as a new factor, rarely mentioned in past research.

Participants did not make a clear distinction between an SAI or SRI, but it became clear from some participants’ answers that a distinction existed. When asked directly what country they identify with most, all participants name Switzerland (6), France (2), or Geneva (1). One of these later explains on their own that by Switzerland they really meant the Geneva area. Others were asked for clarification, all explained that when they named Switzerland or France, they actually meant the larger Geneva area or in one person’s case, France and French Switzerland – i.e., the area they knew best. Two participants said they identified equally with another country as well, one with England and another with the U.S. but when they used a scale named Switzerland as being a more important reflection of who they were. One participant who named Geneva as the place they identified with most said that their identity (non-national) is one as an “international person,” and explained they identify most with Geneva because it has a lot of people with similar experiences living there, i.e., other “international people.”

Participants were asked where they felt most like themselves to get a clearer idea of their internal sense of identity: seven out of the nine participants named either Switzerland or the Geneva area. Another participant said they felt like themselves wherever they went and that their surroundings were not a factor – this participant though, when asked about the country they identified with most and whether it was an important reflection of who they are, said they “absolutely [believed] that Switzerland is an important reflection of who [they are],” giving it a nine out of ten. The other participant said they felt most comfortable in any environment with French/English bilingual speakers, having easily found said environment in both the larger Geneva area and the larger London area where they go to university (the participant added that
before university they would have only named the larger Geneva area as where they most identified with).

**Dissonance**

In this research, dissonance refers to three concepts:

1. Dissonance between ascribed identity and self-ascribed identity (AI vs. SAI)
2. Dissonance between ascribed identity and self-reflective identity (AI vs. SRI)
3. Dissonance between self-ascribed identity and self-reflective identity (SAI vs. SRI)

All participants seemed to deal with some form of dissonance, but the dissonance was felt at varying levels and involved different identity relations. Levels of dissonance were measured as follows: no dissonance meant participants described two identities the same; low-level dissonance meant participants felt indifferent about describing identities as the same or different and would choose which to use according to a conversation’s context but felt comfortable with both options; mid-level dissonance meant participants described two identities incorporating one identity as a part of the other, but ultimately not describing them the same; high-level dissonance meant participants described one identity as completely different from the other; extreme dissonance meant a participant described a very strong difficulty, close to an inability, to describe an identity, making it not only different from other identities, but unattainable.

According to these levels of dissonance, a pattern emerged among participants and three groups formed with cumulatively high-levels, mid-levels, and low-levels of dissonance (See Table 3).

High levels of dissonance were clear within the first group as they described feelings of frustration and/or anger (often using those words) about describing their SAI or SRI, and in one participant’s case, even in describing their AI. All three participants in this group described very strong difficulty, frustration, or even an inability to describe their SRI. When prompted through
different questions to describe their SRI, a first participant described hostility towards the “notion of the nation” and a strong desire to separate themselves from their AI. This participant described their SAI as completely different from their AI, although it is possible that they may incorporate their AI into it on occasion outside of the questionnaire’s context. The two other participants described their SRI as “complicated” and “difficult to pin-point,” but both described their SRI as definitely different from their AI, and expressed discomfort when using only their AI as their SAI even though both do so in order to simplify their life’s story when presenting themselves. Both of these participants seemed to give a lot of weight to their AI when forming their SAI, one seemingly due to a perceived importance of citizenship (this could be the case for both, but only one mentioned it). The other consistently named their AI as the only way they described their SAI, while insisting that their SRI, although very difficult to describe, was different, going as far as to say that their AI was the country where they felt they had to make the most effort to fit in. These results led these three participants to be placed into the high-dissonance group.

Table 3

*Identity Dissonance: Ascribed versus Self-Ascribed versus Self-Reflective*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>AI vs. SAI</th>
<th>AI vs. SRI</th>
<th>SAI vs. SRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-Level Dissonance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alysa</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>mid/high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>mid/high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>high/extreme</td>
<td>high/extreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid-level Dissonance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorri</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-level Dissonance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katharina</td>
<td>mid</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second group, which displayed mid-level dissonance, showed very similar identity dynamics among participants. All four incorporated their AI into their SAI and SRI, giving the AI more or less importance, and had a ready-made “life story” they felt comfortable with. None felt comfortable with only naming their AI for their SAI, and all of them seemingly expressed their SAI as being the same as their SRI.

The third group, with the lowest levels of dissonance, also showed almost identical identity dynamics. Both were the only ones in the sample to say they felt comfortable naming only their passport countries as where they were from and did so depending on their conversation’s context. However, both said their AI is different from their SRI, which, for one participant, is most strongly based in their identification with the larger Geneva region, and for the other in their identification with France and French Switzerland. Their SAI is only different from their SRI when they choose it to be though – they choose to use their AI, but, having a clear concept of what their SRI is, will openly use it as their SAI if they are prompted to or choose to.

**Perceived Fit and Its Relationship to Dissonance and Belonging**

Scoring themselves according to their perceived physical fit and language fluency (see Table 4) in every country they felt associated with, participants created a “perceived fit score.” The scores cannot really be compared as quantitative measures, but a pattern did emerge. Participants with the highest levels of previously mentioned dissonance tended to give themselves much lower overall scores than participants with mid- to low-level dissonance, and would also say physical fit and fluency fit definitely affected their sense of belonging. Mid- and low-level dissonance participants gave themselves overall higher scores and were more likely to say that these factors only sometimes affected them and to bring up culture fit as a more or just as important factor.
Table 4
Perceived Fit, Belonging, SRI, and Dissonance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>High Scores</th>
<th>Low Score</th>
<th>Perceived Fit Scores</th>
<th>Say affects “belonging”</th>
<th>SRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Fit</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Physical Fit</td>
<td>Fluency Fit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alysa</td>
<td>Haitian: 10; U.S./&quot;67&quot;</td>
<td>Swissa: 9; U.S. English: 9</td>
<td>Swiss: 2; Greek: 4</td>
<td>Haitian: 0; Greek: 7</td>
<td>U.S.: 15; Swiss&amp;Greek: 11; Haitian: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Swiss: 9; U.S.:7</td>
<td>Swiss: 10; U.S. English: 10</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Swiss: 19; U.S.: 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorri</td>
<td>Swiss: 8; U.S.: 8</td>
<td>Swiss: 8; U.S. English: 10</td>
<td>Iran: 4</td>
<td>Iran: 3</td>
<td>U.S.: 18; Swiss: 16; Iran: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Swiss: 10; U.S.: 8</td>
<td>English in U.S.: 9; English in EU: 10; French: 7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>French: 7</td>
<td>Swiss int.: 20; Swiss: 17; U.S.: 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Swiss: 7; Ghana: 3</td>
<td>Swiss: 10; Ghana: 1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Swiss: 17 Ghana: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Swiss: 10; U.K.: 8</td>
<td>Swiss: 9.5; U.K. English: 9.5</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Swiss: 19.5; U.K.: 19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katharina</td>
<td>Swiss: 10; French: 10; German: 10</td>
<td>French (FR&amp;CH): 9</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>German: 6</td>
<td>French/Swiss: 19; German: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>Swiss: 5</td>
<td>Swiss: 8</td>
<td>Brazil: 4</td>
<td>Portuguese: 6</td>
<td>Swiss: 13; Brazil: 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swiss int. = specific Swiss international community that speaks English as main language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissonance Level</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level</td>
<td>Geneva &amp; U.S., but more Swiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level</td>
<td>Swiss &amp; U.S., but more Swiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Limitations

Although the research’s sample was not a representative one due to the difficulty in finding participants that both fit the criteria and were willing to fill out the questionnaire, the results are still important though in that there were some apparent trends among participants that
merit further investigation within both the overall ATCK population and the Geneva ATCK population. It is also true that all participants fit into a close age group, which could have affected their answers and where they were on their journey of identity development. All questionnaires were completed relatively close (three to four years) to the time they finished high school, when the greatest number of identity issues takes place (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) as their identity is often being questioned and challenged by non-TCKs (Sindic, 2011) once they leave their high-school environment. No questionnaires were completed by ATCKs who had finished high school less than three years earlier, which should have diminished the effects of national identity being a fresh issue.

Implications

Implications for Future Research

Two questions related to this study as an exploratory research into identity construction of the Geneva ATCK community and general ATCK community merit further investigation. The first would be whether non-Geneva ATCKs at the same age are also on average at the same stage in their identity development as Geneva ATCKs, or if Geneva ATCKs “resolve” or make peace with their identity faster than others because of a possibly greater ability to add a locality to their Third Culture identity.

A second question would concern how this identity develops over time; for example, using concepts of AIs, SAIs and SRI s and seeing on average how ATCKs (from Geneva vs. general ATCKs, and/or only general ATCKs) deal with these three identities over time and the impact it has on dissonance and their overall comfort-level concerning their national identity. It would shed more light on the importance of SAI and SRI congruence and whether further comfort in one’s SRI can lead to the SAI losing importance. Using the concepts of Self-ascribed
National Identity and Self-reflective National Identity as separate concepts that can at times be equal also seems to be essential in improving our understanding of identity formation and dissonance among third culture kids.

Another subject meriting further research not related to national identity construction directly, but rather to “belonging,” would concern how much “language proficiency” affects “belonging” and whether some TCK communities are more likely to perceive it as important than others. Several Geneva ATCKs in this research named language proficiency as a factor influencing their identification with an area or country. This factor does not usually appear in TCK literature. Perhaps a reason for this is that past researchers have never directly asked – although Geneva ATCKs brought up this factor before it was mentioned in the questionnaire. A second possibility is that Geneva ATCKs tend to have a different experience from other TCKs and maybe integrate more into the culture and country for a variety of reasons. For example, many Geneva TCKs are less mobile than TCKs from other areas, the Geneva area may also offer a greater number of international school options that yet still keep to the host culture’s education system and/or emphasize the host culture’s language. More research should be done concerning Geneva TCKs and other TCKs according to the region they grew up in and how it affects the perceived importance of language fluency.

**Implications for Counseling**

The results of this research could have several implications concerning the counseling of TCKs and ATCKs and how to diminish dissonance and subsequent depression. For a start, dissonance differences among research participants should be noted as well as the way they think of their AI, SAI and SRI. Cases of high overall dissonance should be compared to cases of low ones in order to try to find ways to lower dissonance outside of a “non-TCK” identity.
development framework, which only emphasize their differences and difficulties fitting into regular national identity schemas. These regular frameworks are more likely to frustrate TCKs and increase dissonance and depression instead of decreasing it due to a felt lack of understanding from the counselor and general public.

For counseling TCKs, the implications of these findings could be that therapists should try to help TCKs in two ways. First, they could be encouraged to look less for approval from others and acknowledge the greater importance of their own sense of identity, leading to a lack of ascribed importance to congruency between SAIs and SRIs. Second, counselors could assist TCKs in finding an SAI they feel comfortable disclosing to others. The process may need to first involve helping patients figure out their own SRI. Either method should be practiced while validating the TCK’s emotions and thoughts and helping them decrease the importance some ascribe to regular schemas of national identity – especially that one needs to be a citizen to truly belong, or that a national identity needs to follow specific rules to be considered “correct.”

One such rule that posed a direct problem for this research and the formulating of questions was that national identity is supposed to be linked to a country, not a city, like Geneva, and even less to an area, like the larger Geneva area, and definitely not an area that covers part of two countries, as the larger Geneva area does. This problem comes as a direct result of “national identity” including the word “nation,” and it is time, as globalization increases, that new terminology not only be available, but become a full part of conversations around identity and teaching of identity development. Elfie Rembold and Peter Carrier (2011) have written extensively on modern and post-modern identity theories, and describe Doreen Massey’s identity theory as one where “identities are multiple, constructed in relation to multiple locations at a time when people move from place to place, and live in different social, economic and cultural
contexts” and mention how local identities could eventually replace identities constructed around a nation-state. These concepts seem perfectly compatible with TCKs, who are essentially the embodiment of this theory.

Concerning TCKs and their sense of belonging – a prominent issue ATCKs will speak of in counseling – participants named “culture” as one of the most important factors affecting “belonging” and several articulated that it played a larger role than either physical fit or fluency fit. This explains why scores did not always align with participants’ SRIs. Yet, enough participants with high and mid-level dissonance said that physical fit and fluency affected their sense of belonging for these variables to be considered as possible factors affecting TCK’s “belonging” in future research.

Implications for the importance of physical fit and fluency could be two-fold. For one, parents who worry about their children’s future sense of belonging due to their present lifestyle as “global nomads” should reconsider where they put their children in school. Maybe instead of placing their children in international schools systems where the host culture’s language is secondary – a common practice – they should be advised to consider placing their children in school systems (international or not) where the host culture’s language is primary. The result would be bettering their child’s chances of becoming fluent and even without accent, and could maybe significantly help with “culture fit” in the long-run as well. The second implication concerns counseling. Participants with high –level dissonance participants, who all said physical fit and fluency fit were very important may be ascribing greater importance to external fit, rather than internal (way of thinking) fit. They may therefore be ascribing much importance to how others perceive them within a culture, ultimately ascribing more importance to their SAI or AI
than to their SRI. If this is the case, a therapist can try helping a TCK by validating their internal perceived fit to subsequently help TCKs give it a greater importance than external fit.

**Conclusion**

From this research it can be concluded that different TCKs construct their national identity differently, which supports past findings by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken (2009). According to the findings of this study, some TCKs achieve lower levels of dissonance while constructing their national identity by creating congruence between their SRI and SAI, but participants with the lowest levels of dissonance do not worry much about congruency at all. This lack of worry seems to be related to a strong SRI and the relatively lower perceived importance of the AI and SAI. This focus on the SRI rather than the AI or SAI shows a greater emphasis on internal processes (what we feel and believe) rather than external ones (what we tell others, and who they tell us we are).

These findings suggest that, to help TCKs deal with dissonance, the best course of action is to help them view their internal feelings and opinions about who they are as more important and relevant than what others and regular identity frameworks tell them they can and cannot be. This is why it appears to be so important to use language that validates TCKs’ experiences and emotions when talking to them and discussing them in the literature.

Part of resolving the issue is agreeing that having an identity as an “international person” is a real phenomenon that does not function in the same way regular national identities do and requires the use of a new national identity framework. As large cities continue growing exponentially and globalization increases, these large cities will become – and are already becoming – international hubs with growing TCK populations. This process will lead to more and more cities with large percentages of their populations identifying with the Third Culture. As
this occurs, more TCK research will need to be directed toward TCKs from these large international cities who grow up with perhaps less mobile lives, yet, due to globalization, might feel even less grounded than past TCKs in their parents’ host cultures. The subject of TCKs and Global Nomads is not to be overlooked. Globalization had made them the children of the future and not understanding their identity development and the need for new frameworks will affect therapists’ and parents’ ability to help their patients/children deal with this difficult issue that often leads to depression within this growing community.
References


Appendix A

Consent Form:

*Third Culture Kids: Where do they feel they fit in?*

You are being invited to participate in a research study interested in explaining how adult third culture kids view themselves in the world. This study is being conducted by Alexandra Martos, from North Central College (IL, USA), as part of an undergraduate thesis.

This is an interview study comprised of a series of open-ended questions followed by two short questionnaires. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an adult third culture kid, meaning you grew up amongst several cultures and have lived for a significant amount of time in a country outside of your passport country during your developmental years.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The information you provide will help compile a general idea of how adult third culture kids view themselves in the world by comparing answers over several respondents. The interview will take about one to two hours to complete. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but the information learned in this study should provide more general benefits.

This interview is confidential, but please let me know whether you would agree for me to use potentially identifying information (i.e., name, age, passport country). Otherwise, any information disclosed during this interview will be kept confidential and if used explicitly within the thesis, will be used in such a way that individuals will not be identifiable through their answers. No one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed in any way that will allow for personal recognition.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing this interview, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason, and to stop completely at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Alexandra Martos, aimartos@noctrl.edu, +33-630-35-93-10.

The North Central College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed my request to conduct this project.

I, ________________________________, have read this consent form, and agree to participate in this study.
Appendix B

Questionnaire:

-When you think of your identity, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

-When you think of your national identity, what comes to mind?

-When someone asks you where you are from, would you feel completely comfortable giving only your passport country’s name as an answer without adding an extra explanation? (By “passport country”, I will always mean the country or countries whose citizenship you were born with)

-When someone asks you where you are from, what do you answer?

-How old are you?

-Where were you born?

-What are your parents’ passport country(ies)?

-Have you ever lived in that country/those countries? For how long?

-Where (else) have you lived, and for about how long and at around what ages?

-Were you naturalized at any point in time? To what country?

-How many passports could you legitimately hold, and to what countries? Which one(s) do you identify with more easily?

-Do you identify with a country, area, or culture for which you do not possess citizenship?

For each country you feel affiliated with – including passport countries: (ex: France: [scale], [elaborate]; England: [scale], [elaborate], Thailand: etc. – as many or as few countries as you feel necessary)

-How much do you believe you fit in physically? As in, do you believe people see you on the street, and believe you are probably from the area. Please give me an answer on a scale from one to ten – one being definitely a foreigner, ten being definitely a native – and then please elaborate. (This can be about skin color, hair color, eye color, height, etc – in China, for example, neither black people, or Caucasian people physically fit in)
-How fluent are you in the national language? As in, when people hear you speak, do they believe you speak like a native? Use a scale from one to ten again, and elaborate a little. (This can be about accent or grammar – taking the example of China again, someone can look Chinese, and yet not speak Chinese well enough to pass for Chinese)

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

-Do you think either of these factors impacts how other people react to you within the culture? Explain in each country’s case

-Do you think it impacts your ability to say you “belong” to that country? Explain for each.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

-For countries outside of those whose citizenship you were born with, do you believe you integrated the host culture – explain why you feel well integrated (or not)? Do this for each country you feel affiliated with.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

-How would you explain your feeling more integrated to one country’s culture, rather than another? Be specific about which countries you are talking about.

-Where do you feel more like yourself?
-Why, do you think?

-Are there countries where you sometimes feel as though you have to make an extra effort to fit in? Which ones?

-In the end, which countries that we’ve talked about do you least identify with? And why?

-Which country do you identify with most?

-Do you believe this country to be an important reflection to who you are? Please use a scale from 1 to 10 (1=doesn’t reflect me at all, 10=reflects me perfectly), and then please elaborate.

-(IF NATURALIZED.) Did getting naturalized bring you any peace of mind? Elaborate (reactions and thoughts about becoming a legal citizen of that particular country)

-(IF NATURALIZED.) Would you now name your new passport country as the place you are from? (If naturalized in several countries, please elaborate for each)

THANK YOU SO MUCH!!

If you are ever working on a project I could help you with, don’t hesitate to send it my way!
Appendix C

Facebook Group Name: HELP! I Need Interviews/Survey Responses for my Thesis

Facebook Group Description:

If you’re a procrastinator, PLEASE procrastinate by answering my questionnaire 😊.

I’ve been working on my thesis and I REALLY need filled out questionnaires. It’s kind of long, but I will be SO grateful to anyone who fills it out! It should take anywhere between 30 minutes and 1 hour – a lot of these questions will be questions you’re used to answering or have often thought about.

You can help me and participate if:
- You lived in the Geneva area (including neighboring France) for at least 3 years between the ages of 13 and 18.
- Neither of your parents are originally Swiss or French.
- You were born without a Swiss or French passport, and if you were naturalized, you were only naturalized at or after the age of 12.

The questions are written in English, but you can answer in English, French, or Spanish – whatever you feel most comfortable with.

The first page is a consent form that I need you to complete by typing in your first and last name, BUT questionnaire answers will be kept anonymous, and when printed out, answers will be separated from consent forms, and I will make sure your identity is safe when writing the actual thesis – if having your identity known does not bother you, please let me know.

If you know anyone who fits this profile, PLEASE invite them to this group.

Thank you so much!

If you’re interested in learning about the results, let me know, and I’ll send you a copy of my thesis when it’s done.
Appendix D

Listed Clarification Questions

- Do you have Swiss or French citizenship? I’m not sure if you made that clear.

- Do you have a French passport?

- I wanted to know if you got the Swiss citizenship in the end?

- In the questionnaire I asked if you got naturalized and you say yes, does that mean you have Swiss citizenship or is that a misunderstanding?

- Switzerland had been your answer for the country you identify with most – when you say Switzerland, do you really mean the country, French Switzerland, or do you mean the Geneva area? Just so I have a better idea what it is you mean even though those aren’t actually countries.

- In the 45nteger45naire, I asked you to score your perceived physical fit in both Ghana and Switzerland from (1, definitely not native to 10, definitely native) and perceived language fluency (same scale). You did so for [insert 1st country name] but not for [insert 2nd country name], could you please do that?

And then tell me whether you think both or either of these things impact your ability to say you belong to these countries.

- Do you still have family in [insert country name]? and do you go there to visit?

Have you ever gone there? (I need to write down whether you’ve never been, been once, or visit regularly, etc)

- Did you leave [insert country name] when you were 5 or 6 years old?

- How old were you when you moved to the Geneva/PDG area?
- Est-ce que tu peux me donner deux ou quatre raisons pourquoi tu penses être plus intégré dans la culture [insert 1\textsuperscript{st} country name] que dans la culture [insert 2\textsuperscript{nd} country name]?

[Translation: “Can you give me two or three reasons why you think you are more integrated in [insert 1\textsuperscript{st} country name]’s culture versus [insert 2\textsuperscript{nd} country name]’s culture?” Side note: the participant had said in their answers that they identified more with the 1\textsuperscript{st} country than the 2\textsuperscript{nd}.]

- Aussi, est-ce que étudier et vivre en [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name] a fait que tu t’identifies avec la culture [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name again] plus qu’avant, moins, ou pareil?

[Translation: “Also, has studying and living in [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name] made you identify with [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name again]’s culture more than before, less, or the same?”

After receiving the previous question’s answer, which contradicted previous answers from the questionnaire:

- Est-ce que tu t’identifie toujours plus à la culture [insert 2\textsuperscript{nd} country name] que [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name]?

[Translation: Do you still identify more with [insert 2\textsuperscript{nd} country name]’s culture than [insert 3\textsuperscript{rd} country name]’s?]
Appendix E

Summary of Answers per Question

How many passports could you legitimately hold, and to what countries? Which one(s) do you identify with more easily? One participant could hold 4 passports, another was unsure but could probably hold 3, and all others (7) could legitimately hold 2.

Where were you born? Four were born in the U.S., 2 in Switzerland (Geneva), 1 in France (Geneva area), 1 in Berlin, and 1 in Peru.

What are your parents’ passport countries? Two grew up with parents from two separate cultures/countries: Haitian American (father)/Greek (mother), and Brazilian (both biological parents)/Peruvian (step dad). Two grew up with one mixed cultured parent: Iranian American (father)/American (mother), and Italian Peruvian (mother)/Peruvian (father). All others (5) had parents that had the same unique citizenship: American (2), German (1), Ghanaian (1), English (1).

Have you ever lived in that country/those countries? For how long? Referencing their parents’ passport countries, 5 were born in a parent’s/the parents’ passport country and stayed for varying amounts of time after their birth: 1 month, 6 months, 3, 5 (2), and 12 years. The participants who had stayed for 3 years, one who had stayed for 5 years, and the one who had stayed 12, returned for university (one for only a year). Another who was not born in passport country went for university as well for 3 years (4 years as of 2014). The one who left after a month spent cumulatively 9 years in parents’ passport country over the years separated over 4 stays including that first month.

Where do you feel more like yourself? Seven out of the 9 say either Switzerland or Geneva area. Karen says she feels like herself wherever she goes, and Jenny says wherever she is in an environment with both French/English bilingual speakers (she explains that she can find this in both the Geneva Area and London easily).

Why do you think? Two of those who said the Geneva area specify that it is because of the international community – both evoke feelings of alienation when not in this type of international community. Three say it is because they lived their whole life there, another brings up friends and family. Karen says she tries to “go into every new stage of life with an open mind”, and Jenny says she “[feels] comfortable in both [France and England] “personality-wise” and “[thinks] language is what creates barriers to expression”.

Which country do you identify with the most? If asked to name a country, instead of just being asked where they most feel like themselves, every single participant says they identify most with Switzerland (6), Geneva specifically (1), or France, as in the general Geneva area (2). Dorri does say she identifies equally with the U.S. though, and Jenny says she used to identify most with France, but now (after university)
identifies with England just as much. Also, Chris, who named Switzerland, later goes on to say that it is “Genevan life” more specifically that he identifies with.

**Do you believe this country to be an important reflection of who you are?**

unsure whether worth writing down results

**When you think of your identity, what is the first thing that comes to mind?**

Alysa and Karen use life events/experiences as ways to think of their identity, and Chris says the associations he has encompass “a large range of emotional affect”. David says Swiss, and Jenny says French (and both say they means the Geneva/Pays de Gex area.) Dorri and Katharina name the two areas they feel associated with, while Victor mentions the three areas he feels associated with but above all identifies himself as “an international person.” Finally, Emilia finds it “difficult to pin-point [her] identity, when [she’s] not sure of it yet” and will usually just use her nationality (Brazilian), she says, although she does not feel Brazilian – in the next question she will say that she feels “more Swiss than anything.”

This was the first question in the questionnaire, and might illustrate the strong association third culture kids feel between identity and nationality, even when not called “national identity”.

**When you think of your national identity, what is the first thing that comes to mind?**

Jenny is still consistent in naming France. On the other hand, Alysa, Karen, Chris, Emilia, and Victor feel that it’s complicated, or even contradictory (Emilia). Karen chooses to construct a new definition for national identity: “How the culture I have lived in have influence my personality and the way I live my life, what habits make me more Swiss, or American,” while Chris describes “hostility to the notion of the nation as a whole and the individual’s relation to it.” Victor says that he does not identify with a specific nationality, although he does later say that he identifies with the Geneva area, which, as an area and not a country does not apply to the notion of “nationality” (this might be why Chris also doesn’t name Geneva since he names it as the place he identifies with). David and Katharina react to this question by naming their “ascribed nationality”, i.e. Ghanaian and German, although they themselves say they do not identify with these, or at least not strongly – Katharina mentions that she thinks of her family, since “it is the only part of [her] life that feel[s] German.” This reaction to the question might illustrate how David and Katharina feel that national identity is something that is ascribed to them, and not something they can choose – which seems to also be the case with Emilia as she consistently names Brazil even though she herself says that she does not feel Brazilian.

**When someone asks you where you are from, would you feel completely comfortable giving your passport country’s name as an answer without adding an extra explanation? & When someone asks you where you are from, what do you answer?**

David and Katharina do not feel uncomfortable only naming their passport country when answering the “Where are you from?” question, but David will usually elaborate and talk briefly about Switzerland and France as well as Ghana. Katharina only elaborates if they ask, usually due to her lack of an accent, she says. Emilia says that she doesn’t necessarily feel comfortable doing it, but names Brazil because it “saves [her] the hassle of having to explain [her] life too much.” All others, i.e. Alysa, Karen, Dorri, Chris, Jenny, and Victor, say that they would not feel comfortable only naming their passport country – Karen says, “definitely not” – and feel a need to provide an explanation – Victor says he has a “rehearsed statement”. These six usually feel a
need to provide an explanation and will explain their “life’s story” when asked where they are from, although Alysa says, like Emilia, that she will name her passport country, presumably to make things easier.

Alysa, Karen, Dorri, Chris, David, and Jenny name Switzerland, France or Geneva as the key component of their speech – they mean the Geneva/Pays de Gex area when they say France or Switzerland. Alysa: “but […] I’ve lived in Switzerland most of my life”; Karen “but grew up in Switzerland”; Dorri “but lived most of my life in Switzerland”; Chris: “I usually respond that I am from Geneva” and he if asked further he will mention the Jura (French area within the larger Geneva area) and the U.S. and explain that he does not associate culturally either; David: “but I was born in Switzerland, moved to France at 6 then moved back to Switzerland at 15”; Jenny “but I grew up in France”. Victor names Geneva: “I also mention that I actually grew up between Lima, DC, and Geneva.”

**Are there countries where you sometimes feel as though you have to make an effort to fit in? Which ones?**

Alysa, Karen, Dorri, Chris, and Emilia name their passport countries (although Alysa doesn’t name the U.S.) for different reasons: culture and personality is different, or a difficulty finding people they want to connect with. David, Jenny, Katharina and Victor don’t feel as though they have to make an extra effort.

**How would you explain your feeling more integrated to one country’s culture, rather than another? Be specific about which countries you are talking about.**

Alysa: time spent there, culture/personality of people who live there, later also mentions language proficiency and physical likeness to others.

Karen: time spent there – especially formative years, culture/personality – including mother’s Germanic influences.

Dorri: time spent there, culture, and language proficiency (language proficiency is why she feels integrated in the U.S. she says and she least identifies with Iran because she doesn’t speak the language well enough and “the culture is entirely different”)

Chris: preference due to disliking another culture (U.S.) and not wanting to force himself to integrate into it

David: time spent there, how many people he knows aside from relatives, language proficiency: He says these are reasons why he doesn’t identify as much with Ghana since he’s never lived there, doesn’t know anyone but his relatives, never adopted the real culture and speaks none of the dialects.

Jenny: time spent there, language proficiency (accent), ways of thinking (influenced by parents as well), the people you know outside of relatives. These are the reasons why she says that she now equally identifies with French and English culture since

Katharina: Grew up in France, all her schooling has been in French (in France and then in Switzerland), all her friends and boyfriends are all French or French-speaking. She says that reasons for feeling integrated into Swiss culture as well – she says France and French Switzerland is mostly synonymous to her – is time spent there + some speech that is particular to Switzerland.

Emilia: knowing the language, having friends (relationships), time spent there – or special period (later adolescence), familiarity with surroundings.

Victor: People with similar experiences.
Which countries that we’ve talked about do you least identify with? And why?
Used this to answer previous question – doesn’t need to be in results

Do you identify with a country, area or culture for which you do not possess citizenship?
All say they identify with Switzerland (7), France (2), and/or Geneva (2) at some level, except for Emilia, who although she says she’s lived there most of her life, says that she never truly considered herself “Swiss” but she later says that “[Switzerland is] more me than any of the other countries I affiliate with.”

For countries outside of those whose citizenship you were born with, do you believe you integrated the host culture – explain why you feel well integrated (or not)? Do this for each country you feel affiliated with.
All participants say they feel well integrated and fit into Switzerland or France. Some mention how they believe they feel the mentality there comes closer to their own compared to other places (4). David said he integrates well with people from different backgrounds because he grew up in an international environment, Victor mentions the international community – as the specific Swiss community he integrated, and Chris mentions that he only integrated “certain spheres of distinctly French culture [and not others] from sheer lack of a social environment to bring me closer to French traditions” – he started going to an international school in Geneva in his teens – he repeatedly mentions though that he feels strongly affiliated to Geneva and its international community.

- How much do you believe you fit in physically? As in, do you believe people see you on the street, and believe you are probably from the area. Elaborate. (Using a scale from 1 to 10 – 1 being definitely a foreigner, 10 being definitely a native.)
- How fluent are you in the national language? (Using the same scale)
- Do you think it impacts your ability to say you “belong” to that country?

<table>
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<th>Name*</th>
<th>Physical Fit</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Physical Fit</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Identity Scores</th>
<th>Say affects “belonging”</th>
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<td>Greek: 4</td>
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<td>U.S.: 7</td>
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Participants who described less or little dissonance overall in the questionnaire tended to give themselves overall higher scores for countries they feel affiliated with in terms of fitting in physically and language fluency. Interestingly, these people also tended to believe less that their physical fit or fluency affected their ability to say they “belonged” to the Geneva/Swiss/French area and believed it was more affected by cultural difference/similarities or how long they spent there. Participants who showed greater amounts of overall dissonance regarding their identity in the questionnaire tended to give physical fit and fluency more importance. This is especially interesting when considering how in those three cases, there was another participant who did not feel dissonance yet objectively fits in less physically or speaks less fluently than the one who did feel dissonance. Alysa believes she fits in less physically because she is mixed, and Emilia says she doesn’t think she looks like a Swiss person, while David is black and doesn’t think this affects his fitting in. Chris admits self-consciousness about his linguistic differences, which he says lead him to “emphasize differences rather than try to smooth them out.”, while both Dorri and Victor, who mention accents, don’t think it is an issue.

This could be due to several factors: Chris has lived in France for longer than Dorri or Victor, which may have led him to be harder on himself concerning linguistic ability. Alysa and Emilia perhaps feel overall more dissonance than David for other reasons, which perhaps become reflected in how they perceive themselves within their community. This could also be the case with Chris.

**Do you think either of these factors (physical fit & fluency) impact how other people react to you within the culture? Explain in each country’s case.**

Most say these factors do impact how others react to them, either because they don’t fit in or because they do. Jenny does not think it impacts their reaction to her, and Katharina believes it sometimes does. Victor believes his accent definitely makes people react to him as a foreigner, even in Geneva, but that this doesn’t really affect his self-ascribed identity as he says “after living in Geneva for 7 years I do not feel like a foreigner.”

**(IF NATURALIZED) Would you now name your new passport country as the place you are from?**

No one has been naturalized Swiss or French – Dorri has been naturalized Iranian.
Alysa, Karen, and Emilia were in the process of being naturalized Swiss. Chris was in the process of being naturalized French.

Chris responded to the question considering what he will do once he is naturalized French: “I would still say that I am from Geneva while associating with my French nationality far more than with my American one.” Alysa mentions that she would feel most Swiss once she has the passport, and would feel better about it – meaning that she perhaps needs to be ascribed the nationality in order to feel comfortable ascribing it to herself.

Jenny was looking into getting naturalized but was afraid it might be too late.

(IF NATURALIZED) Did getting naturalized bring you any peace of mind? Elaborate.

Chris: “Not yet naturalized but will be soon. If I do pass the test I will feel a lot more peace of mind because I that I will have a place to come back to that is not the United States. The thought of being able to operate out of Europe as an independent adult is a very comforting one.”

Alysa responded to another question saying that when/if she’ll officially be Swiss, she’ll name Switzerland as the country she identifies with most.