

# LIMINALITY AND IN-BETWEENNESS: EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT BRITISH BOARDING SCHOOLS BY CLAIRE DING

## Abstract

My research focuses on the liminal existence of international students, which creates uncertainty, confusion, and potentiality. I ultimately suggest that for International students liminality is not just a terminal state, but a permanent state that arises from their educational joinery and extends to other areas of life. International students see their identity as entangled with different cultures, places, and people.

## Theoretical approach

According to **Van Gennep**, there is a tripartite structure with rites of passage and the middle stage is liminality. This is further developed in Anthropology by **Turner**, who argues that liminality is a state of “between and betwixt”. Based on this theoretical concept, I argue that international students at British boarding schools live in the liminal, coming to see their identity, sense of belonging and home in ruptures, and temporalities.

## Methods

The materials presented here are drawn from my conversations with my interlocutors in person and online over the summer of 2024. The six interlocutors were selected by means of snowballing technique. All my interlocutors are East Asian, having attended British boarding schools during their early adolescence that is around the age of 13 or 14; they have all attended an all-girls’ school at one point during their educational journey and are currently full-time UK university students.

## Conclusion and further research

My research is linked to the broader discussion of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) as a global phenomenon. However, different from other TCKs, my interlocutors lived abroad on their own, lacking immediate family support, which has been indicated as a crucial contributor when transitioning to living abroad.

*“Where is home?”*

*Belonging is a feeling of happiness*

*I feel I am in limbo*

**Quotes from my interlocutors**