

## **Abstract**

This present research investigates how Spanish Third Culture Kids (TCKs) navigated their cultural identities during expatriation during their formative years. Existing literature focuses on how expatriation influences integration, lifestyle & career choices of individuals, however there is limited research on how adult TCKs reflect on their expatriate experiences when they are no longer in their formative years.

Using an exploratory & social constructivist approach, the research employs the Identity Negotiation Strategies and Expatriate Responses (INSER) model to understand how 8 Spanish adult TCKs navigated their cultural attitudes during their expatriation outside their home country – namely their cultural learning mindset & salience of home culture identity. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews & coded in the qualitative data software NVivo. The findings reveal that the majority of participants defined cultural identity as ‘evolving and dynamic’ and that in early formative years showed passivity towards culture. However, over time their identity negotiation strategies diverged to either monocultural, multicultural, global European & cosmopolitan identities – as reflected in the INSER model. This research highlights the complexities and multifaceted nature of TCK cultural identities, possessing practical implications for fostering greater European identity through family expatriation and support for TCKs in navigating their complex cultural landscapes.

**Key words:** Cultural Identity, Spanish Third Culture Kids, Negotiation Strategies, European Identity, Social Constructivist Approach, Exploratory