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among Third Culture Adolescents living in Bangkok, Thailand

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1.

Abstract

In this research, I examined the ramifications of international mobility on the inter-personal relations of members of the Third Culture population aged 16-18 who live in Bangkok, Thailand. These adolescents live for most of their lives in relocation, i.e., outside their country of origin and outside that of their parents. This is qualitative research, which examined nine adolescents who live in Bangkok, Thailand. The interviewees are my past and/or my present patients. I interviewed them, with their consent and that of their parents, and I used the summaries of our sessions during the therapy, for the purpose of this research.

The term Third Culture Kids (TCK) refers to three cultural situations that are adopted by kids who live in a foreign country. The first culture relates to their country of origin or the passport country; the second culture relates to the country of residence and the host culture; and the third culture relates to the phenomenon of global transience experienced by kids of families who move from country to country to live and work (Van Reken and Pollock, 2009). While the first and the second cultures are tangible social structures, the third culture is temporary, amorphous, and constantly changing. The Third Culture is the one which gives them a sense of belonging and understanding within a similar population which shares similar experiences.

I have found that members of the Third Culture face many difficulties, in and outside their homes, deriving from the recurrent moves and separations, coupled with the pressures they cope with on a day-to-day basis. Difficulties in creating and preserving inter-personal connections, loneliness, stress over their studies, and the experience of lack of control over their lives, are the essence of the difficulties described in this research. I have also found that these difficulties sometimes become unbearable and lead the adolescents to extreme situations of depression, self-harm, and being suicidal; and that emotional therapy can be a lifeboat for these adolescents.

This research is important for families living in relocation around the world, whose adolescents belong to the Third Culture population, and to the global community of therapists who provide a solution for this population.

2.

Introduction

In this research I examined the way in which Third Culture adolescents maintain social connections while living in a country which is foreign to them and their parents. These adolescents develop and adjust to a third culture; a culture that is not directly associated with their homeland, and not even that of the countries from which their parents came. This foreign population, which is mostly Western, has relocated to a country in South-East Asia, whereby one of the parents or both are sent as representatives of an organization or a public office. They stay and live in that country for a few years, knowing that it is a period that will not last forever, but not knowing the exact date it will end. This is a “nomadic” population; people who have moved from one country to another, sometimes more than once, and who were forced to adjust each time to a new cultural, lingual and social environment. With each move, the adolescents experience “Attachment-Detachment” feelings; and even while living in that country they may experience that same “Attachment-Detachment” feeling, because the people around them are also in a constant state of mobility.

In this research I examined the different types of social connections of Third Culture adolescents, the way in which they experience inter-personal relations, and the way they develop friendships and form liaisons with their peer group.

The research is based on my professional-therapeutic experience as well as my personal experience, as I have been living in South-East Asia since 2010, and I am part of both societies, which are so different from each other – the local Asian society and the foreign Western society. Over the years, I have met many people who have lived in places for short periods, such as teachers in international schools, who move as a result of finite contracts (mostly two years), at the end of which they are transferred to another country, or neighbors who are constantly changing, moving houses, countries and continents. This is the nature of the life of expatriates, who have neither residency nor citizenship, but only temporary work permits which are limited to the duration of their employment contracts. The conditions described above enable social connections, at a face-to-face level, for short periods – a few years, or even only a few months.

Over the past ten years I have been working as a Western foreign therapist in Asian countries. In the course of my work, I meet Third Culture Kids on a daily basis; kids who require emotional therapy for various issues or problems, and share their day-to-day challenges with me. During the sessions with adolescents of the third culture group, I have identified socialization characteristics of this population, of which the main ones are:

- Building-up/forming confident, stable, and strong connections with the original family.
- Difficulty in creating meaningful and good social connections with the peer group.

During my working years, I found a gap between the way the adolescents described their relations with their family members and that in which they described their social connections. I have identified a phenomenon which I would like to examine in this research: most of the adolescents who addressed me for emotional help reported loneliness and great difficulty in creating social connections with their peer group, as opposed to their confident and stable feelings in their relations with their nuclear family. It appears that in most cases, the relations in the nuclear family were stable and meaningful – the families were unified and spent a lot of time together. On the other hand, it appears that their relations with their friends (the peer group) are unstable and superficial. Are they anxious to expose themselves to people who might leave? Is it possible that the experience of frequent separations, turns these adolescents into anxious people, fearing that the connection will be cut-off, unwillingly?

This research examined these questions, considering the ramifications of the separation experience on the way they avoid connections or find it difficult to create confident, warm and stable connections.

Much research has been done about relocation, changes and moves of foreign populations between countries and even about children in relocation, but, so far, I have not come across any research, which focuses on the interpersonal connections of Third Culture Kids. I found differences and uniqueness in the Third Culture population regarding these subjects, thus I wanted to research the influence of travels and the changing residential environment on the socialization process of this population. The

research assumes that the transience caused by the parents' careers has a unique effect on the adolescents' socialization processes, and so that which applies to the overall population of adolescents does not necessarily apply in the same way to Third Culture Kids and adolescents.

I hope that in the foreseeable future this research will constitute the basis for a therapeutic model for Third Culture Kids and adolescents, which will assist therapists in providing emotional support for this population, and will serve international schools around the world in their work with these kids and adolescents.

2.1. The Research Question

How does relocation affect the adolescent's relationships within and outside the family in relation to the following aspects:

1. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life affect their ability to create and strengthen social connections with their peers?
2. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life change the nature of their connections with their nuclear family?
3. How do a short-term emotional-dynamic treatment and a positive connection with the therapist help these adolescents change the nature of the relationships with their peers, the relationship in the family, and their academic achievements, and in what way?

2.2. The Field of the Research

The field of the research itself focuses on two main physical spaces: the private/familial space, i.e., home, where family dynamics and attachment relations take place, and the public space –school and places where adolescents like to meet, where socialization among friends takes place. All the interviewees are my patients, and we have been meeting every week for a period of –one-to-two years and even more.

2.3. Thailand and Bangkok: Basic Data

The research was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand – a unique city that is characterized by massive absorption of representatives of foreign companies who relocate there from all over the world. The total number of men and women who relocate to Bangkok is around seven hundred and fifty thousand people, some of whom arrived to this city with their adolescent sons and daughters. The cultural-social environment is unique to Bangkok; there is a mixture of East and West in the city – the local people are characterized by a profoundly different way of life than that of those who came from Western countries. The language, food, clothing and interests of these two populations are completely different.

Thailand occupies 514,000 km²; it borders Myanmar in the North-West and West, Laos in the North-East, Cambodia in the East and Malaysia in the South. The country is divided into 76 provinces. Its population is approximately 65 million residents and the annual growth is approximately 0.7%. From a religious point of view, the population is divided as follows: 94.6% are Buddhists, 4.6% Muslims, 0.7% Christians and 0.1% other.

The capital of Thailand is **Bangkok**, one of the largest cities in Asia, with an estimated population of 18 million residents. The city is located on the bank of the Chao Phraya river. The meaning of the name Bangkok is “The Plum Village”. Its Thai name is “Krung Thep”, which denotes The Angels’ City.

Initially, Bangkok was a small trading village on the Western banks of the Chao Phraya river before the Ayutthaya Kingdom was established between the years 1350-1767. In 1767, Burma conquered Thailand, and its new ruler, Taksin, established a new capital called Thonburi, in the area where Bangkok is currently situated. In 1782, King Rama I established a new capital called Krung-Thep Mahanakhon Amon (the name of the city in Thai) – the new city received the name Bangkok. The name Bangkok became the official name in English, but in Thai, the name Bangkok refers only to the old part of the city at the west bank of the river. Throughout the years, Bangkok has grown and

developed. The trade has developed due to the city's location on the banks of the river. The transportation and infrastructure have developed, and Bangkok has turned into the economic center of Thailand. During the 1960s, approximately 3 million people lived in Bangkok. The city had flourished and prospered from the mid-1920s until the economic crisis in 1997, when the Baht (the Thai currency) lost its value and brought Thailand to bankruptcy with heavy external debts. Thailand's economy started recovering in 1999. Bangkok is a highly sought-after tourist center by people from all over the world. Tourism is the main source of income for the city; every year around 35 million Thais and about 12 million tourists from abroad visit the city. There are many Buddhist temples in Bangkok, as well as the magnificent royal palace which is a famous tourist site.

The population of Bangkok: Bangkok is an enormous city in terms of its population. According to data published in 2010, the population reached about 12 million registered residents and around 6 million additional residents who have never reported living in the city. In addition, there are hundreds of thousands of people who come in and out of the city for work. It is estimated that the number of residents has increased over the past few years and currently includes approximately 15 million people. It is important to note that due to the military coup that took place in 2014, new data has not been published.

This is the demographic data regarding foreign population in the city of Bangkok: 82,000 Japanese, 56,000 Chinese, 117,000 from other Asian countries. There are also 48,000 Europeans, 24,000 Americans, 5,300 Australians, 3,000 Africans, 303,000 Burmese and 64,000 Cambodians. According to this data, there are approximately 750,000 foreign residents in Bangkok. The data about Bangkok was taken from the Bangkok Population, 2018 website.

I have been living with my partner and three daughters in South-East Asia: in Bangkok for about six years. Previously, we lived in Singapore for about four years. We have been wandering around the world for over a decade, moving from country to country, working and raising our daughters in a culture to which we do not directly belong.

3.

Literature Overview

3.1. Immigration and Relocation

Immigration and relocation are somewhat-similar, slightly different terms. In fact, relocation is a sub-group of immigration, as both groups involve people moving from one country to another. The main difference between these two terms lies in the objective of the move and its duration, which are clearer and more defined in relocation. For most relocations, the move is carried out for work purposes and for a limited period.

3.1.1. Immigration

Immigration is the movement of populations from place to place inside countries or between countries for limited periods or permanently. The prevalent use of the term immigration refers mostly to a human movement that crosses the borders of a country for a period which exceeds a year. The term immigration refers to any movement of people – either willingly, by choice, in search of new opportunities, or due to lack of choice, i.e., by becoming refugees, during war times, human trafficking, natural disasters, hunger etc. History has witnessed many cases of massive immigration, as opposed to immigration by individuals, agricultural immigration or seasonal immigration. During the history of humanity, immigration had an enormous demographic, ethnic, economic and social influence (Pakers, 1979).

3.1.2. Relocation

As of the 20th century, many organizations have been searching for a competitive edge, opportunities, and possibilities by expanding their business activity to other countries. This led, in turn, to the formation of Multinational Corporations (MNC). This phenomenon is known as globalization. In 2008, it was reported that 850,000 MNC companies exist around the world (Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008). One of the outcomes of international business activity is the increasing need for employees for international assignments who are willing to move and live in another country for a certain period. These employees – the expatriates (hereinafter: expats) – were sent for jobs in an

international environment on behalf of the MNC (Deen, 2011). In 2017, there were 56.8 million expats in relocation (who are defined as employees in relocation for a period ranging from 6 months up to 5 years), with an expected annual growth of 2-3% (Finaccord, 2017). Approximately 60%-80% of the documented expats reported that their families moved to live with them (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

The expats are considered as pivotal in determining the achievements of the organizational objectives (Takeuchi, 2010), hence the need to send them and place them where the organization needs them. Their employment budget is significantly higher than an employee who has the same role under local employment terms. These employees often earn the highest salaries in their company, in addition to other benefits and costs which are financed by the employer, such as the costs of the move and the costs of living (international schools for the kids, housing, medical insurance, and visits to the homeland).

The MNC needs to cope with the possible risks of failed placements, a premature end of the employment contract, and impediments to the employee's efficiency. The success of the expats' placement is therefore important and central to the employer. Nonetheless, most of the publications and research about relocation mainly deal with human resources management, business management etc. – research which focuses on the organizational interests (Rols, 2016); and not on the perspective of the individual who is being relocated. As reported in the Harvard Business Review (Black & Gregersen, 1999), between 10% and 20% of the managers who were sent for relocation returned earlier than scheduled due to lack of satisfaction at work or difficulties in adjusting to the foreign country.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the failure of relocation. Companies which were interested in choosing and assessing international employees, understand that it is necessary to examine the failures and successes of the placement in a more comprehensive way (Global Relocation Trends Survey Report, 2011). The employer plays a unique role in the life of the expat employee compared to his role towards his local employees. The employer is considered by the expat as an influential factor, which affects their life experience beyond employment itself. Thus, the employer

plays a significant role in the well-being of the expat employee, both by choosing candidates who are suitable for the conditions of the move and in coping with the challenges of the move by providing adequate support.

3.1.3. Stress factors in relocation

International suitability is a multi-faceted term (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991), which includes psychological, social, and professional adjustment. The first two aspects are relevant to the employee and his entire family. Psychological adjustment refers to internal aspects such as mental health and self-satisfaction. Social adjustment relates to external aspects, which connect the individual to the new environment, such as the ability to cope with daily problems in the host country (Ali, Van Der Zee & Sanders, 2003; Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2007).

Personal psychological factors such as motivation, interpersonal skills, intellectual flexibility, adjustment and multi-cultural openness have a direct effect on the suitability of the employee (Mol, Born, Willemsen & Van Der Molen, 2005). Relating to the adjustment model of the expat employee, Jha and Naithanki (2009), added that psychological factors such as the individual's personality, their emotional maturity and suitability, help in coping with work-related pressures and with the way the work is carried out in the new country; cultural openness helps the employee to adjust socially and culturally.

By moving, the expats renounce and lose quite a lot – they leave behind family members and friends, familiar activities, religious centers, their work, and schools. At times these losses are not clear and can be perplexing to the extent that it becomes difficult for those who moved to identify the sources of their grief and adjust to the new place (Boss, 1999). The geographic distance might add to the tension: time differences reduce the window of availability of the support network in the country of origin; visits to the homeland and hosting friends and family in the country of residence lead to stress. Being secluded coupled with lack of a supportive network, coping with daily situations (such as problems at school, transportation, the language) might develop into anxiety, irritability and a sense of helplessness.

The expat tends to rely on other people who came from the same country (Hånberg & Österdahl, 2009), and does not integrate into the new social environment. For the employee, the emotional uncertainty can also be triggered by uncertainty at work; these employees usually cope with a new role which requires different, and at times, more complex skills (Mol et al., 2005). When the roles at work are complex, demanding and at times not entirely clear, this ambiguity has a negative impact on the functioning of the employee (Beauchamp & Bray, 2001). Some research shows that peoples' suitability to their workplace, can affect their commitment towards the organization and their performance, and might result in a failure of moving to that role and of the entire relocation (Deen, 2011).

3.1.4. Culture shock

Culture shock is a result of stress and anxiety, which derive from coming in touch with a different culture and the feelings of frustration and bewilderment which derive from the loss of most or all the familiar cultural nuances and social laws (Eriksson & Lindström, 2013). Culture shock occurs when people connect with people of another culture and experience a loss in understanding their new social and behavioral environment for a long time. Moving to a new culture poses challenges to adjusting and functioning in existing situations, and frequently requires a few complex adjustments for simple tasks (O'Keeffe, 2003). For example: shopping at the grocery store, recycling rules, transportation laws and language. Culture shock is a normal and prevalent effect among the expat population. Even those who have already been in previous assignments might continue experiencing culture shock with every move (Hånberg & Österdahl, 2009).

3.2. Populations of Immigrants and Relocation in Clinical Contexts

3.2.1. Difficulties and ways of coping of immigrant populations

Among immigrant populations in the United States there is a large variety of mental problems including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, addictions, and a higher frequency of severe mental diseases and suicidal thoughts (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good & Kleinman, 1995; Duldulao, Takeuchi & Hong, 2009). The overall process of immigration is mostly accompanied by a sense of confusion, helplessness, anxiety and anger. It includes loss and separation from the country of origin, from family members and familiar habits and traditions; changes in the socio-economic status; exposure to a new physical environment; and the need to manage in unknown cultural contexts – all of the above have the potential to serve as a catalyst for the development of a large variety of psychological problems.

Many first-generation immigrants experience a variety of psychological problems and mental stress. The challenges that immigrants are required to cope with include difficulties in the adjustment process (McCaffrey, 2008; Ponce, Hays & Cunningham, 2006; Tummala-Narra, in press; Vasquez, Han, & De Las Fuentes, 2006), and problems relating to various traumas. According to a report (APA, 2012), published in the United States, many immigrants suffer from problems pertaining to discrimination, negative labeling, and an attitude of hatred and rejection towards foreigners.

3.2.2. Immigrants – Strength and resilience

Immigration is frequently presented as a social problem that requires a solution (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Nonetheless, meticulous reading of research from a variety of disciplines, indicates that immigrants demonstrate not only vulnerability, but also remarkable resilience and adjustment strengths (APA, 2007; Chiswick, 2011; Hernandez & Charney, 1998). Data received from research carried out in the United States regarding the wellbeing of these populations, indicates that the first generation of immigrant populations is of the highest level of functioning in relation to physical and

mental health, and also in meeting various educational criteria (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004; García Coll & Marks, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Contrary to common belief, it is among the second generation and beyond, that a decline in the level of performance can be noted. These findings are explained by factors relating to the motivation and optimism of the parents' generation, providing they initiated the move themselves, hoping for a better future for themselves and their children. Another explanation for the decline in the performance of members of the next generation relates to their hopes and expectations of climbing the social ladder and having a sense of belonging, which is often unfulfilled due to social barriers and, in turn, leads to even greater distress than that experienced by their parents' generation.

In many cases, even though first-generation immigrants cope with a large variety of pressures and risk factors for physical and mental illnesses (such as poverty, discrimination, demanding jobs and social seclusion), they are more successful than their colleagues who remain in the country of origin, as well as second-generation immigrants, in a large range of performance indicators in various spheres (Alegría et al., 2007; Corral & Landrine, 2008; García, Coll & Marks, 2011).

3.2.3. Supporting young immigrants and kids in relocation

Immigrants of all age groups seek, at times, the assistance of traditional familial networks, for example: looking for help from the family, friends, and veteran immigrants from the same ethnic group who immigrated to that country. Different groups of immigrants have different resources and different support networks; some are more welcoming than others.

Parents and children adjust to a new culture in different ways and at a different pace. The immigrant parents usually feel that they find it difficult to understand the way of life their children live outside the house. On the other hand, the young immigrants need to cope with the complexity of having one culture at home and a different one outside. Young immigrants feel that they cannot address their parents with problems and fears, as they think their parents do not know the culture well enough to advise them. In addition, young immigrants feel that their parents are too burdened with many

pressures relating to their integration and absorption in the new environment (Suárez-Orozco, 2001 & Birman, 2006; C. Suárez-Orozco).

It appears that many obstacles prevent the provision of adequate and culturally-sensitive mental health service to minorities and immigrant populations (Vasquez, Casas & Rale 2008). The following obstacles affect the immigrants' ability to be effectively assisted by mental health services:

- A social-cultural obstacle on the part of the immigrants, which includes differences in the way they express themselves and present the difficulty/problem, and their ability to cope with mental problems (Alegría et al., 2008).
- Shortage of therapeutic centers, and shortage of experts and qualified personnel working with immigrant population (APA, 2009).
- A clinical obstacle – most of the therapeutic theories have been written about and examined on populations from Western cultures. Thus, the intervention and therapeutic methods are lacking when it comes to ethnic groups, minorities and immigrants (Tummala-Narra, 2007).

When immigrants require clinical treatment, it is important to consider these obstacles as part of the therapeutic process. Therapists in the absorbing country might be judgmental towards behavioral patterns that are foreign to them, as they do not understand their origin. Something that can be perceived as a strength by one culture, might be perceived as deviating from the norm or as unacceptable by another culture (Harvey, 2007; Tummala-Narra, 2007). A culturally-adjusted therapy of immigrant patients considers their ways of coping based on the culture they come from.

Young immigrants seek emotional therapy due to mental difficulties – adjustment difficulties, complex relations with other people, coping with issues in a foreign country, and the distance from the extended family. Emotional therapy helps them cope with these difficulties. The research of Melles & Frey (Melles & Frey, 2014), about the unique therapy method – RCT (Relational Cultural Therapy), which was developed by five researchers in the seventies in Boston (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey,

1991), claims that people aspire to and need interpersonal relationships the same as they need air and water. Interpersonal connections are important for learning, personal growth and development, and they constitute the main aspects of life and should be considered as such.

The theoretic basis of RCT relies on the assumption that a significant connection with others leads to the development of “a healthy sense” of the Self (Jordan, 1997, p.15). As opposed to the traditional models, which are based on the belief that individuation is the main way for self-development, RCT offers an acknowledgment and growth of one’s sense of Self, which constantly develops throughout life via mutual and significant connections with other people.

The RCT theory becomes even more relevant during adolescence, an age which is characterized by a constant search for connections outside the nuclear family and a desire for a connection. The emotional therapy represents a connection with a stranger, a different person, and in this case – a professional, and comes to support and accompany those who need it. The therapeutic environment may help the adolescents in replicating the connection with the therapist to connections with others, and in building trust, and sharing emotions, feelings and behavior.

3.3. The Attachment Theory

John Bowlby (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982), developed the Attachment Theory, a theory in Developmental Psychology, which deals with the connection between new-borns and the caregiving parent in the first years of their lives. The connection provides the baby’s need for daily care, physical proximity to the caregiver, usually the mother, and for receiving protection and security in alarming situations. The theory assumes that in each infant there is an inherent, congenital and universal need to create a connection with at least one principal caregiver, a connection that is vital to their sound social and emotional development. In fact, this is a motivational strategy as well as a survival strategy of the infant, which contrasts Freud’s psychoanalytical theory, whereby what drives the baby, is the gratification of physical urges and needs. According to Bowlby

(Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982), when the infant's caregiver is available, permanent, emphatic and warm, the attachment mechanism operates adequately. This, in turn, develops the child's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence, which enables the child to maintain adequate connections with the environment. In times of threat, the child will seek proximity to the caregiving figure.

The attachment mechanism can be overactive, underactive, or essentially inadequate; a situation whereby there is **overactivity** is characterized by an ambiguous behavior of the child's caregiver figure, in which case, the child internalizes the feeling that they will not always receive protection when needed. As a result, in times of threat, the child operates the attachment mechanism even more strongly, looking for proximity and protection, and will find it difficult to detach themselves from the caring figure, even when the threat has gone. A situation of **under-activity** of the attachment mechanism is characterized by a cold behavior of the child's caregiver, ignoring the child, or even rejecting him in a way that does not provide him with protection. As a result, the child develops a realization that there is no point in turning to this figure in times of threat. When the child faces a threatening situation, he will feel more pressured by the rejection than by the threatening factor, and thus, with time, the child will stop looking for protection from his caregiver figure and will not operate the attachment mechanism that often. A situation of **essentially inadequate activity** of the attachment mechanism is characterized by the caregiver neglecting and/or abusing the child. As a result of this behavior, the child will develop a lack of decisiveness about proximity to this figure and will also suffer from mental problems.

Bowlby (Bowlby, 1969) believed that attachment characterizes the human experience throughout one's entire life. Nonetheless, only in the middle of the 80s did various researchers start researching the roles of the attachment processes in adolescence in depth.

Ainsworth and Bowlby (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969), noticed three main stages during the baby's first seven months, which lead to the formation of the infant's attachment mechanism. They defined an additional fourth stage, which

characterizes the quality of the kids' attachment from the age of three and the attachments of adolescents.

The first stage, out of three stages that exist during the first seven months of life, is the pre-attachment stage, in which the baby starts to prefer human stimulus to still stimulus. During this period, the baby's attachment to the main caring figure and the attitude towards that figure are not different from those the baby has with other people around them; the baby responds to every touch and keeps it by an involuntary grip. **The second stage** is the stage of formative attachment, in which the baby distinguishes between caregiving familiar figures and other figures. At this stage, the familiar figures can calm the baby in a better way, and he already initiates a request for a connection by extending his hand and holding it voluntarily. **In the third stage**, which is the stage of discriminative attachment, the baby forms a unique connection with one person and actively seeks the proximity of that person. When the principal figure leaves the baby, the baby is dissatisfied and cries.

Bowlby (Bowlby, 1982), assumes that the child forms an introverted and organized action model towards the attachment figure and in relation to themselves, during the second half of the first year of life. Bowlby's concept correlates with Erikson's psychosocial theory (1987) regarding the way in which the 'Good Self' develops. Erikson claims that the initial objective of the infant's development during the first year of life and the first half of the second one, is establishing basic trust. Being dependent on their environment, the infant is preoccupied with two parallel questions: "Can the world be trusted?" and "Am I trustworthy, do I deserve the good attitude I receive?". The parents help the infant to acquire basic trust in the environment, and at the same time also acquire a sense of self-confidence, a feeling that they are trustworthy and valued, by providing them with sensitive care and being constantly responsive to their needs.

Bowlby (Bowlby, 1982), assumed that the third stage lasts until the age of three-four. Around this age, when a decline of the child's egocentricity starts to show, he starts to develop the ability to see things from the attachment figure's point of view. Bowlby defines the more complex attachment between the mother and her child at this age as

“partnership”. Hazan and Shaver (Hazan and Shaver, 1987), were the first researchers to examine Bowlby’s ideas in the context of romantic relationships. They claimed that the emotional connection that develops between romantic adult partners derives, in part, from the same behavioral attachment mechanism which creates the emotional connection between babies and their caregivers. Hazan and Shaver maintained that adult romantic relationships, like the baby-caregiver relationship, are attachments, and that romantic love is part of the behavioral attachment mechanism in the same way as the motivational mechanisms, which underly caregiving and sexuality. In addition, Hazan and Shaver have demonstrated that uncertain attachment during adolescence is related to low levels of stability, fulfillment and adjustment in romantic relationships in general and in marriage in particular. Various pieces of research have also connected uncertain attachment with reduced intimacy, affection, trust and commitment in the framework of romantic relationships, and with destructive patterns of emotional reactions – negative behavior that harms relations. Hazan and Shaver researched the way people think of their romantic relationships, and their memories regarding the nature of their relations with their parents. The researchers have found that securely attached adults, perceived their parents more positively than those of anxious-ambivalent attachment and anxious-avoidant attachment mechanisms.

3.4. Socialization

Socialization is the process whereby the individual acquires social skills starting from his childhood until he reaches maturity, learns his place and role in society, and learns the accepted norms and values of the society he lives in. The socialization process is continuous and does not stop; it is not done independently but is affected and directed by the society surrounding the individual. The people affecting the individual in this process are called “mediation agents” or “socialization agents”, and they are part of various social frameworks, such as parents, school, youth movement, army and workplace (Caspi, 1995). The family is the most significant socialization agent for the kids. It is within the family that they develop adjusting behaviors (Parke & Buriel, 2006).

In addition, the family constitutes one of the most efficient social support networks, and as such, serves as a restraining or as an empowering factor for the adolescent.

The family also affects the kids' and adolescents' stands and concepts regarding physical and mental health (Settertobulte, Jensen, & Hurrelmann 2001), and teaches them to make use of health organizations. Research shows that the residential environment has a significant impact on maintaining good health – different environments may either encourage healthy behavior (King, 2005; Mota et al., 2006), or be an obstacle and serve as a risk factor for these behaviors (Roche, 1999; Subramanian et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2005), such as crime and use of drugs. The residential environment can affect the health of an individual who grows up in it in several ways and by several means: via informative networks of the neighborhood, behavioral health norms in the neighborhood, social capital and the health organizations existing in the neighborhood. Research shows that the social capital of the neighborhood plays an important role in predicting the individual's health behavior (Prentice, 2006).

3.5. Adolescence

The term “adolescence” originates from Latin and means ‘growth’; to grow up towards maturity. Adolescence is defined as a transitional period; a bridge from dependence on adults during childhood to maturity and independence where adolescents can provide their own needs. Transitional periods in life are usually times of crisis, and so is adolescence. From a psychological point of view, this age gradually creates a new situation, which requires the adolescent to adjust to the passage from a child's behavior to that of an adult.

Adolescence is characterized by significant changes in physiological, cognitive, and emotional development. Parallel to these changes, the adolescents are required to cope with the need to define an integrated and coherent self-identity, which correlates with the way they perceive themselves and the way they are perceived by their environment (Solberg, 1994; Sroufe, Cooper and DeHart, 1998). Blos (Blos, 1979),

called this period “The second individuation process.” He also defines this period as one in which many changes, which require an adaptive effort, take place in all spheres of life. According to Blos, during adolescence great vulnerability develops in the mental structure, as a result of arousing urges which were latent during the latency period, and due to reducing dependency on the family and looking for significant objects outside it. During this period, the self-image and self-esteem change and are formulated. A strong positive self-concept serves as a stable basis for a positive and empowering experience of the adolescence phase. In addition, it can be claimed that during this period, significant changes occur in the expectations from the adolescents at school, in the family, and the social system.

The developmental tasks that characterize adolescence can be classified into four main spheres:

1. **The physical-physiological sphere:** puberty occurs for girls between the ages of 9 to 16, and for boys between the ages of 10 to 17. This development is accompanied by increased release of hormones and visible physical changes – significant changes that occur during a relatively short period and require rapid adjustment by the adolescent. The physical changes, the time they start, and the pace at which they occur, differ from one adolescent to another. These differences might cause problems within the peer group, such as low self-image due to lack of development, or early and very quick development. The hormonal and physical changes might be very perplexing and give rise to feelings of uncertainty and lack of self-confidence among adolescents.
2. **The emotional sphere:** during this period in which the child becomes an adolescent, the process of self-identity consolidation starts; a process whereby separation from the child’s identity, which was attached to a principal figure, such as a mother or a father, occurs. From the emotional, intellectual, and social perspectives, the separation from the principal figure in their life is carried out in stages. In this process, the adolescent turns himself into a figure of separate, private identity. The separation process occurs by rebellion and hostility directed against the parents. Only towards the end of the initial separation process,

between the ages of 16 and 18, does the adolescent start developing independent ideas and an independent style of their own.

3. **The cognitive sphere:** during adolescence, there is a development in the way of thinking. The adolescents reach an adult's level of thinking in various aspects; there is a transition from the concrete to the abstract and from the subjective to the objective. The adolescent develops the ability to deal with complex reality, greater sophistication of language, conclusion capability, understanding the workings of things, and critical thinking. The perception of time expands and enables a new understanding of the sequence between the past, present, and future.
4. **The social sphere:** at this stage in life, adolescents start developing relations with the opposite gender, and they prefer their peer group. In parallel, they develop separation and greater distance from their parents. The need to belong to a group of friends and create a personal and separate identity from the parents develops. The social pressure at this age is high and intensified, and the adolescent looks for acknowledgment and social suitability. With the strengthening of connection outside the nuclear family, the dependency on the parents diminishes.

The four spheres mentioned above do not develop in the same way, and at times there are gaps between them concerning the pace and duration of the development.

3.6. The Third Culture Kids

The world nowadays has turned into one "global village". Many people travel, wander, live in different places and work in foreign countries that are not related to their ethnic origin and their past. This situation created an entire population, called "Third Culture". This term was coined during the 1950s by two American sociologists, John and Ruth Hill Useem (Hill, Hill & Useem, 1954). They coined this term to describe the phenomenon of American families who lived in India and stayed for many years outside

their homeland, in the framework of an assignment from their workplace, i.e., immigrated “temporarily” for employment purposes (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). These people said that, in the beginning, they did not feel a need to culturally integrate with the local Indian population – the second culture – but after a while, they did not feel fully identified with the culture they came from – the first culture – thus they created a “third culture” for themselves.

In 2014, about 190 million people lived outside their country (Martin & Zucher, 2008), for short or long periods. Most of them succeeded in adapting to new cultural patterns of the host country; some of them started to learn the language of the locals. In an article by Dr. Jennifer Young (Jennifer Young, 2015), from Long-Beach University in California, which deals with Global Nomads, she defines the term as characterizing people who live for a significant period of their lives outside their country and homeland, and are not citizens in the countries they moved to (McCaig, 1991; Mclachlan, 2005; Schaetti, 1998).

In research published in 2014, by the two researchers Elizabeth Melles and Lisa Frey, in their article titled “Here everybody moves”, it has been found that Third Culture Kids move from place to place based on their parents’ employment decisions, work offers and relocation packages. They move from country to country and experience frequent and significant changes, to the extent that they find it difficult to connect to the environment, and/or connect to themselves. When the parents are busy with their affairs and preoccupied during the adjustment period, the difficulty of their kids will be greater (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 94).

Also, it has been found that the more countries the family move to, and the more frequent the adjustment periods they experience, the more preoccupied the parents will be, and less available to listen to their adolescent kids’ feelings and difficulties. As a result, these adolescents will experience feelings of negligence by their parents, a kind of mental abandonment and a lack of attention because their parents are busy with their own difficulties. These adolescents will show signs of chronic seclusion and lack of motivation to connect with other people and befriend them (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

A research that deals with attachment and leaving for undergraduate studies (Shakira Espada-Campos, 2018), claims that Third Culture Kids choose their place of studies based on its proximity to an international airport so that they can often visit their families. In addition, it has been found that Third Culture Kids need close emotional support during their studies. They find the move to university difficult and spend many hours on the phone/video chats with their parents who live in a different country.

So far, I haven't found pieces of research about attachment and socialization patterns of adolescents in relocation.

3.7. Summary of the Literature Overview

Relocation and immigration are accompanied by numerous and diversified difficulties, which derive from the move from the familiar and known to the unfamiliar and unknown. These difficulties do not skip any member of the family, adults and young alike. The adolescents, who undergo physical and mental changes like all the other adolescents of their age, are compelled to experience these changes in a changing social and cultural environment. The inter-personal connections with their peers, which constitute an important and meaningful component in the life of the adolescent, are cut off due to the move between countries, and it appears that their difficulties grow bigger and bigger.

Adolescents who maintain a stable and secure connection with their family and their parents should have, in theory, developed a secure attachment pattern. But I wonder whether this attachment pattern may get undermined in an ever-changing environment and at such a meaningful stage of the adolescent's development.

Third Culture Kids experience a different and unique way of life, which provides them with many opportunities but also includes difficulties. In my opinion, there is a connection between the geographical transitions and the attachment ability, which the adolescents develop inside and outside the family, and I would like to examine this notion in this research.

4.

Methodology

4.1. The Method of Research

The research method chosen for this research is the qualitative method; a method of self- research with a constructivist approach (Shkedi, 2003). This approach is based on subjectivity, and it enables the involvement of the researcher and accepts demonstrating empathy towards the participants (Shkedi, 2015 P.17). As such, it matches the expectations from the therapist. This method includes a phenomenological analysis of the research population. The research was carried out in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand.

Choosing a qualitative method derived from the understanding that only a dialogue that takes place in an intimate and secure space will enable an authentic discourse; this will produce the information and data to be analyzed, as explained below in the article describing the research process.

In this chapter, the basic hypotheses of qualitative research will be discussed. The assumptions and questions of the research will be presented at a later phase. Then, the research population will be described.

Basic hypotheses of the qualitative research: in research carried out according to the positivistic approach, the emphasis is put on the linear and causal connection between the factors, aiming to discover the universal regularity of the researched phenomena. This approach took over Social Sciences, aiming to apply this research model from Natural Sciences to the branch of science researching people (Freudenthal, 1977). The positivists' claim in this context is that a phenomenon has an independent existence, and it is not dependent on the observer. The research methodology which has developed in this approach is hypothetical-deductive, an approach that is based on early assumptions regarding the researched subject while attempting to confirm or refute them through the research (Shkedi, 2003).

At the basis of the qualitative approach lies the constructivist concept. The qualitative-constructivist researcher observes the uniqueness of the interviewees and

identifies the contexts in constructing reality as it is described by them (Shkedi, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher, like the interviewee, is present and voices his/her personal voice. The researcher's viewpoints and perspective rely on their experience and culture, and they create the observation system through which the researcher absorbs and develops their stands and concepts regarding the researched material (Alpert, 2001). The researcher's involvement starts with choosing the subject for the research, through choosing the interviewees, relying on the researcher's ability to listen and understand what the interviewees say, and eventually – to organize and analyze the data, and write up the findings and the conclusions.

In the framework of constructivist research, I will use the principles of phenomenological research – researching a phenomenon, searching for the essence of the human experience (Willis, 1991). The phenomenon is the object of the research of the Phenomenologists. The phenomenological method focuses on understanding the meaning that events have for the people who take part in them. In phenomenological research, the researchers focus on understanding the meaning of the research objects and the processes by the participants themselves (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Researching a phenomenon is suitable for this research, as it enables research into the phenomenon of adolescents' relocation from their personal stories, the way they experience social connections, and the dynamics in their families while living in a foreign country.

It will probably be possible, in due course, to present this research according to the grounded theory research approach.

4.2. The Tools of the Research and the Method of Data Collection

This research has a self-focused methodological pattern, which means that the researcher is the research tool. The assumption is that the therapist has an advantage over an external researcher, by virtue of knowing the patient and of the relationship formed with the patient. On the other hand, there is a concern that the research will be

biased when a researcher conducts the research themselves. For this reason, the researcher is obliged to create the conditions which will enable the readers of the research, and obviously the researcher themselves, to make sure that the research is unbiased. Full transparency and documentation of the research processes, regarding the data and its analysis and findings, may act as protection against biased research.

The process of the research is based on self-case studies of the patients who I have been accompanying for a while. For this purpose, I chose to carry out a triangulation (Shkedi, 2011), i.e., using several data sources. This approach will lead to crosschecking of the data and its verification, which, in turn, may enable a better and more comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon.

Thus, the research process was carried out in two ways:

- I. The first, using semi-structured interviews, which took place at my clinic.
- II. The second was analyzing documents from five sessions with each interviewee. The sessions have been documented at the clinic in the treatment notebook, which is at my disposal. Each session was documented.

I. _____ The first research tool – semi-structured interviews (see the outline of the interview in Annex 9.2)

A semi-structured interview, approximately 60 minutes for each interviewee, was carried out separately without any connection to a therapeutic session. The objective of the interview was clear to the interviewees, and they all expressed consent to conduct the interview and signed an informed consent form. When minors were involved (interviewees under the age of 18), the parents also signed this consent form (Annex A). The names of the interviewees have been changed.

The interviews were carried out with the interviewees on an individual basis in English, and took place at my clinic, in similar conditions to those of the therapeutic sessions. In cases where the interviewee was no longer in Bangkok, I conducted these interviews via recorded video calls. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was requested to present themselves and then they were asked open questions about their

life during relocation – their friends, family, homeland, studies, etc. The interviewee was able to share their feelings and thoughts freely. In my role as a researcher, I gathered the data from the interviewees, who personally experienced the phenomenon being researched. I researched the meaning of the experience for the interviewees and its impact on their daily lives.

II. The second tool of the research – document research

Document research made use of the documented sessions carried out with the interviewees/patients. Each session was 45 minutes long and took place at the clinic in an identical location to that where the interviews took place and under similar conditions. Each interviewee/patient had a designated notebook where I wrote what they had said, their impressions, sensations and feelings in detail, including citations. These notations were written using the spoken language – English, and their analysis was translated into Hebrew. According to Yin (1984), a document is a non-interfering tool for data measurement which is based on records from different sources. This tool is of great use in qualitative research. All the sessions took place with the presence of the therapist and the patient only. The atmosphere in the room was pleasant and enabling, and it was a secure space.

4.3. Method of Data Analysis

The initial analysis started with determining the main category, which was the subject of the

research. For that reason, I focused in the interview in directing questions, but not specific ones, and I let the interviewee tell the story of their life as an adolescent boy/girl in relocation, with regard to their familial and social connections, affinity to the homeland, affinity to the country of residence, attitude towards school and connection to the therapy. In analyzing the therapeutic sessions, I used the same categories to bring into focus the subjects I was examining. This focus would help, afterward, in analyzing the data. In the framework of the initial analysis, I divided the raw data (interviews and documents) into units of meaning (text segments) by carrying out an in-depth reading of

the data. Each unit of meaning was defined by a few words, which expressed its content. I then gathered all the units of meaning, numbered them and divided them into super-categories. I then divided them into sub-categories and presented them as a Category Tree.

The method of analyzing the data was applicable in a similar way to the analysis of the interviews and the documentation.

4.4. The interviewees

Nine interviewees, between the ages of 16 and 18, who studied or are still studying in international schools in Bangkok, and whose parents, one or both, have senior jobs and hence arrived on relocation outside their homeland, took part in the research. All the interviewees come under the definition of Third Culture Kids. I know their families well, and from time to time, I meet with their parents for parental guidance, as part of the therapeutic process.

The interviewees include five adolescent girls and four adolescent boys, all of whom are my patients. They arrive at my clinic for a weekly session for emotional support in dealing with adjustment difficulties, depression and/or anxiety disorders, eating disorders and/or other various difficulties. The population involved in this research is the foreign population in Bangkok (not Thai citizens), who previously lived outside Thailand. They speak English and study in the framework of the International Baccalaureate Program (IB).

Below is a list of the participants in the research. The list starts with the boys, followed by the girls:

Pseudonym	Gender and Age	Parents' Country of Origin	Countries in which they lived	Duration of living in Bangkok	Duration of the treatment and reasons	Additional information
Ken	18 Years old	USA	USA Malaysia Thailand	Two years	About a year. Suffers from sleep disorder, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and concern for addictions	He has been living outside the US since the age of 12. His firstborn sister left home recently for university in the US. Speaks two languages, a mediocre student, does not like school, and gets himself into trouble. He spends long hours outside his home. His parents have demanding jobs. He is due to go to college in the US.
Johan	18 Years old	Father from Denmark Mother from Indonesia	Turkey, Switzerland and Thailand, Canada	Four years	A year at the clinic and half a year on Skype. Suffers from depression.	Firstborn. His brother is at a boarding school in Denmark, his younger sister is in high school. He studies at a university in Canada and speaks three languages. The father has

						a senior role in an international firm. The mother is a yoga teacher.
Ben	17 Years old	Father from Mali Mother from Germany	Ethiopia, Thailand, Lebanon, Thailand	Eight years	Two years. Suffers from self-harm, depression, eating disorders	A firstborn son, his two younger sisters study with him at the same school. Speaks three languages. Was treated with medications and stopped taking them after six months. He is a mediocre pupil. He decided at one point to study for a partial Baccalaureate due to mental load. His mother is a senior official at an international organization. His father has been unemployed for many years and is diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia.
Rico	17 Years old	Father (deceased) from the USA	USA and Thailand	Ten years	Two years. Suffer from self-harm, attention	The young boy of a family of 3 people. His older sister studies at

		Mother from El-Salvador			deficit and hyperactivity disorder	<p>university in Boston. The father passed away ten years ago.</p> <p>He is being treated with Ritalin. A bright child, lacks motivation for studying. Speaks three languages. His mother is an international school teacher.</p>
Ella	17 Years old	Father from Australia, Mother from Korea	Australia, Thailand	Twelve years	Two and a half years. Suffers from Bulimia	An only child. Both parents have full-time jobs. She is a good pupil who does not invest much in her studies, but yet achieves high marks. Speaks three languages.
Monica	16 Years old	USA	Netherlands USA, Belgium, Thailand, USA	Two years	<p>A year at the clinic and half a year on Skype.</p> <p>Suffers from depression, self-harm</p>	She has a twin sister and two older brothers who do not live at home. A mediocre student, she does not like school and is rebellious. Speaks two languages. Her father is a government official, and her mother is a housewife.

Emmy	18 Years old	Norway		Seven years	A year. Suffers from panic attacks, mood swings	The firstborn daughter in her family. The father works in an international firm. The mother is a housewife. They have been moving around the world ever since she was a child. Speaks three languages.
Rachel	17 Years old	Nepal	Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand	Three years	A year. Suffers from heavy migraines and other physiological phenomena, anxiety	She has an older sister who studies in England. Her father has a senior position in an international corporation. Her mother is a housewife. Speaks three languages.
Louise	17 Years old	Australia	Australia, Thailand	Thirteen years	Two and a half years. Suffers from self-harm, depression, low body image and low self-esteem.	She speaks three languages. She is due to complete her Matriculation Exams this year and return to Australia. A good student. Her sister is two years younger than her and studies at the same school. Her parents

						have a consulting business in Australia that they manage from remote.
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Table 1: The list of the interviewees

5.

The Objective and the Questions of the Research

The objective of the research was to examine the nature of the inter-personal connections between Third Culture adolescents and their peers while on relocation, and the nature of the relations with their families, as described by the interviewed population. On the surface, it appears that the researched population indicated a secure attachment pattern with their family members. Despite that, it appeared that they found it difficult to develop deep and meaningful social connections with their peers. This phenomenon stands in contrast to the findings of Hazan's and Shaver's research (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), which determined that a positive connection with the parents led to a secure attachment pattern with friends and partners. This research examined the ramifications of relocation on the style of socialization, and the way in which emotional therapy enables adolescents in relocation to change their patterns of connection with their environment.

In this framework, the following questions were asked:

1. How does the mobility that characterizes their way of life affect their ability to create and establish social connections with their peers?
2. How does the mobility that characterizes their way of life change the quality of their relations with their nuclear family?
3. How do an emotional-dynamic therapy and a positive connection with the therapist, help these adolescents change the nature of the relations with their peers, relations within their family, and their academic achievements, and in which way?

The questions of the research rely on two fundamental cornerstones: one is personal-professional, the other is theoretical. In my work, I experience them as very sensitive people who feel they have no control over their future. These adolescents have various opportunities, for example, academic studies around the world. They are very knowledgeable, and their life experience is very rich, given their young age, and, in

most cases, they have already been exposed to an enriching and inspiring cultural experience. Despite all that, it appears that they have trouble in creating social connections, which derives, in my opinion, from the frequent moves. I often find that the lack of stability in their lives influences their personal identity, their social skills and their behavioral patterns in their inter-personal connections with their peers and the adult world.

The theory strengthens the questions of the research, as it points out Third Culture Kids as meeting the definition of “global nomads”. In general, it can be said that they have an excellent ability to adjust, they are high achievers, they know how to manage their lives correctly and efficiently, they are of high inter-personal capabilities, as well as have the ability to resolve problems and crises (Bonebright, 2010; Kebschull & Pozo-Humphreys, 2006; McLachan, 2005; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Nonetheless, they live with a feeling that they are rootless, they find it difficult to feel that they belong, and often find it difficult to create binding and/or intimate relations. It appears that these adolescents are inclined towards various clinical, emotional situations, such as depression, anxiety, longing for the country of origin, coping with un-processed situations of grief and difficulties with their studies (Dixon & Hayden, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Barringer (Barringer, 2001), reported that these adolescents experience a relatively prolonged period of adolescence and that they grow up without any roots. Although the Third Culture adolescents’ need for receiving emotional therapy and counseling has been acknowledged, only a few pieces of research aimed at examining and suggesting a good and adequate therapy for this population have been carried out (Barringer, 2001).

6.

The Quality of the Research

Validity: in qualitative-constructivist research, the issue of validity is related to the question: “Does the researcher see what he thinks he sees”? The validity of the proposed research can be examined in two ways:

1. A continuous process of deduction and induction, i.e., moving back and forth between the data, the conceptual perspective, and the conclusions.
2. Preserving the testimonials of the research: preserving the written documents, the recorded interviews, their transcription, and the documents with the analysis made it possible to adhere and be loyal to the data received from those participating in the research. In addition, the data of the research was submitted to instructors and colleagues, to check whether this paper examined what it had intended to examine.

Reliability: reliability means the option to repeat the activities carried out in the framework of

the research and reach the same results. In qualitative research, the researcher’s interpretations are personal, but reliability can be obtained by keeping the process transparent, by examining the findings against an overview of the theoretical literature, exposing the data, documenting the analysis, including citations from the interviewees, and revealing the way in which the research was carried out, and decisions were taken; so that the reader can see the rationale behind the researcher’s actions and examine them according to the research perspective of the researcher.

Generalization: in qualitative-constructivist research, the reader is the one who decides whether to make a generalization and apply the findings of the research to new cases. The role of the researcher is to present the readers with in-depth descriptions based on categories, so that the readers can examine to what extent the research depicts the reality with which they are coping.

Two types of generalization can be pointed out: generalization from one case to another, i.e., a process whereby the reader examines the researched cases and their relevance, or the relevance of some of them to the cases which the reader comes across and/or copes with.

The second type of generalization is a theoretical generalization, i.e., a situation whereby the theoretical conceptualization of this research leads to finding parallels to theoretical descriptions that appear in the existing literature (Shkedi, 2011).

7.

Professional Ethics

In the proposed research, I was sure to follow the rules of professional ethics which include the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and the Code of Conduct outlined by the APA (American Psychological Association). These rules relate to keeping the client's rights and wellbeing and the confidentiality of the therapy in all respects.

Likewise, I also acted based on the ethical code of therapists as exists in South-East Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand) and the USA. The therapist is required to know and work with a variety of religions, faiths, cultures and languages which characterize the country. The authorities of the country have consistently preserved along the years the dignity of all religions which are active in that country, i.e., Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Among other things, the ethics code determines that the symbols and visual images have to be understood in their cultural context, and that the dynamics that can result from cultural differences should be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

All the interviewees and their parents signed a Consent Form for the Declaration of Helsinki so that it will be possible to make professional use of the information collected in the personal interviews and the documentation of the meetings. Participating in the research was conditioned on the informed consent of each participant.

8.

Pilot Research

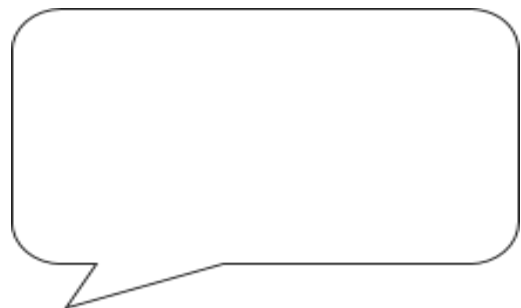
To focus the research, to check its theoretical assumptions, and to examine the methodology, I performed pilot research with one of the randomly chosen interviewees. The adolescent, from American and El Salvadorian descent living in Bangkok, agreed to be interviewed and for the interview to be recorded for the purpose of the research. The interview was conducted in English so that he could tell his story freely, while the interviewer helped him focus on the main subject of the research. Also, the findings of the analysis of the documents from the therapeutic sessions were presented, as described in the chapter dealing with the process of the research.

The adolescent and his mother signed a non-confidentiality document before the interview and expressed their consent to take part in the research.

8.1. Analysis of the Interview and Presentation of the Units of Meaning

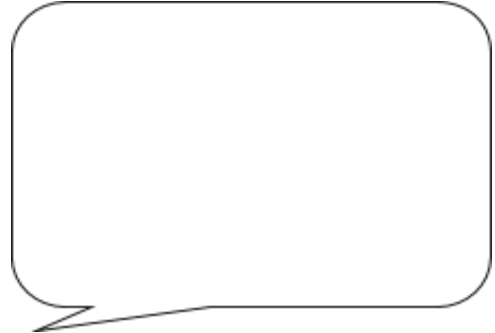
In the first phase of the analysis, the interview was divided into units of meaning about 3-5 lines long, each one dealing with a specific subject. Each unit was given a name taken from what the interviewee said, expressing the content of the unit. In this way, a few dozen units of meaning were produced. Below is a demonstration of the analysis process:

One of them, since year 7, so that'd be like...no since
year 9, so that'd be like 4 years. And the other
one since like, I think, year 11. So that's like, 3
or 2 years
and yeah, ...which is weird because yeah...a
lot of my close friends and a lot of my friend group, just right now, they're very new, we
weren't the same friend group like many years ago. Yeah.



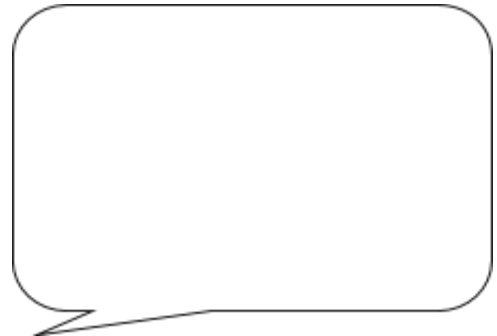
But I guess it just generally happens because with friends you've had for a long time, the most likely thing is that they leave, or you leave. One of you always leaves, so it just a matter of time. Or also just like as you get older and stuff like that, you just, you both become different people,

and you just hang out with people, so yeah, pretty much every 2 or 3 years, your friend group almost completely changes. Most of my friends are very recent.



It's a lot more like if you took that entire situation out of Thailand, it would feel the same just because I pretty much, me and all the other international students who aren't Thai, there is a very big detachment, partly because we can't speak the language, but also just partly because

Bangkok is very industrialized, there's a lot less culture to sink your teeth into. And also, it's even in this place where I've lived most of my life, like all of my life except for 2 years when I couldn't even make memories or something, I felt kind of like a guest more of. Because I don't have others, I don't have attachments to Thailand, like I don't have any family or anything which ties me to the culture. So, it really feels like I'm just visiting even though I've been living here for a long time.



Then, the units of meaning were sorted into several super-categories (Shkedi, 2011), each category comprising several units of meaning which deal with the same subject. These are the super-categories which were produced:

1. Connection with the family (mother, father, siblings, extended family).

2. Difficulties in creating connections with the peer group (close friends, classroom friends, friends from other frameworks).
3. Ambivalent attitude to other meaningful figures (teachers, a therapist).
4. Complex affinity to other countries (the country of origin, the country of residence, another country).
5. Me with myself.

8.2. Analysis of the Documents

For the purpose of analyzing the documents, five sessions with the interviewee from the first year of therapy were analyzed to strengthen the validity of the research. The analysis of the meetings was carried out identically to the process of analyzing the interview, and according to the same categories (as aforementioned). Below is a demonstration of the analysis of the meetings:

He skipped lunch to catch up, and cannot be with his friends, cannot be part of them. Asks

me to write a letter to the counselor at school to get extra time in his next round of exams.

He had another exam in Spanish that he didn't finish. He is afraid of losing his friends because he is not as smart as they are.

He thinks no one wants to be friends with him because he spends a lot of the break time in the library or in extra classes. He tries going out

with friends on the weekends. Mentions that everyone will be leaving for different universities, so it doesn't really matter if their friendship will end now or in one year.

The findings of the Pilot research helped me focus on the questions of the research (See Annexes B, C, D).

9.

Description of the Process

1. Recording and transcribing the recorded interviews.
2. Creating units of meaning from the interviews and the documents of the sessions.
3. Cataloging the units of meaning under top categories.
4. Going through the units of meaning under each top category and dividing them into sub-categories.
5. Extracting themes according to the categories.

1. Recording and transcribing the interviews: This initial phase was the beginning of the data processing work. Each interview was recorded, with the consent of the interviewee and their parents. Upon completing an interview, the phase of transcribing the interview started. In addition, I gathered all the documents of the sessions for each patient, transcribed the summaries of the meeting, and uploaded them onto a digital file so that I can work with the data and move onto the next phase of extracting the units of meaning.
2. Creating units of meaning from the interviews and the documents of the sessions: after completing the transcription of all the material, I divided the content into units of meaning without filtering the content and/or applying any consideration to it. Every few sentences were gathered into a unit of meaning, regardless of whether the unit contributed or did not contribute to the subject of the research. This phase was very mechanical and did not require much thought. All the units of meaning were registered in a chart, as shown in Chart 2 below. For each unit, I mentioned the interviewee's name and its source – documentation of sessions or personal interviews.

Unit of meaning	Interviewee	Source
She felt lonely after two close friends had left Pattana, and since then, their group dynamic had changed.	Ella	Sessions
Louise knows her relationships won't last, so she protects herself by not getting involved in relationships as well as minimizing her time on Facebook.	Louise	Sessions
He had two close friends who had already left.	Rico	Sessions
Since she had moved a lot, it seemed easy for her to say goodbye, connect and disconnect from peers.	Rachel	Sessions
Although M wants to have more friends, she doesn't want to put the effort, energy, or empathy needed to build friendships.	Monica	Sessions
B has 5 or 6 people he can trust at school. The rest don't know him, and he is not comfortable about sharing his opinions or feelings with them.	Ben	Sessions
E doesn't have much trust in others.	Emmy	Sessions
In real life, friends grow apart and lose touch.	Ella	Interview
It's hard for him to trust people, and relationships involving trust are difficult.	Johan	Interview
Expat friends often leave, usually after 3 to 6 years.	Louise	Interview

K likes being social and having strong relationships, especially with his friends.	Ken	Interview
Five of her closest friends don't live in Bangkok anymore.	Rachel	Interview
Because nobody that I know has been through even close to the things that I've been through, I think it's hard for them to understand why I am the way I am.	Monica	Interview
I have known them for 4-5 months; I've never had friends for more than six months.	Monica	Interview
At the same time, they need to make new friends, and they should be realistic about keeping friendships and not just presuming they will last forever. However, it is important to try to keep in touch.	Ben	Interview
She has pretty deep friendships with her close friends.	Emmy	Interview

Table 2: An example of units of meaning table

3. Cataloging the units of meaning under top categories: In this phase, I went through all the units of meaning and defined a top category for each unit. The top categories constituted the first phase of filtering the content and matching them to a theme. The seven themes in the top categories which emerged were 'The Adolescent and Their Friends,' 'The Adolescent and the Place of Residence,' 'The Adolescent and Their Parents,' 'The Adolescent and Their Siblings,' 'The Adolescent and School,' 'The Adolescent with Themselves' and 'The Adolescent and Therapy,' as presented in Chart No. 1 in Chapter 10. An eighth category that is not mentioned in the chart is 'Personal Details,' in which I included all the contents that did not contribute to the analysis, for example, sentences such as

“Johan is a student in Year 12 at the ISB” or “Rachel’s father works for company XYZ”.

4. Going through the units of meaning under each top category and dividing them into sub-Categories: once all the units of meaning had been tagged under the top categories, I filtered the list according to each category, and I went through all the units of meaning once again, to find sub-categories that would express a position / a saying / a certain feeling. Notions such as ‘Father is absent’, ‘I feel a lack of belonging’, and others emerged time and again from the units of meaning and were tagged under the matching categories. Units of meaning which did not have a sub-category which repeated itself remained under the top categories and were eventually filtered out of the analysis. At the end of this phase, I found 27 sub-categories of the 7 top categories, which I then used for the last phase of the analysis – the extraction of themes.
5. Defining themes according to the categories: I re-visited the units of meaning under the categories, as well as the categories themselves to identify and extract the themes – a certain saying – for each of the top categories. At the end of this process, I identified seven different themes that emerged from what the interviewees had said.

10. Findings

The chapter of the Findings comes to answer the three questions of the research - how does relocation affect the adolescent's relationships within and outside the family in relation to the following aspects:

1. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life affect their ability to create and strengthen social connections with their peers?
2. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life change the nature of their connections with their nuclear family?
3. How do an emotional-dynamic therapy and a positive connection with the therapist help these adolescents change the nature of the relationships with their peers, the relations in the family, and their academic achievements and in what way?

As aforesaid, the findings were divided into 27 sub-categories, which were organized into seven main categories (hereinafter the themes):

1. The Adolescent and the Place of Residence: It is difficult for me to define where my home is.
2. The Adolescent and Their Friends: I like company, yet I refrain from deepening connections knowing that separation will follow.
3. The Adolescent and Their Parents: A close connection with the mother as opposed to a distant connection with the father.
4. The Adolescent and Their Siblings: Connections with siblings of the same gender are closer than those with siblings of the opposite gender.
5. The Adolescent and School: The International School is of a high level, but is very stressful and demanding.
6. The Adolescent with Themselves: I do not live at peace with myself, to the extent of self-harm.
7. The Adolescent and Therapy: Therapy helped me improve my connections with my close family, my social skills, my achievements, and my belief in myself.

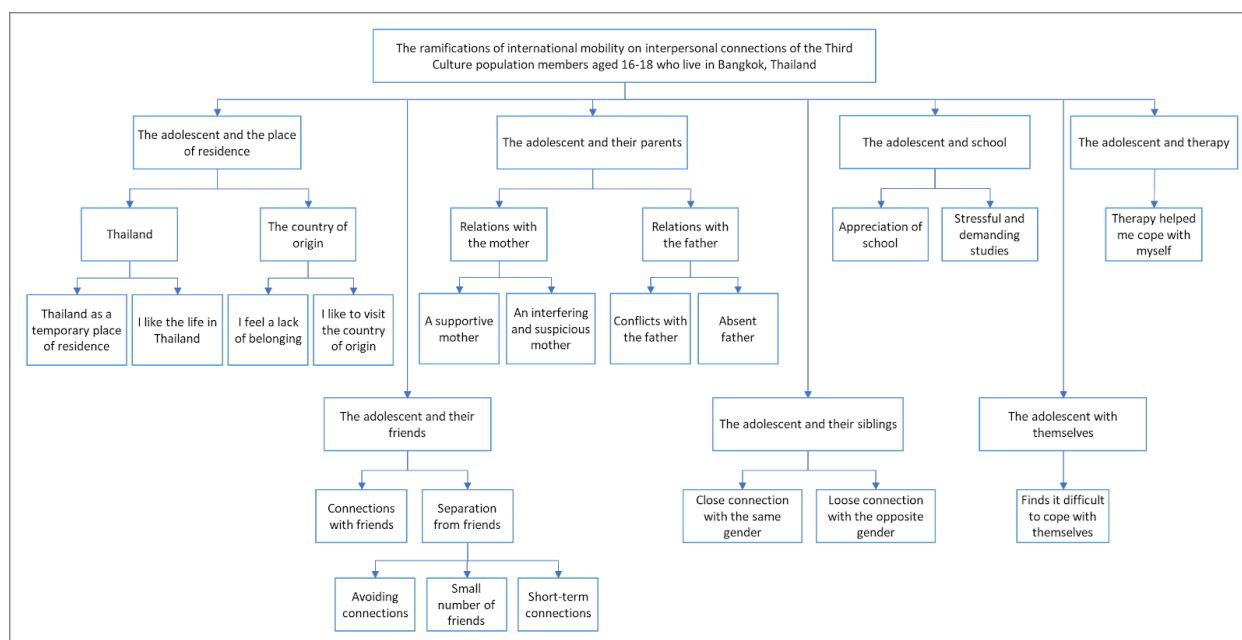


Figure 1: Categories Tree

10.1. Theme Number 1: The Adolescent and the Place of Residence

It is difficult for me to define where my home is

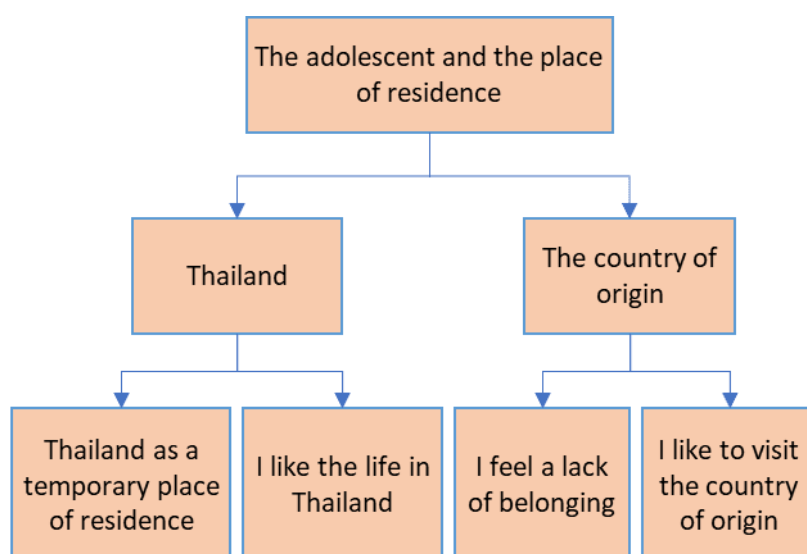


Figure 2: Category tree for theme no. 1: The adolescent and the place of residence

The term “home” is a very broad term for Third Culture Kids – they do not see themselves living in one place or belonging to one place. An analysis of the data shows that the interviewees feel that they do not have a country in which they feel at home. The collective answer to the question “What is home for you?” was: “Despite liking Thailand, it is not home. I am more attached to the country of origin and like to visit it, but also, the country of origin is not home.” Seven out of nine interviewees said that they loved life in Thailand, and seven spoke about their feeling of lack of belonging to the place and seeing it as a temporary place of residence. Likewise, four interviewees reported that they liked visiting their country of origin.

10.1.1. The attitude to Thailand – a temporary place of residence, lack of belonging coupled with a positive attitude to life in Thailand

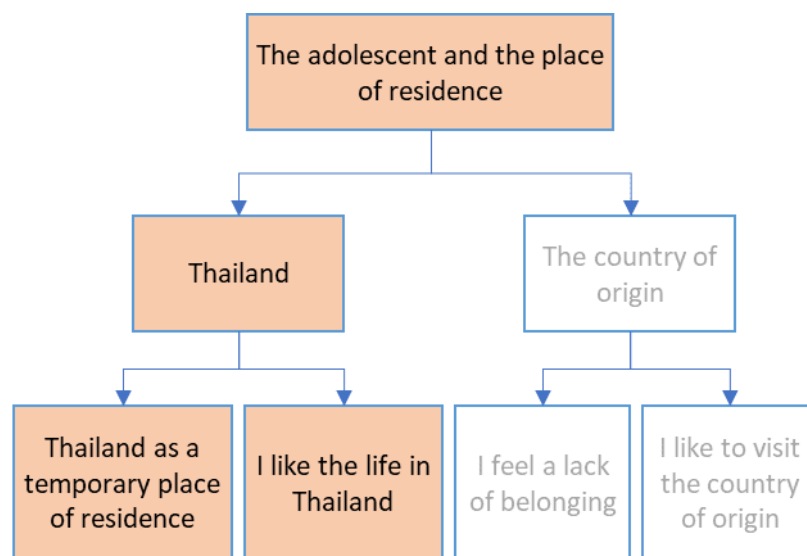


Figure 3: The adolescent and the place of residence – Thailand

Most of the interviewees (seven) spoke positively about Thailand. They liked living in Bangkok; they have plenty of freedom to use public transport; they feel safe to walk about when it is dark, and generally feel comfortable.

Johan says that Thailand is a wonderful place. When he was asked at the interview what he liked about Thailand, he answered “everything!”

“Things to enjoy, like, literally everything... you can’t find anything there which isn’t cool. It’s interesting.”

Rico claims that he likes Bangkok as everything is accessible, and there are a lot of possibilities.

“I really like, at least in Bangkok, how close everything is. Like everything which I want to do, like hang out with my friends, or watch movies, or eat dinners; even like just going to the supermarket, they’re all just within walking distance.”

Ella says that Thailand is a convenient, safe, and cheap country. She likes the availability of public transportation and good food.

“Thailand is an easy country to live in; everything is cheap, you can move around the city in BTS, MRT, and motorbikes. It’s easy to find fresh veggies and fruit, and the food is tasty.”

Ben likes Thailand as it is a spontaneous, changing place with a rich history and culture. He also appreciates the abundance of food, the convenience, and it being an interesting place.

“It’s a spontaneous place. I like the culture and its root, its core. I like that they have street food literally anywhere. I like how convenient a lot of things are, I mean horrible for the environment but like, if you want to ride taxis, then taxis are always available... It has a very rich culture. There’s always something to learn and something to explore. There’s always something new to find out that’s always interesting to know. There are always new places to go to. It’s constantly evolving. It’s dynamic, which fits with me as a person, just for me personally.”

Louise says that life in Bangkok is faster and more interesting than life in Australia.

“I quite like the lifestyle (in Bangkok) ... And it’s very fast-paced. Ah, and then, you know, we can just go out to the mall and watch a movie and go out for lunch, which I think is much more hectic than what I’m used to when I go back to Australia.”

Ken moved from Minnesota to Kuala Lumpur, and from there to Bangkok. When asked which of the places he liked the most, he answered:

“The city (Bangkok) is a lot more interesting. Kuala Lumpur, the actual city, is kind of dull.”

In the interview, after she had already left for the United States, Monica said that she misses Thailand and loves the freedom that is felt there – *“the freedom to be yourself, and, actually, the fact that there are no rules.”*

Monica says that she misses Thailand for its freedom – being able to be yourself. There are no rules there.

Despite being fond of Thailand and Bangkok, seven of the interviewees felt a lack of belonging to the place. They know that it is a temporary place of residence and that when they finish high school, they will move to the next destination. Three interviewees out of the seven (Rico, Rachel and Louise), treat Thailand as a home to a certain extent, though they are not really attached to the place. The other four interviewees said that they do not have a home – not in Thailand or anywhere else. I will discuss these four interviewees in the next article (10.1.2) in relation to the country of origin.

Rico said that Thailand is “home”, as his mother and his friends live here. He has been living here for most of his life and he still does not feel he belongs in this country.

“Home for me is probably Thailand because that’s where my family and friends are, but I’m not very attached to this country. I’ve been living in Thailand for almost my entire life, and still, I feel like a visitor here.”

Rachel defines her home according to her current place of residence (i.e., Thailand), although her place of residence changes. She notes that her sister, as opposed to her, defines Nepal as home.

R's sister considers Nepal as home, but R doesn't agree, especially since she has never lived there. R feels that wherever she is living at the moment is home, even though it changes.

Louise, who says she is half-Thai (even though she is actually a quarter-Thai), maintains that one of the disadvantages of being a Third Culture Kid is the issue of cultural identity. Though she observes the Thai costumes and speaks the language, she feels she is a "Western girl".

Cultural identity is one of the disadvantages of a Third Culture Kid. Plus, being half-Thai, half-Australian complicates matters.

Although she observes Thai culture and speaks Thai, Louise considers herself more Western than Asian.

10.1.2. The attitude towards the country of origin – love mixed with a sense of lack of belonging

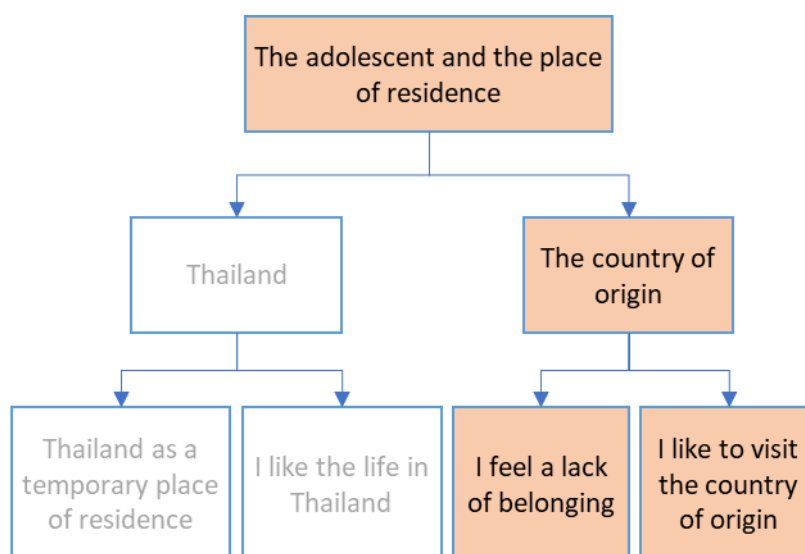


Figure 4: The adolescent and the place of residence – The country of origin

Talking about their country of origin (or that of their parents), four interviewees felt a connection to, and even love of, the country of origin. They like visiting their homeland, they have good connections with their extended families that remained there, and they visit once or twice a year. Some of them are even considering moving or returning to live in the country of origin at a certain point in time.

Ben said in the interview that Germany was probably his home, and he assumed that once he finished his studies in the United-States, he would probably live in Germany.

Home is most likely Germany. They return to Germany periodically, and when he studies in the US, they'll probably meet there as well. Germany is a permanent place for them, so even though he's a Third Culture Kid, it's probably home for him.

He feels close to his grandfather and his grandmother, and he loves spending time at their place.

B feels close to his grandparents. Their time in Germany helps them to bond and spend quality time together as a family. He loves this time with them.

Rico said that he has a sense of belonging to El Salvador – his mother's country of origin, yet he feels more American than any other nationality (based on the country of origin of his father, who had passed away).

"I am eligible for Salvadoran citizenship, but I never got it.

I have a sense of belonging to El Salvador because of my mom, but I have never lived there.

I have no American influence, but it feels like I am more American than anything else."

Louise keeps in touch with her family in Australia, especially with her grandmother:

She has some contact with her family in Australia, especially her Grandma, whom she visits once or twice a year. She knows she might go back to live in Australia as an adult.

Summarizing my sessions with Ken, he said that he loves the US and his mother's family.

He loves his mom's side of the family; they are a big family, and they can stay there for the whole summer.

"We travel back to the US every year, sometimes twice a year. I like the US."

Despite their deep attachment towards their country of origin, seven out of the nine interviewees noted that they did not feel they belonged there...they did not feel "at home". Four interviewees (Ben, Ken, Monica and Emmy), explicitly said that there was no place that is "home" for them. The other three were those who said that Thailand was sort of home to them (Rachel, Rico and Louise).

Although Germany is considered as “home”, Ben does not feel that it is home, as he was neither born nor raised there. He lives in peace with the fact that no place is home for him.

Although Germany is “home” logistically speaking, he doesn’t feel he actually has a home, he wasn’t born and raised anywhere specific, but he’s at peace with that.

Ken thinks that most adolescents define their “home” according to their parents’ country of origin. For him, home is each one of the places where he used to live in the past, and hence, he finds it difficult to define one place as his home. Moreover, he does not define his identity through one piece of land or the other.

Most of the students identify “home” to be where their parents are from. But K believes that each country he’s been to is part of his home.

K doesn’t feel that it’s necessary to describe only one specific location as home.

Other students struggle with personal identity but not for K, as he doesn’t just want to identify himself with a piece of land!

Monica expressed her frustration saying,

“I do not have a home.”

Emmy also emphasizes that there is no place she considers home. She was born in Norway but has been living in Thailand for nine years. She enjoys visiting California and feels connected to that place, though she never lived there and has no family connection to that place.

She feels she doesn’t have a place to call home: she was born in Norway, so she feels a connection. At the same time, she lived in Bangkok for nine years while she was growing up. With California, she feels a connection because of the lifestyle and personality of the place. She feels a connection with each place but doesn’t call any place home.

10.2. Theme Number 2: The Adolescent and Their Friends

I like company, yet I refrain from deepening connections knowing that there will be a separation

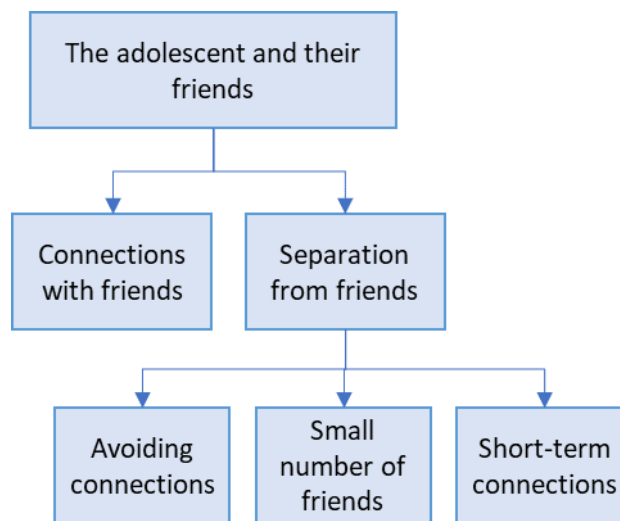


Figure 5: Category tree for theme no. 2: The adolescent and their friends

From analyzing the data, it transpires that the social connections of the adolescents are characterized by a yearning for connection and having high socialization capabilities together with a fear of separation. This theme is based on the fact that five out of nine interviewees said that they liked spending time with friends and wanted to be in touch with their peer group. Seven out of the nine – whether they said they liked company or not – mentioned that they were tired and/or were apprehensive of deepening their connections due to their recurrent experience of separation.

10.2.1. Connections with friends – Yearning for connections and knowing how to establish social connections

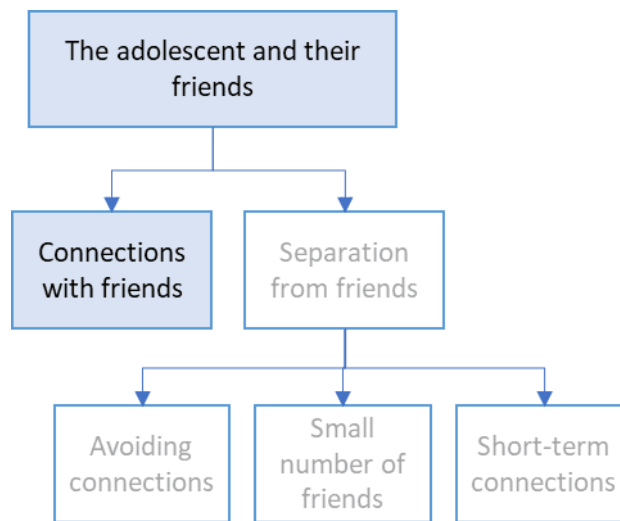


Figure 6: The adolescent and their friends – Connections with friends

Five of the interviewees said that they liked having company; they were interested in having friendships and enjoyed spending time with friends; they also said that they had high socialization capabilities.

Monica said that she finds it easy to create new social connections,

"I am good at making new friends."

Ken said that he likes company and that he is interested in strong social connections,

K likes being social and having strong relationships, especially with his friends.

Ben enjoys spending time with his friends, they go out and have fun together, they also meet at each other's houses,

B enjoys hanging out with friends the most, whether out or at a friend's house, and this is what makes an activity fun.

Emmy has close social connections, and she shares her opinion with her friends,
She has deep friendships with her close friends. She can share everything
with her friends, even deep things, or even express contrary opinions.

Ella says she has many friends,

Ella has about 22 friends. Seven of them know her well.

10.2.2. Separation from friends – numerous separations leading to a small number of friendships, short-term connections and the avoidance of connections

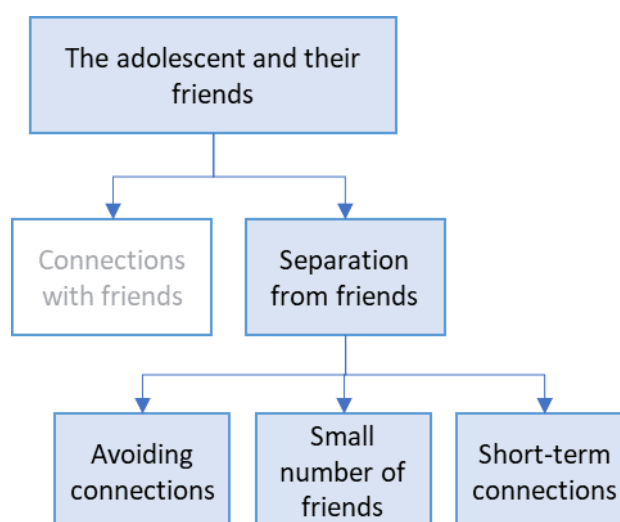


Figure 7: The adolescent and their friends – numerous separations

Despite their yearning to create friendships, the separation experience exists within every one of them, and they are aware that the connection will end at one point. The methods of coping with the numerous separations vary among the interviewees: three of them (Emmy, Johan, and Monica), choose not to invest in new acquaintances, as they are ‘tired’ of creating connections. Two others (Rico and Louise) prefer a smaller number of connections to start with, to avoid frequent separations, and two other interviewees (Ken and Rachel) said that they found separations easy and that they got

used to it. The findings also show that five of the interviewees said that they found it difficult to trust other people.

In the interview with Emmy, she recounted a sad separation she had experienced in the past. This experience has 'put her off' from creating social connections, as she understood that these connections could dissipate very quickly.

"Two of my best friends left in middle school. I was really close to them... at that point, I saw how a friendship could quickly go away... And so I was like, ahh, it's not worth my time to put so much energy into something that could go away so easily. I guess that's also the reason why I was so like not telling anyone about me, because I didn't know how long they were going to stay in my life."

She said that she found it difficult to trust people after her close friend had left. She did not have faith in friendships and thought to herself that it was pointless to get attached to people.

"I feel like the first time it (a friend leaving) kind of happened, my personality instantly changed. I had trust issues; I didn't feel like I trusted no one. I didn't kind of believe in friendship or getting like close friends because they moved; I was like, what's the point?"

In the summaries of my sessions with Emmy, I noted that she was hoping to meet new friends, but she did not make an effort to do so; and that she did not trust others,

E wished she had more friends but did not do much to meet new people. She felt that she would need to say goodbye anyway rather quickly, so there was no need to put in too much effort. Emmy doesn't have much trust in others.

When documenting my sessions with Johan, he said that he was rather indifferent to social connections, as in any case separations would take place in the near future,

J didn't care much, as he thought that even if there would be connections between them, they would all be separating in a few months anyway and probably would not keep in touch.

In the interview, Johan claimed that,

“One disadvantage of growing up as a Third Culture Kid is that people come and go, which makes it more difficult to establish deep friendships.”

And added that he found it difficult to trust other people,

“It's kind of hard to trust people; I'm not going to lie.”

Johan did not enjoy good friendships in the countries he had lived in since primary school. For him, the international school was “a train station” – people come and go all the time. He was fed up with separations,

Johan hasn't had any good relationships with friends in any country he's lived in, even in primary school. International school is like a train station where people come and go, and J feels tired and doesn't want to say goodbye anymore.

Louise knows that her friendships will not last. Therefore, she protects herself by not getting involved in relationships. This has transpired from summarizing our sessions.

When asking Louise whether she can trust others, her answer was positive but applied to a small number of people. She demonstrated it by saying that it is only with very few people that she would feel comfortable in her home, without having to get organized and dress more formally.

Iris: *“Can you trust others?”*

Louise: *“Some people...there are a very small number of people to whom I will say, yeah, sure come over, and I won’t be dressed or something and I’ll feel comfortable. But yeah, it’s quite hard.”*

Rico said in our sessions that he did not care if his social connections ended then or at some point in the future, as in any case everyone would be leaving within less than a year.

Rico mentioned that everyone would be leaving for different universities, so it would not really matter if their friendship ended now or in one year.

Rico does not share much information with his friends; he finds that it works better for him. This also reduces the number of friends who he trusts.

“I speak less with my friends. The less I speak, the better – they think that I am always happy. That’s how the number of people I trust has diminished.”

In the interview, Rico said that he has only a few friends that know him,

“No one really knows me, except for 1.5 people.”

Despite wanting to have more friends, according to the summaries of our sessions, Monica feels that she is not interested in making any effort.

Although M wants to have more friends, she doesn’t want to put in the effort, energy, or empathy needed to build friendships.

In the interview, she added that she does not trust anyone but herself,

“I have no trust in anybody, literally, no trust. I never rely on anybody but myself.”

According to the interview with Rachel, one of the disadvantages of being a Third Culture adolescent is moving a lot from place to place, and the need to establish fresh connections, but one gets used to it. She separated from five close friends who had left Bangkok.

“A disadvantage about being a Third Culture Kid is having to move around a lot and making new friends in a new environment, which can be very difficult, but you get used to it in time.”

Five of R’s closest friends don’t live in Bangkok anymore.

Looking at the summaries of the sessions, it transpires that Rachel moved between many countries and therefore she finds it easy to separate from her friends and connect with new friends,

Since she has moved a lot, it seems easy for her to say goodbye, connect and disconnect from peers.

Ken also noted that he likes having company and is interested in close connections with friends and added that he is good when it comes to separations.

“Emotionally, it’s pretty easy for me to say goodbye.”

10.3. Theme no. 3: The adolescent and Their Parents

A close connection with the mother as opposed to a distant connection with the father

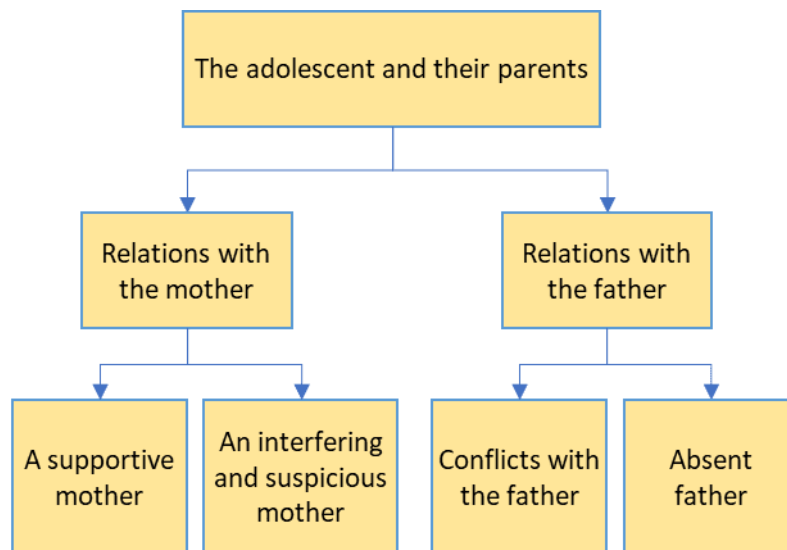


Figure 8: Category tree for theme no. 2: The adolescent and their parents

This theme, which emerges from the interviewees' comments about their parents, depicts – even if not categorically – sensitive relations with the father, full of conflicts on the one hand, and a good relationship with the mother, on the other hand. The father is depicted as an absent uninvolved parent, but still, as someone who dictates and determines. Whereas the mother is depicted as supportive and understanding at times, and as an interfering and annoying mother at other times.

10.3.1. Two types of mothers: those who are close to their kids – understanding and compassionate; and those who live their lives through their children –interfering and suspicious

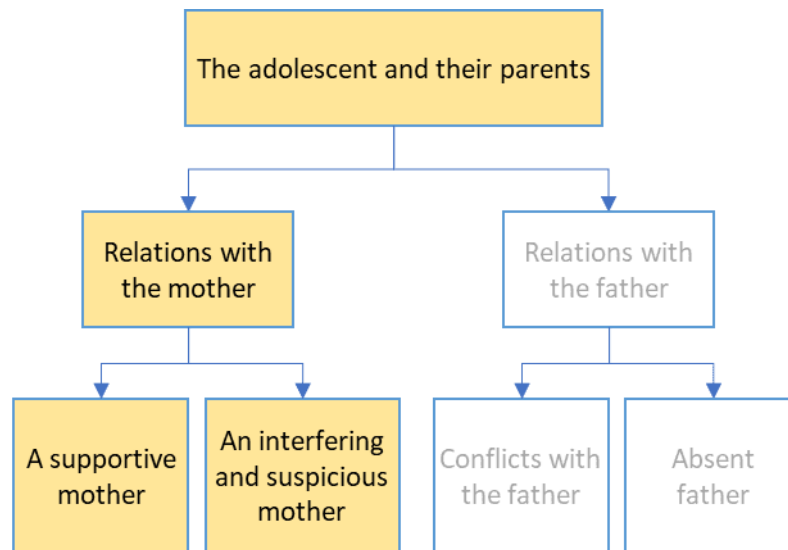


Figure 9: The adolescent and their parents – Relations with the mother

Six of the interviewees said that they saw their mother as a supportive, close, understanding, present and compassionate figure, with regard to their difficulties; while the experience of three out of the nine interviewees is of a mother who interferes too much, annoys and is busy with her kids' lives. Only one interviewee out of the nine described her mother as domineering and suffocating.

Rachel, Louise, and Ben have a good and close connection with their mother, and only have good things to tell about the time they spend together. Rachel loves spending time with her mother, she feels close to her and she knows her well. She shares her difficulties with her mother, and she feels her mother's empathy.

Her mom has a lot of time to spend with her, she knows her very well, she loves her and feels close to her, she shares with mom most of her difficulties. Her mom knows everything about her and is empathetic to her.

Louise said that she enjoyed spending quality time with her mother,
Louise enjoys spending time with her mom over coffee or breakfast.

She felt more open towards her mother; she told her about private matters.

Louise has become more open about spending time with her parents and sharing things with her mom. The bond with her mom is strong in relation to certain things.

Ben felt that his relations with his mother were good, honest, and open, and he trusts her to a great extent.

He has great relationships with mom and is very open and honest with her.
He trusts her a lot.

In addition to these three interviewees, Emmy, Monica, and Johan also described their mothers in a positive way, though they also had a bit of criticism. For example, Emmy said that most of the time her relationship with her mother was good, but she can be irritating.

They have a nice relationship most days, *“but mom can be annoying, always checking my room. She believes that I smoke and drink, but that’s not true.”*

“Mom tries to know everything about me, she asks me so many questions, and I don’t like it.”

Monica experiences her mother as being too involved in her life,

Her mom is overprotective and is very involved in everything she does.

“Mom wants to have quality time as a family, even though Dad travels a lot.”

Her mom has more patience and doesn’t push her to do homework but does ask a lot of questions about school, friends, and her boyfriend.

Johan has good relations with his mother, sometimes too close. His mother does not work and dedicates most of her time and energy to her family.

His mom is always around her kids and husband.

He feels his relationship with his mom is a bit too close and that his mom doesn't understand or respect his boundaries.

Compared to these six interviewees, Ella is the only interviewee who claimed that her mother tries to control every aspect of her life.

Mom tries to control every aspect of her life after school.

Mom wants her to be involved in sports... For her birthday, she got a camera and a bicycle. The camera was her idea, because she loves taking pictures, but the bicycle was bought because her parents want her to be more active even though she doesn't like bicycles.

Some boys invited her out, but her mom is too conservative to let her go; she wants to stop her piano lessons, but her mom won't let her, and she likes to wear make-up, but Mom won't allow it.

Ella described an annoying and interfering mother in a similar way to Johan's, Monica's, and Emmy's descriptions, without adding words of affection about her mother.

10.3.2. The father is absent from home and is not involved, but he is still very dominant and influential

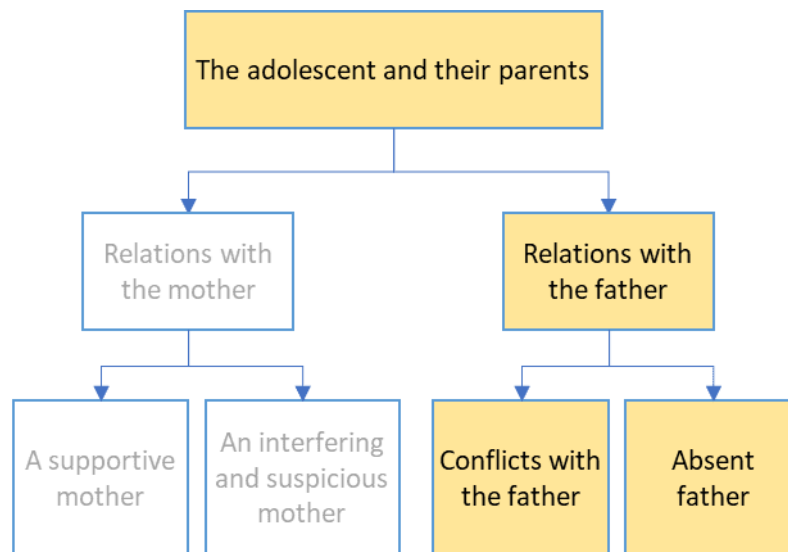


Figure 10: The adolescent and their parents – Relations with the father

The stories of four interviewees depict a picture of an absent father, not present and not involved, who works a lot and goes on many business trips, staying long days and even weeks away from home. These frequent travel results in quite a few conflicts between the adolescent and their father. Although the father is far away, he is dominant and affects their lives to a great extent, either because he is the reason for the moves or by being involved from afar and dictating the rules at home. Another interviewee – Ben – has sensitive and confrontational relations with his father in most spheres of their lives, even though his father does not work, does not travel and is not missing from the house as is the case with the other interviewees.

Johan has many conflicts with his father. He is fed up with his father making the decisions for the whole family.

J has a lot of conflicts with his father, whom he doesn't like or respect, and wishes Dad could travel more so he wouldn't be at home so much.

J is tired of Dad always making the decisions for the whole family without deep consideration of how it would affect his family, especially J, who is in grade 12 and finishing high school.

“Dad is self-centered and always wants to be in control.”

Monica’s father also travels a lot. She claimed that her father did not know her.

“My dad doesn’t know me.”

Rachel recounted that her father is strict and assertive and has his own set of rules.

Her father can be a tough man; he has his own rules and is very assertive.

They do spend quality time together but mostly at home, because her dad usually comes home late.

Emmy’s father loves her very much, so she said, but he is very busy with his business.

He is less involved, he cares a lot about her life, but he is busy with his work and business, so he doesn’t have much time.

Ben said that his father is not involved in his life.

His Dad is not really involved in B’s life and has never gone to a parents’ conference at school.

Ben defines himself as gay. His father considers the gay population as a sick population that needs therapy. Ben felt that his father did not respect his choices in life.

It is unacceptable and against his father’s religion to be gay, especially since he is the only male in his family. His father considers it a kind of illness B needs to recover from. But B can’t understand why his Dad cannot respect his feelings and sexual preferences.

Ben's father does not support his spheres of interest, for example, drama, theatre and the entertainment industry. He speaks negatively about these spheres despite Ben being very interested in them.

Dad has expectations of B. Since B was young, Dad spoke negatively about anything to do with the entertainment industry and didn't think it's a real job, so he told B not to do it.

Ben's father grew up in a culturally poor and different environment, without education at school. He is a Muslim who grew up in Africa and is affected by his religion and beliefs.

His dad's opposition to the entertainment industry is also affected by his culture and religion. Also, his dad grew up in a less privileged environment, which affects his expectations. It seems that B is doing everything the opposite of what his dad wanted. He feels that he has probably failed his dad in so many ways. His dad also told him not to study in the US, but now he is doing the exact opposite – studying performing arts in the US. B isn't doing it on purpose to oppose his dad; perhaps that was the case in the past in the deepest level of his sub-consciousness, but now he feels it is just the way things are working out for him.

10.4. Theme No. 4: The adolescent and Their Siblings

Connections with siblings of the same gender are closer than those with siblings of the opposite gender

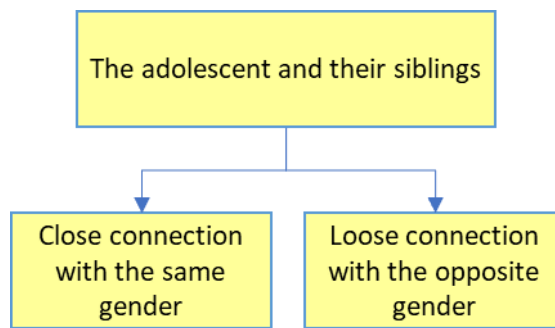


Figure 11: Category tree for theme no. 4: The adolescent and their siblings

This theme indicates that the connections of Third Culture Kids with their siblings are very close when they are of the same gender, whereas, for interviewees who have siblings of the opposite gender, the connection is complex, there are no mutual spheres of interest and the connection is not as close.

10.4.1. The connection with the siblings is good and deep mostly when they are of the same gender

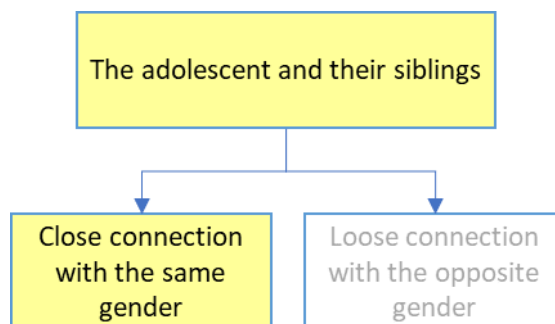


Figure 12: The adolescent and his siblings – Close connection with the same gender

Five of the interviewees described close, warm and loving relations with their siblings. It appears that their attitude did not differ whether the siblings were younger or older. There were close and loving relations with younger siblings, and at times admiration

towards older siblings. For four out of these five interviewees, the siblings are of the same gender.

During the sessions Johan spoke about his younger brother's move to Denmark (the father's homeland), and how he wished they stayed together.

Johan talked about his 15-year-old brother, L, a lot today. They used to be together all the time, but L was not happy at ISB and decided to move to a boarding school in Denmark, where he seems to be happy. J wishes he had moved as well.

In addition, Johan mentioned that he adored his older brother (his brother from his mother's first marriage).

Johan admires his half-brother, who lives in Indonesia but occasionally visits.

Rachel speaks of her sister with affection:

She misses her sister very much; she used to talk to her at least 3 times a week.

Louise described a good connection with her younger sister.

She has a nice relationship with her younger sister who is 13 years old. They live close to school, so they walk there together.

Monica has two sisters and two brothers. Her older sister and two brothers live in America, far from her. Her twin sister lives with her. She only spoke about her sisters.

She had a nice talk with her sister in the US after a long time.

"I'm closer to K."

Ben is a different case, as he is very close to his two younger sisters.

B has 2 younger sisters with whom he has a good relationship, but he is especially close to one of them, almost as a twin.

He starts the morning by sending his little sister to school and later picks her up. It's a big commitment that he is willing to undertake to help his mom, because she needs him. She works super hard to provide for the whole family.

10.4.2. Loose connection with siblings of the opposite gender

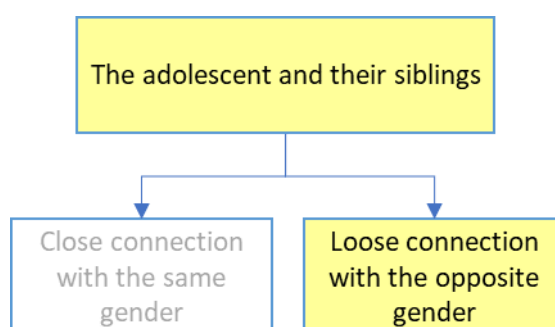


Figure 13: The adolescent and his siblings – Loose connection with the opposite gender

Four interviewees described complex relations with their siblings. Quite notably, those who described poor relations with their siblings were referring to siblings of the opposite gender.

Emmy points out to the differences of gender and age between her brother and her, saying:

“Overall, I think I have a good relationship with him (her brother), but I think because of age and gender, we aren’t as close as I think we would have been if I had a sister, the same age as him.”

Rico isn’t comfortable when his sister is around. He is afraid of her judgmental attitude.

“It is a very weak relationship because I just never felt comfortable around her, and I just sometimes feared her when I was a lot younger... I don’t feel that we have much of a relationship at all. Like, when she left for university, I didn’t miss her or feel upset, but every time we go back to visit her then I am scared.”

From my meetings with Ken:

K has a weird relationship with his sister, they are close but don’t really talk to each other.

Monica does not keep in touch with her two older brothers.

“I didn’t really grow up with them, because they moved when I was very young. They went off to college when I was 7 and 10. I don’t really remember growing up with them.”

10.5. Theme No. 5: The Adolescent and the school

The International School is of a high level, but it is very stressful and demanding

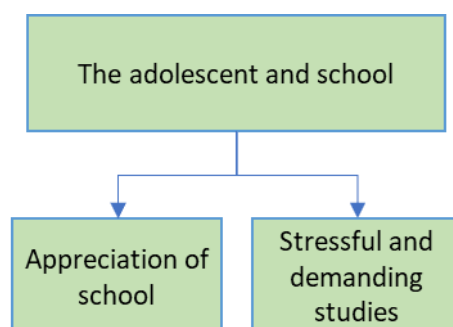


Figure 14: Category tree for theme number 5 – The adolescent and school

This theme is based on a considerable number of the interviewees who noted that the International School is stressful, the International Baccalaureate Program is of a high academic standard, the pupils are required to undergo intensive learning and

competition is tough. They worry that they will not succeed in their studies, and at times experience failure in exams. Still, some of them hold the school, its academic level, and the future opportunities it creates for them, in high esteem.

10.5.1. Deep appreciation for school

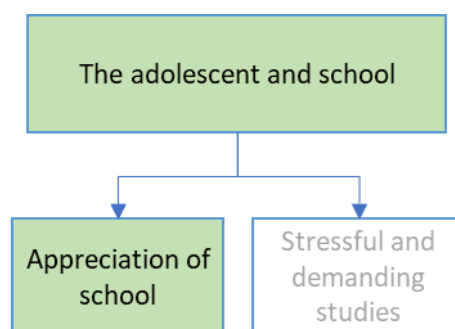


Figure 15: The adolescent and school – Appreciation of school

Although the interviewees study at various schools in Bangkok, it seems that most of them have a unanimous view about the level of their studies. Five of the interviewees noted that the school is of high quality, the teachers are excellent, caring, involved in the pupils' lives and want them to succeed. Some of them also referred to the various opportunities that the studies opened for them.

According to Emmy:

"ISB is a good school academically and has good teachers."

Rachel likes her school and her teachers:

ISB is a very good school, she likes her teachers, the atmosphere at school is good. She feels there are a lot of opportunities, and she feels welcomed there.

Johan said that he appreciated his teachers, they support his spheres of interest.

“I would love to be a high school teacher...I want to be that cool teacher, you know. Like, that will have an impact on people’s lives... I haven’t forgotten some of my teachers, because of the insights and everything they gave me; I like the way they supported me.”

Rico mentioned several times that he liked his school and he felt that the teachers liked teaching their subjects.

“It’s a pretty good school. It has a lot of good resources, and all of the teachers who are teaching me really enjoy their subject; they enjoy what they do.”

10.5.2. Stressful and demanding studies and a feeling of failing to meet the requirements

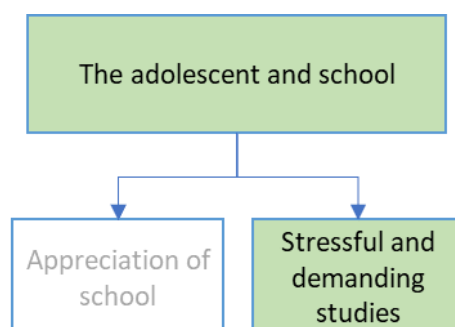


Figure 16: The adolescent and the school – Stressful and demanding studies

As for the learning experience, five of the interviewees described learning as stressful. It seems that they have the will to succeed, but it does not always correlate with their learning abilities, as they perceive them. This view was mentioned by four interviewees who said that they were not good pupils.

Johan said that many of the students suffer from emotional problems which partly derive from the difficult and stressful academic studies.

“The school is very competitive. It’s like they (the school) take the academic stuff very seriously and a lot of people suffer greatly from it... I feel like mainly the mental health issues came from the academics.”

Louise fears having low academic achievements and struggles with the school’s competitiveness.

L feels she’s an average student with no ambition at the moment. She sometimes feels overwhelmed as NIST has a very competitive environment where a lot of students get tutoring classes after school. She’s afraid she won’t get high grades

Ken decided to take only a partial IB program (IB Certificate, as oppose to the full IB Diploma).

He cannot do the full IB, so he only does the Certificate. His teachers cannot understand his difficulties.

Ben feels stressed at school. He feels that he is not a good pupil.

B feels very nervous about school because he was never a good student and he has huge gaps in his studies

Emmy also said that school can be very burdening.

10.6. Theme number 6: The adolescent with themselves – Finds it difficult to cope with his/herself

I am not at peace with myself, to the extent of self-harm

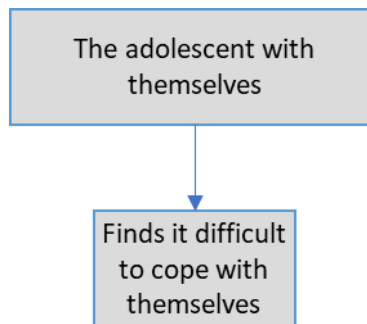


Figure 17: Category tree for theme no.6 – The adolescent with themselves – Finds it difficult to cope with him/herself

This finding may be impartial to a certain extent, as all my interviewees are adolescents who needed emotional support, and hence it is possible that it is not a representative sample of the large Third Culture adolescent population. Nonetheless, I decided to present this finding, together with this reservation.

As aforementioned, the group of the interviewees comprises adolescents living in relocation who came for therapy due to great distress. Six of them suffer from clinical conditions of depression, self-harming, and/or eating disorders.

Louise came for therapy due to self-harming and eating disorders. In our meetings, she reported having suicidal thoughts and described symptoms of depression.

Her parents didn't know she came back home at 2 a.m. She spent some time on the roof and wasn't feeling well, to the point she thought it's time for her to jump off the roof and end her life.

She mentioned again that she had cut herself in different areas of her body although Mom didn't know about it.

She started cutting herself 7 months ago and even found a "self-harming community" on Facebook. She felt she could rely on people in that community and freely express herself with them.

L says she can stay in her pajamas, do nothing and just watch TV or Netflix all day.

When she's in a bad mood, she can stay in bed all day for 24 hours, without brushing her teeth or bathing and eating only junk food.

Rico also came to have therapy because of self-harming.

He cuts himself on his tummy with strings or with a ruler.

Ben told his mom he wanted to end his life. He thought that she would be happier with only his two younger sisters.

B was very sad and told his mom he wanted to jump from their 28th floor apartment window.

B just doesn't do anything and can stay in bed for 24 hours. He felt his Mom would be happier and better off with just his two sisters.

Ella came to have therapy due to bulimia, as she mentioned in our first meeting.

She was fat as a child and is now bulimic. She can eat many desserts in one hour and likes strange food combinations like topping her donuts with ice cream or putting Nutella in her yoghurt.

It appears that Ella suffers from a low body image, though, in my opinion, she is a very impressive and beautiful adolescent.

E feels she gained a lot of weight and looks bad with acne and awful hair.

Monica came for therapy due to suffering from clinical depression following a suicide attempt. She expressed her difficulties in our meeting, saying:

"I hate change. It stresses me out. I hate being lonely. I hate starting over. I hate explaining myself. I hate school. It's so hard to adjust to different curriculums all the time."

10.7. Theme number 7: The adolescent and therapy – Therapy helped me cope with myself

Therapy helped me improve my connections with my close family, my social skills, my achievements and my belief in myself

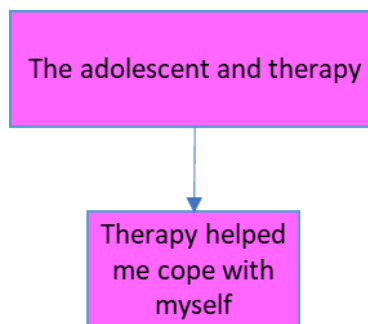


Figure 18: Category tree for theme number 7 – The adolescent and therapy – Therapy helped me cope with myself

All the interviewees persevered with emotional therapy for at least a year. Some of them continued the therapy for two and a half years and more. I felt that I developed a deep, supportive and encouraging relationship with all of them; a relationship which encouraged a different type of connection – a connection with a stranger. The relationship with my patients grew stronger and stronger as the time passed. During therapy they felt better with themselves, they strengthened themselves mentally and coped better with their problems.

Louise had therapy for approximately three years. She felt she was in a safe environment and that she could cope better with her life.

Being in therapy for the last 3 years has helped Louise a lot to process her feelings, instead of bottling them up, in a secure environment so she could handle them in a better way.

After a year of having therapy, Louise met her boyfriend. They have been together for more than a year.

Louise's close and trusting relationship with Iris is a pattern that Louise can use to build new friendships in the future.

"After 1 year in therapy I started dating my boyfriend."

In one of the sessions Louise noted that she has not cut herself, despite having knives from the Art room.

In the past 4 weeks, L hasn't cut herself even though she brought back blades from school. Now, she doesn't have blades at home anymore.

She doesn't feel the need to cut herself anymore and thinks she might come back as a new person with a fresh start. Her friend had already left for Rome and she felt very sad at her farewell party.

Rico testifies that the therapeutic process helped him.

"The therapeutic process helped me a lot to be more connected to myself."

Rachel feels a dramatic change in her relationships.

R sees a dramatic improvement in her relationship with her parents, especially with her dad; she is more open with her friends and is also doing better academically.

Monica said she felt at ease with me and with the therapy.

"Therapy helps me to get stuff out and calms me down."

"I feel comfortable with you and I don't hide things from you."

"I wish there was more support for kids like me, as nobody understands."

Monica even recommended therapy to one of her friends.

M recommended a friend to see a therapist. Even though she doesn't know what happened to her, she knows the friend will benefit from it, *"like me."*

Like Monica, Johan also said that he would recommend therapy to every Third Culture Kid in the world.

He will recommend that any TCK around the world sees a therapist once they start high school or even before.

Johan said that the therapeutic process helped him a lot, and that he could finish his IB thanks to the process.

According to Emmy, therapy contributed to boost her self-confidence.

"I'm happy to share my problems with you."

"Therapy gave me a lot of self-confidence."

At the end of one of our sessions, Ben said that he likes our sessions.

B said he loves coming to my office, as he feels I understand him, and he can't wait till next week to continue.

B feels that our relationship is not only formal and that I know him more than all his friends do.

Ken said that he felt better thanks to the therapy.

"I came for a therapy 3 months ago, I feel a bit better, I feel that I can hold a conversation with my parents in a better way."

"I know the therapy helped me trust others."

Ella said that therapy helped her to a great extent.

Although not fully recovered, therapy has been helpful, and she has learnt a lot about how to be more stable.

The interviewees were happy to come for emotional therapy and persevered for a long time. We have formed very deep relationships, and they felt that they could expose their innermost secrets to me. On many occasions we discussed the need for authenticity, for therapy to be successful. Their interpersonal connections and skills have been upgraded; they were happy to meet with friends, they have better communication with their parents and with other adults (teachers, instructors and strangers). In addition, they have also improved their academic achievements.

The main themes that surfaced from the findings of this research are those which emerged during the therapy process with the interviewees, and were reinforced in the interviews with them. The frequent moves, which resulted in a sense of lack of belonging – “I do not have a home” – create difficulties in establishing deep and long-term connections with friends, and magnify the feelings of proximity, coupled with conflicts, within the family. In parallel, the competitive environment at the International School, where these kids grow up, and the high achieving families, create massive pressure on the Third Culture adolescents. Consequently, they find it hard to cope, which in turn leads them to extreme behaviour. In this context, emotional therapy constitutes an important turning point.

10.8. Reciprocal relations between the themes

The findings were divided into themes. Several reciprocal connections can be identified between the themes, as emerges from this research:

Firstly, there seems to be a connection between the linkage to the place of residence (10.1.) which is cut off because of the father's career (10.3.2.): two interviewees –

Johan and Monica – said that their fathers are to blame for detaching them from their places of residence.

Johan's father already left for his job in Tokyo, only a month after getting his promotion. J suspects Dad had it all planned and just kept it a secret from them. Now Dad expects everyone to move asap, but J doesn't want to do it.

Monica's parents told her they were moving to Hawaii even though they promised they would stay in Thailand until she was in grade 12. M is very upset and doesn't know if she can handle another move and make all the adjustments all over again.

In addition, it appears that the father's absence (10.3.2.) intensifies the mother's need to strengthen her relations with the children (10.3.1) and the bond among the siblings (10.4). Louise said that when her father was not at home, her mother puts a greater emphasis on family time.

"My Dad's away, so not as much (quality time) with him. But since my Dad has left, my Mom has been more adamant on family time and that's just because she misses my Dad. There's no one in the house she can talk to so there's more family time now."

The theme of the adolescent and his siblings (10.4) is also inter-connected with the theme of the adolescent and his friends (10.2), as the connections among the siblings become stronger in the absence of social connections. Johan said that his younger brother is his best friend and that he underwent a difficult period when his brother left for Denmark, as he recounted in the interview.

"I'd say he's (his brother) my closest friend. Or one of my closest friends. We grew up together. We like the same things; it was nice to have him as a constant every time. I always knew I had a friend. I always see him"

as a friend. Before he left, it was kind of shitty. And now I don't have a friend anymore."

The connection between a sense of lack of belonging (10.1.), a small number of deep connections (10.2.2.) and connections with ones' self (10.6.) came up in Emmy's interview. She described the advantages and disadvantages of not having connections which tie her to a certain person or to a certain place. On the one hand she is independent and can manage on her own, but on the other hand she has no one to rely on in times of need, or where to go back to when she "gets lost".

"But here it's like, 'I don't need no one'. So, it's good you're not attached, which is also bad because if you're not attached to anyone then it's like what do you call home, who do you call your best friend, who is your go-to person? I don't have my go-to person. So when I deal with tough stuff in my life, sometimes I think that's part of the reason why I'm so lost and don't really know who I am, because you don't have a place to go back to, to find yourself again."

Difficulties in socialization (10.2.1.) result, among other things, from cultural sensitivity deriving from multiple countries of origin (10.1.) of the pupils at the school. In the interview, Johan described an incident he had with an American classmate when he made a joke about Trump. This incident demonstrates the complexity of inter-personal and peer communication at the International School:

"So when Trump got elected, I was kind of like making some stupid jokes, and then a guy turned around to me and said: 'Johan, you have no right to say something about my culture'."

In the absence of a home country (10.1.), the International School serves as a familiar and comfortable anchor (10.5.1.). Rachel said in the interview that she loved school, as it was very similar to the international schools she had attended in countries where she had lived.

“ISB is a school that I’m used to in terms of it being an international school, not only that, but it’s called a sister school, but with ISKL and JIST and they’re all IS schools, so they’re all very similar, so it’s just what I’m used to and the curriculum in terms of academics and athletics and stuff like that.”

Finally, inter-relations can be identified between the connections the patient has with themselves (10.6.), moving from place to place and the sense of lack of belonging (10.1.), and processing the loss and the need for therapy (10.7.). Monica (aged 16), summarized the interview by saying that members of the Third Culture need emotional support to cope with their experiences of separation and loss.

Iris: *“Okay. Monica, do you want to add anything to this interview? Do you want to add anything about yourself as a 3rd culture teenager?”*

Monica: *“I guess I wish there was more support for kids like me, because nobody understands. It really sucks.”*

Iris: *“More support for kids like you. Why do you think kids like you need more support?”*

Monica: *“Because we have to deal with stuff that most kids don’t have to deal with. They don’t have to deal with loss and leaving everything behind and starting over with a new culture, new languages, and new curriculums, like it’s... it’s really hard.”*

11.

Discussion

International mobility is a unique characteristic in today's world, where people move voluntarily and involuntarily between countries around the world. For kids and youngsters who join their parents, mobility is not a choice but is determined for them. At times, this mobility is very frequent, occurs a lot, and becomes part of their lives. These kids experience many changes and must adjust to the new place, its cultural norms, values, language and education systems.

In light of the data gathered in the personal interviews and the documentation of the meetings, it has been found that the lives of nine of my patients, members of the Third Culture living in Thailand, are full of difficulties and complex challenges in several spheres of life. In this chapter, I have tried to establish a connection between international mobility and the difficulties in the lives of the interviewees – members of the Third Culture – as they were expressed in their life stories during the interviews and therapeutic sessions.

It is important to note that by virtue of my membership of the FIGT organization: Family In Global Transition, which is an international organization dealing with families in constant mobility, I addressed the founder of the organization, a prominent figure in this field of research – Ruth Van Reken – whose books I used a lot in this research, asking to be referred to professional literature in this sphere. I have also addressed additional researchers who are members of the organization, and though all my queries were responded to, regrettably, there is little previous research about social and/or family connections in this population. Thus, I based my research on a limited number of literary sources.

11.1. Everyone Has Difficulty in Defining Where Home Is – Home Is Everywhere and Nowhere

Home is a notion that is difficult to define among Third Culture Kids. All of the interviewees found it difficult to say where home was for them: Ben (aged 16), mentioned in the interview that despite Germany being considered “home” logistically, he does not feel it is home, as he was not born and did not grow-up there. He lives in peace with the fact that nowhere is home for him.

Although Germany is “home” logistically, he doesn’t feel he actually has a home; he wasn’t born or raised anywhere specifically, but he’s at peace with that.

Even in the professional literature (Crossman, 2016), the definition of “home” for this population is unclear. The answers are confusing, and probably represent in the best way the feelings of confusion and lack of belonging of Third Culture Kids.

Bangkok is a cosmopolitan, vibrant, diversified, and interesting city. It offers the adolescents who live there an array of opportunities, places of interest, and entertainment. Moreover, Bangkok is considered a place where personal security is high; therefore, the parents give the adolescents freedom of action. According to the interviewees, they feel a high sense of mobility and freedom, which enables them to spend time outside their home. They said that it is a spontaneous, culturally rich city, where the food is tasty, fresh, and accessible and that the people make it an interesting place.

Johan (aged 18), said in the interview:

“Bangkok is a cool place because you can find everything here. But it’s the people that make a place interesting and fun.”

Although all the interviewees love and enjoy living in Bangkok, they said that they did not feel they belonged there. The gaps between the local Thai culture and the Western culture of most of the interviewees are very large. Differences in religion, costumes, ethnicity, external looks, and language emphasize the alienation of the Western person in Bangkok. Thus, even kids/adolescents who spent most of their lives in Thailand do not feel they belong there. This is revealed by Rico (aged 17), who has been living in

Bangkok for the last nine years, stating that for him, home is in Thailand, but he still does not feel he belongs in that country. Like Rico, Emmy lived for nine years in Bangkok, but she is European in her identity, and she claims that she does not have a place that is home for her.

In Crossman's book (2016), she writes that Third Culture Kids grow up in a place they know is not home – a place which they know they will eventually leave. "Home" is a very complex term for kids who grow up in an international environment – it is clear which is the passport country, but it does not necessarily feel like home (Crossman, 2016). Hence, "I do not have a home" refers not only to the feeling of lack of belonging to the country of residence, but also to the feeling of lack of belonging to the country of origin or the passport country.

Ken (aged 18), expressed it beautifully when he said that he does not define his identity based on one piece of land or the other. For him, home is each of the places where he used to live in the past, and therefore, he found it difficult to define one place as his home. Johan (aged 18), moved between four countries during his 18 years. He felt like a guest in each of the countries, and also currently, studying at university in Canada, he feels like a foreigner; and Monica (aged 16), told me in one of the sessions that even though she was American, when she returned to the United States, she was considered "Dutch." She also does not have a home, as she stated when summarizing the sessions:

"When I moved back to the US after two years in The Netherlands, people called me the Dutch".

In the interview, she said: *"I don't have a home."*

Crossman says that for many of the Third Culture Kids home is not one place. They have many places which they call home, and if they are asked to choose one, they will find it very difficult (Crossman, 2016). "My heart goes out to the Third Culture Kids who are affected by constant mobility, which is a crucial experience in their lives. Over the

last six years, I moved back and forth between my homeland Denmark and my host country Iceland. I spent most of the time in Iceland, which, compared to Denmark, now feels like my second home. I identify the different feelings which come up when I stand with one foot in my homeland country and with the other foot in the host country. It is a mixture of contradictory feelings of being in-between: longing, belonging, or a feeling of culturally not belonging” (Engelbrecht, 2013, p-8).

The findings show that the home experience of Third Culture Kids is characterized by not having one home, correlate with the professional literature. It appears that the sense of lack of belonging derives from a life split between countries.

Even if the country of origin is not “home”, it is a place that is loved by the interviewees. All the interviewees miss their country of origin and yearn to visit it. Three interviewees (Rachel, Emmy, and Louise) speak about their will to live in those countries in the future. Rachel likes speaking in her parents’ language (Nepalese) and waits for the holidays in order to visit her extended family in Nepal. A few interviewees described their visits to their country of origin as a positive experience; they enjoy spending time with their family. Most of them mentioned the extended family living there and said that the visits to the country of origin strengthened the connection between them.

From knowing the Third Culture Kids, I understand that they are yearning for an island of stability and are looking for attachment to an ideal place: a place that is entirely good, safe, with people who are permanently present. They travel to visit their extended family only on holidays, stay there for a short period, and it is conceived by them as the ultimate place. The extended family dedicates a lot of time to be with ‘the guests’, who arrive from overseas; there is a lot of quality time with family and proximity. In my opinion, they idealize their countries of origin.

11.2. Most of Them Are Interested in Having Company, But Refrain from Developing Deep Connections

As transpires from the findings, Third Culture Kids want to have relationships with their peer group. Nonetheless, they refrain from developing deep connections, as they fear separation and experiencing secondary loss time and again. Moving from one country to another causes Third Culture Kids to become accustomed to situations whereby people leave. In the international school, separations are frequent and do not enable the establishment of deep and long-term connections. Once they leave for university, they are in a similar situation – they are far away from family and friends, and they need to get acquainted with new people yet again.

Like most adolescents, Third Culture Kids are also eager to have social connections with their peer group. According to the literature review, at these ages, adolescents start developing relations with the opposite sex; they prefer the peer group and, in parallel, separation, and great distancing from the parents develop. At this age, the need to belong to a peer group, and create a personal identity, separated from the parents, develops. Peer pressure at this age is very high and intensified, and the adolescent seeks acknowledgment and social compatibility (Coleman, 1980). Five interviewees said that they like to meet with friends, desire social connections and are happy to go out together. However, seven interviewees said that they are tired of separation – three refrain from meeting or are ‘too tired’ to meet new friends; two others fear creating or deepening social connections and two more claim that as a result of many separations, they find it easy to separate from friends. As far as these interviewees are concerned, there is no point in investing in inter-personal connections, as they are bound to end. Emmy (aged 18) said that she does not make an effort to meet new friends. Ben (aged 16) also speaks about a “temporary connection” with his current friends.

The findings showed me the way these adolescents ‘distance’ themselves from connections with their peer group, and refrain from new acquaintances as a protective mechanism. They try to avoid the pain of separation, which is a type of loss. In their

book, Pollak and Van Reken ascertain that numerous losses of social connections, loss of a familiar place and status, and loss of living standards/lifestyle lead Third Culture Kids to undergo a constant process of sorrow and mourning. It is an unpleasant situation which the Third Culture Kids try to avoid. As for trust and lack of trust, they state that although Third Culture Kids are interested in creating connections in the new place they moved to, they feel vulnerable and are afraid of making social mistakes and being rejected or exploited by others (Pollak, Van Reken, 2017). Crossman claims that many of the Third Culture Kids have tests which they use to decide if they can trust a certain person and share their deep thoughts and feelings (Crossman, 2016).

Rico (aged 17) has been living in Bangkok for more than nine years, and he has not moved many times, he has been through many separations from his friends who have left the city over the years; he therefore prefers not to open up and share parts of his life with friends. He keeps his private life to himself, enjoys going out with friends, and spending quality time with them, but these are only “shallow” relationships. He does not have many close relationships. In an interview, he claimed: “only 1.5 people know me” and added that he does not care if these relationships end now or at a later phase.

Others maintain relationships with a larger number of friends but find it difficult to maintain long term or deep relationships due to their numerous departures and moves, or those of their friends. For example, summarizing a session with Johan (aged 18): he said he did not manage to maintain deep relationships with his friends in any of the countries he had lived in. He does not remember people from the past. As far as he is concerned, the international school is a “train station” – people come and go all the time, and he does not want to say ‘goodbye’ anymore. Monica (aged 16), feels that due to her frequent moves, nobody understands her. Ben mentioned in the interview that he and his friends would not stay friends forever.

In her book (2016), Crossman claims that “Third Culture Kids are forced into numerous separations which exhaust them emotionally; some of them feel that it is not worth meeting new friends. This usually occurs after frequent separations year after year, or when the kid himself has moved several times, and he is the new kid in the group; he has no energy left to make new acquaintances” (Crossman, 2016; p. 225). Pollock and

Van Reken (2009) claim that the Third Culture experience can create a better and richer understanding among Third Culture Kids of themselves and the world, and an ability to get attached to a large variety of people, but this attachment will not be deep or long-lasting (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009).

Considering the data of this research and the professional literature, it can be said that Third Culture Kids are interested in social connections, but find it difficult to create long-lasting connections, as their mobility is very high. It appears that they refrain from creating connections to save themselves recurrent separations. It may be only one of the reasons for the fact that their social connections are not deep, it may well be a case of kids with an insecure pattern of attachment, and that is why they require therapy. This data has not been checked in the research.

11.3. Ambivalent Relationships with the Parents – A Distant Father, An Attentive and Understanding Mother, But Who Occasionally Interferes

As transpires from the previous chapter, adolescents in relocation experience frequent changes and many separations in their social environment. Compared to these changes, the family unit is stable and undergoes fewer changes. In most cases, the family moves from place to place as one unit, at least until high school is completed. In professional literature, it has been found that when the Third Culture Kids move a lot or their friends leave, the family becomes very important. For many Third Culture Kids, the family members are the only permanent thing – they are the only ones who stay (Crossman, 2016).

Looking at the family unit in this research, I have found that the relationships in these families are complex - there are a lot of external pressures caused by frequent moves from place to place, which, in turn, complicate the dynamics within the family. It has been found that in most cases, despite the father being dominant and influential, he is

absent and is not involved, while the mother is understanding and attentive, but at times is perceived as interfering and a nuisance.

Most fathers are people with careers who are focused on the family's livelihood. Due to their professions, they work long hours, come back home late, go on many business trips, and thus are often absent from their homes. Under these circumstances, the father is not involved in his kids' lives on a day-to-day basis, as he is physically and/or mentally absent from the household. This also transpires from Emmy's description of her father's absence and her weak connection with him, as well as from Monica's description, who stated categorically: "my father does not know me".

Nonetheless, the father with a career has a crucial effect on their lives. The career world of the global nomads usually brings about work contracts for a limited period (mostly three years), at the end of which they must move to another role in a different country. This is a situation whereby they uproot their kids to the "next station", forcing them to leave a familiar environment, separate themselves from their reality and start everything anew. Because of them, the family wanders from country to country, and when the father receives a new position, it marks the family's move to the next destination. When a family relocates, there is an imbalance between the person who is responsible for this relocation and the other family members. It is evidenced even with regard to the visa specifications. The working person receives the work permit, and the rest of the family receive a 'dependent pass'. In certain countries (including Thailand), it is very difficult for foreigners to obtain a work permit, and therefore the 'dependent' spouses find themselves being dependent for a long time without a workplace, which magnifies the imbalance. The lack of equality between the emissary and the rest of the family members might result in frustration and sometimes anger.

The kids might develop anger towards their father and even a hostile attitude, as transpired from the cases of five interviewees. In the interview, Johan claimed that he felt that his father concealed his plans, even though these plans affect the entire family. He added that:

"Dad is self-centered and always wants to be in control."

Alongside the career-led fathers, half of the mothers are busy with the home and the kids, and the other half work. In two out of nine cases (Ben and Ken), the mother's workplace is responsible for the family's relocation. In three other cases, the mother works, but she is not the emissary (Louise, Rico, Ella). In the four remaining cases (Monica, Rachel, Johan, and Emmy) the mothers do not work.

According to the interviewees, it is evident that whether the mother is a career woman or not, she is not absent from their lives. In this research, I did not find a certain correlation between the quality of the connection and the mother being a career woman. Both Ben, whose mother is an emissary, and Louise, whose mother works, said that they have open and sincere contacts with their mothers. Rachel, whose mother does not work, said similar things about her mother being empathetic towards her and knowing her well. Three other interviewees said that their mother was close to them and worried about them, but at times interfere too much. Johan said that his mother has no limits, Monica said that her mother burdened her with questions, and Emmy felt that her mother suspected that she smoked and checked her room frequently.

As aforesaid, it appears that the connections of the interviewees with their mothers are good and close, even though at times they feel that their mother is too close, interfering, and irritating. As opposed to the close connection with the mother, there is a confrontational / poor connection with the father, who is frequently absent from home and the adolescent's life, having decided to uproot everyone at once and move on.

11.4. The Connection with the Siblings Is Good and Deep Apart from Cases of a Different Gender

Proximity, which derives from the family being an island of stability in a sea of change, is also evident in the context of siblings' relationships, as well as relationships with the parents. Like the parents, the siblings also move with the adolescent as one unit between countries, at least while they are of school age. According to Crossman (Crossman, 2016), many of the Third Culture Kids claimed that their siblings were their

closest friends – the only ones who had been through the same experiences and seen the same things. 40% of the Third Culture Kids who were born after 1985 said that their siblings were their closest friends. Crossman's claim is also supported by this research, as most of the interviewees described close and tight relationships with their siblings. According to the interviewees' testimonies in the interviews and the summaries of the sessions, it transpired that three female interviewees maintained close connections with their sisters, they like to spend time together and spent long hours talking to each other. Likewise, two male interviewees maintained close connections with their brothers. Louise (aged 16) maintained a good connection with her younger sister (aged 13); Monica (aged 16) was close to her two sisters: the eldest sister who lives in the United States and is ten years older than her, and the twin sister who studies with her at the same school; Rachel (aged 16) is very close to her sister who left for studies in England (aged 19); Johan (aged 18) and his younger brother (aged 15) keep in constant touch after the brother went to a boarding school in Denmark. Johan also has a half-brother who is ten years older than him and lives in Indonesia. He adores him and waits for his visits very eagerly, and Ben has close ties with his two younger sisters.

As can be seen, good relationships between siblings apply in most cases (excluding in Ben's case) to relationships with siblings of the same gender, with no influence of the age gap or geographic distance. The adolescents keep close relationships across continents and oceans, which spread over a wide range of ages. I assume that this closeness derives from mutual spheres of interest between members of the same gender, in a place where everything is magnified (in the framework of relocation), as well as being almost the only permanent thing in an ever-changing world. But what about siblings of different genders? As opposed to the cases mentioned above, when it comes to siblings of different genders, according to the data of this research, the connection is not that close or strong. Ken (aged 18) noted that his relations with his sister are weird and that they do not talk with each other much. Emmy (aged 18) said that the age and gender differences affect the closeness between her and her brother and that they do not have common spheres of interest. Monica (aged 16) who is close to her sisters, did not mention her male siblings very often during the interview, and the summaries of the sessions show that she does not have constant contact with them

and that they seldom talk with each other. For Rico (aged 17), being far away from his sister, who lives in the United States, has done him good – he said that he was happy when she left for university.

Ben (aged 16) is the only interviewee who maintains good contacts with family members of the opposite gender. He has two young sisters. He feels close to both. He treats one of his sisters as his twin, and he looks after his younger sister and sends her off to school. It is possible that due to Ben's sexual preferences – he defines himself as gay – he sees and experiences himself as a feminine figure to a certain extent, and that is why his gender definition is somewhat blurred. This explanation may solve the contradiction which comes up from this finding.

11.5. The International School is of High Quality and a Very High Academic Level. However, It Is Demanding and Pressurizing.

In many countries, Third Culture Kids cannot study in local schools due to the language barrier, and thus they study in private frameworks, international schools, and boarding schools. These are the only places where the curriculum is taught entirely in English (Zilber, 2009). In the past, the objective of the international schools was to prepare the students for their return to their countries of origin. But nowadays, the ideology of these schools is to educate the students to have a global understanding of the world and for general peace (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008). They try to educate for a better future, higher values, to create people who will lead change and take responsibility for a better world (Zilber, 2009).

Most of the international schools in Bangkok operate according to the IB program (IB – International Baccalaureate), which is an international matriculation program acknowledged worldwide by higher education institutes as a very high-level challenging diploma. The program was developed in 1968 to enable those kids who move around the world and want to maintain some stability in their curriculum to receive a high level

of studies. All the universities around the world are familiar with the program and endorse it during the admission process for academic studies.

This program demonstrates high and reputable learning potential (The IB Organization). Rachel says:

“I like ISB because it is very similar to other IS schools I attended, in terms of the diversity in the student population, as well as in the academic curriculum, athletics and art programs.”

The International Schools in Bangkok are of top quality and very competitive. This comes up from what the interviewees said, as well as from my acquaintance with these frameworks. It is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-national environment with many religions, all of which enrich the lives of the pupils to a great extent. To be admitted to one of these schools, the kids need to sit exams and undergo a personal interview. They are also required to submit a grade sheet from previous schools, references from teachers, and at times even their medical records.

The level of studies and achievements is also very high. As evidence, in one of the International Schools – Bangkok Patana – it has been found that in 2019 three pupils out of 123 at the school received a final mark of 45 points – the maximum mark in the IB program. For the sake of comparison, according to data of the IB Organization (ibo.org), the number of pupils worldwide who have been awarded the maximum mark in 2019 was 213 out of 85,783 pupils who sat the exam. In other words, 2.4% of Patana’s pupils received the maximum mark, compared to 0.25% of the pupils over the rest of the world. This school attained an exceptional average of 34 points compared to 30 points of the world average and achieved 97% of success compared to 78% of success worldwide. It is considered a massive success and opens a wide range of possibilities for the school graduates admitted to universities around the world.

The curriculum at the International School of Bangkok is highly expensive and accessible only to those of high income and those who are funded by an organization that has sent them to work abroad. The tuition fee for an academic year at such a high school is as high as that for an academic year at a private institute for higher education

and amounts to dozens of thousands of dollars per year. Hence, these schools employ a large, high-quality, professional team. This is supported by Johan, Emmy, Rico, and Rachel, who said that they appreciated their teachers and that there is a good atmosphere at school. Rico's impression is that the teachers like the subjects they teach. Johan added that he is considering studying teaching in the future, and Rachel said in the interview that the school had opened various opportunities for her.

Crossman claimed that the International Schools offered the pupils a very high level of studies, with a rich and diversified curriculum, which was advantageous. However, the disadvantage is that academic expectations are also high, and the pupils feel it. For example, kids who moved from their countries of origin to a secondary school, feel that there is a big gap in the level of studies, and as a result, they feel that they are only average pupils (Crossman, 2016).

The high level of studies is indeed demanding and stressful. In order to obtain the much sought after diploma, the pupils study day and night under tight schedules. This transpires from what Louise said: she feels overwhelmed by the competitive environment of the school, and that she and her friends study for long hours outside the school in private lessons to meet the requirements. Ben and Ken feel stressed at school because they are not that good. They both relinquished the IB diploma and decided to study for a less stressful International Baccalaureate Certificate. Johan says that in his opinion, part of his emotional problems and those of his friends, derive from an overload in their studies. Four of the interviewees describe themselves as mediocre pupils, and it bothers them.

The findings show that the school adds an element of heavy stress onto the adolescents. It is also possible that due to the moves between countries, the adolescents were obliged to adjust to a new education system each time, which contributed to their academic deterioration. In the test of time, we learn that five of the interviewees (Ben, Louise, Monica, Ken, and Ella) did not finish the IB Diploma program and decided to move to the IB Certificate program (partial IB program).

11.6. They Have Issues Coping with Themselves; All the Interviewees Started Therapy Due to A Complex Problem, Some Had Even Harmed Themselves

This research shows that because of the circumstances mentioned above and the external variables which have affected their internal state, the emotional condition of the Third Culture members is complex and makes it harder for them to cope with themselves.

Seven out of nine interviewees were referred to therapy due to a complex clinical condition (depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicide attempts, eating disorders). All the interviewees are aged 16-18 as aforesaid, and therefore I will discuss the adolescence period first, as it is a complex time for every adolescent.

Adolescence is a period of significant physical, emotional, and social changes. During adolescence, the adolescent copes with the main task of forming and consolidating a more stable and uniform identity. This process includes an examination of various aspects of the personal, sexual, political, social, and familial identity (Solberg, 1994; Saruf, Kooper and Dehart, 1998). In parallel, the adolescent faces challenges relating to his social status, his integration into his peer group, and creating connections with the opposite sex. The adolescent faces significant developmental tasks, but he does not necessarily have the capabilities to cope with them all (Solberg, 1994).

Adolescents have a tendency towards extreme thinking and behavior, increased focus on themselves, and taking risks. These make it more difficult for them to cope and complete the developmental tasks they face. The process of adolescence leads to “self-search”, conflicts and behavior which are unacceptable by the parents (such as curfew times, smoking, inappropriate dressing). In such cases, the emotional difficulties and conflicts can lead to significant distress and might even harm the development of the identity, the self-image, and the familial and interpersonal relations (Steinberg, 1980).

In addition to these difficulties, the Third Culture adolescents cope with a set of difficulties resulting from their complex reality caused by moving from place to place:

difficulties with their identity – I do not have a home – as transpires from article 9.1; short-term social connections and many separations, as shown in article 9.2; difficulties in the connections with their parents, as evidenced in article 9.3; and a demanding school as noted in article 9.5 – all of the above make it more difficult for adolescents in relocation to cope with themselves and with all the experiences in their lives.

Six of the nine interviewees who came for therapy due to a clinical problem were referred because of inflicting self-harm, depression, and/or eating disorder. Three of them reached a state of suicidal attempt or suicidal thoughts. The seventh interviewee came to therapy after using drugs. As aforesaid, three interviewees brought themselves to life-endangering situations. Evidence for the above can be found in the Findings chapter. The last two patients were referred by their parents; Rachel (aged 16), because of severe migraines without a physical-medical reason, and Emmy (aged 18), due to lack of motivation for studying and withdrawing into herself.

From my acquaintance with these cases and based on the findings, I think that among the reasons which led them to be in a clinical condition, there are two main reasons: (1) personality structure which struggles to cope with pressure, as these kids live under a heavy daily burden, be it in the framework of their demanding school, or in their career-pursuing, high-achieving families – at home, these kids are also under stress, whether directly or indirectly. And (2) socialization skills which have been harmed as a result of lack of stability deriving from the ever-changing social environment, the mobility of the family and home, lack of confidence, a sense of lack of belonging, all of which made them feel lonely and contributed to their difficulty in coping with their condition.

Most Third Culture Kids come from high-achieving families. The parents are chosen by the organization which sends them abroad. These organizations look for excellent people. According to Crossman, at times, the “hosting” countries require that the emissaries have an academic degree or unique qualifications to issue a work visa (Crossman, 2016). She adds that most of the Third Culture Kids that she interviewed said that they were under pressure to succeed in their studies.

According to Pollack and Van Reken, at times Third Culture Kids, who feel lost, might take risks, especially during transition periods, to find ways to connect or even avoid feeling lonely. It may be necessary to a certain extent but might lead to dangerous, harmful, and even illegal behavior (Pollack, Van Reken, 2017).

11.7. The adolescent and Therapy – Therapy Helped Me Improve My Connections with my Close Family, My Social Skills, My Achievements and My Belief in Myself

Monica (aged 16) chose to conclude the interview by saying something very significant, in my opinion, to describe the need of kids like her for emotional support, and therefore I chose to quote her word for word. She maintains that “we (Third Culture Kids) have to deal with things that most kids don’t have to deal with. They don’t have to deal with loss and leaving everything behind and starting over with a new culture, new languages, and new curriculums, like it’s...it’s really hard”.

Monica’s words sum up the findings of this research in an extraordinary way, as in one sentence she described the overall difficulties that members of the Third Culture experience. The difficulties Monica mentioned, as well as the difficulties mentioned throughout this discussion, i.e. not having a home, separation from friends, complex relations with an absent father and an interfering mother, and pressure at school, magnify the need of Third Culture Adolescents for emotional support provided by a professional.

From the literature overview, the research and practical experience, I found several characteristics that contribute to positive therapeutic connections, which, in turn, advance the therapeutic process. These characteristics include empathy, support, honesty, commitment, non-judgmental position, and interest in the patient’s life. These parameters, and more, are important for any therapeutic process, and, in my opinion, they are of greater importance when it comes to Third Culture members, whose inter-personal connections require investing an effort, a safety net and mutual trust.

In an article published by Tamir Psychotherapy Institution, it was claimed that it is difficult to know in advance whether mental therapy will achieve its goals, but we do know of one factor, which is considered to be a strong predictor of the result – the therapeutic alliance (Safran, 2000). When checking with patients who had successful psychological therapy, which variable was the most helpful, most of them reported the importance of the relationship with the therapist and attributed a central part of the change to the therapeutic connection and its quality.

And indeed Strupp (2001), one of the leading researchers in the realm of psychotherapy, has coined the term *nonspecific factors*, which he defined as ‘the personal characteristics of the therapist and the positive feelings which emerge in the patient – feelings which can lead to the creation of a positive therapeutic climate from an emotional and interpersonal point of view’. In other words, beyond the therapeutic methods that the therapist uses, there are human factors – variables pertaining to one’s personality – which their contribution to the mental change is invaluable. According to the professional literature, due to the physiological and mental changes that the adolescents generally undergo, there are two schools of behavior: (1) Adolescents who distance themselves, create conflicts, mentally separate themselves from their family and want independence; and (2) Adolescents who want proximity, are more friendly, seek intimacy and good communication (Collins & Repinski, 1994). In any case, whether the adolescents seek proximity or not, it appears that the beneficial connection with the mother is not sufficient, as they do not feel comfortable to share certain things with her, such as: self-harming, using drugs, etc. Therefore, the connection with the therapist is very important – the therapist becomes the sympathetic ear; at times, the only one for these adolescents, someone who keeps a secret and is warm and empathetic.

A basic and very significant notion in every type of therapy, which is considered as one of the most significant characteristics at the basis of positive therapeutic relations, is the notion of empathy (Wampold, 2010). At times, I choose to share stories from my relocation with the adolescents, and I always strive to be attentive to what they say, nurture their self-image and self-confidence, as, in my opinion, they do not receive enough positive reinforcement from significant figures in their lives. Keeping the

therapeutic setting is also important. Each patient has a fixed day and time to provide the patient with as much stability and permanence as possible. In other words, therapy provides them with an island of stability in a place where nothing is stable.

During the interview, Monica (aged 16) said that she felt comfortable with me and that therapy helps her loosen up.

“Therapy helps me get stuff out and calm down. I feel comfortable with you, and I don’t hide things from you.”

Ben (aged 16) feels that the connection with me is not just formal and that he likes coming to our sessions.

“At this point, I really don’t need to go to Iris ‘cause I have problems, I just go ‘cause I want to. I feel like you know all the things that they (my friends) don’t.”

These adolescents who study in private schools receive support from a large team of professionals. The international schools make sure they provide counseling services and provide the kids with assistance from the minute they arrive at the school until their departure. According to the policy of international schools, the school’s advisor/psychologist can only provide an initial response. If there is a need for a deeper treatment, they are obliged to refer to an external professional. In seven out of the nine cases described in this research, the school’s adviser is the one who initiated the referral for therapy. The role of the school’s adviser continues after referring the pupil for therapy – he maintains consistent contact with the teachers, he helps in supervising the pupil during school hours, and if required, the adviser can facilitate matters such as: adding time during exams, supporting learning difficulties, approving absence from school, etc. Therefore, I think that continuous contact and therapeutic follow-up between the external therapist and the school’s adviser is important and even crucial for the success of the therapy. I see the school and the school’s adviser as a significant side of the therapy – the second side.

In clinical research, as mentioned in article 10.6, in most cases, a medical professional is also involved – the family's physician, a psychiatrist, and at times a nutritionist depending on the case. Working with the patients in this research, as is the case with other patients, I found that the cooperation between the therapist and the medical professional contributes to a great extent to the success of the therapy - this is the third side.

The fourth side in the success of the treatment is the parents. The patient's parents are required to be actively involved in the therapeutic process. Starting from the intake phase until the end of the therapy, parental guidance meetings take place, where they receive advice and recommendation as to how to conduct themselves at home in the best, supportive and understanding ways while being considerate towards the adolescents' difficulties.

These days, while I am writing the "Discussion" chapter of my research – October 2019, six interviewees (Ben, Rico, Ken, Louise, Johan and Emmy) have already left Bangkok, five for universities in other countries and one took a year of holiday (please see Chapter 15). Two patients – Emmy and Johan – continue the treatment through video chats with me once a week. Monica had also continued her sessions with me for six months after she moved from Bangkok to Hawaii until her parents found a new therapist with whom she meets face-to-face.

I have noticed that the better the relations between the therapist and the patient, the more successful the treatment is. Likewise, the Third Culture adolescents will be able to reconstruct and replicate a close connection with one person to another, be it friends, family, or other people. As evidence, Monica, Louise, and Ella formed relationships with a partner between six months and a year after having therapy. Louise (aged 17), said that thanks to the therapy, she had succeeded in creating a romantic connection.

11.8. Reciprocal Connections between the Themes

Looking at the findings of this research and the whole set of themes that come up from this research, some reciprocal connections can be identified between various themes.

I think that part of the “I have no home” feeling results from the constant transience and lack of control over their lives, dictated by a career-led father who controls the moves (article 10.3.2), as came up in Johan’s description of the lack of control over his life (aged 18). He mentioned his love of Thailand, and this may be the reason he is angry with his father, as he did not want to leave. Monica (aged 16) had also left Thailand with great sadness and anger towards her father, because of whom they had to leave. It is possible to detect reciprocal connections between their love of Thailand and their esteem for the International School (article 10.5.1), as it constitutes a central part of their adolescent lives where they spend most of the day. Nonetheless, they are required to adjust quicker than they can. Maybe it results from a lack of flexibility in their personalities and low capacity to cope with new situations, especially when the home does not provide enough support.

The father’s absence is magnified in light of the frequent separations and the small number of social connections (article 10.2.2), as the nucleus family is the only permanent thing among the various changes (article 10.1); and thus, when one member of the nucleus family (the father) is absent, his absence is felt even more. This also applies to siblings who leave for studies abroad as we can see in Johan’s (aged 18) case – his father is in Japan, his half-brother is in Indonesia, and his younger brother is in Denmark – a disintegrating family which also causes him to disintegrate, and in Rachel’s case – her father travels a lot for business and her sister studies in England. When the father is absent, it is more important for the mother to preserve the family. As Louise (aged 16) speaks about the importance of family meals, which continue to take place every day, especially when the father is absent (article 10.8).

It has also transpired that sympathy towards school (article 10.5.1) and the need for friends (article 10.2.1) play a role in the sense of belonging and in getting to know other children of their age. Still, the difficulty in socialization at an international school derives,

among other things, from cultural sensitivities (article 10.8), as shown by Johan's (aged 18) description of an incident he had with a classmate after the elections in the US. This incident sheds light on the difficulty of these adolescents to express themselves freely in an international school, to be authentic, and to feel that they are in a familiar and safe environment. Many of them say that they feel they are a "cultural lizard", as discussed in a research carried out at Tilburg University (the Netherlands) by Anastasia Goana Go Ying Ying (2017). She refers to the Third Culture members as lizards who have to adapt, consciously or subconsciously, to their environment.

Although most of the interviewees spoke about a demanding and stressful curriculum (article 10.5.2), they still expressed their fondness for the International School. In the absence of a "home-country" (article 10.1), the school plays the role of something familiar and stable. Rachel (aged 16) moved from Malaysia to Bangkok to a similar educational framework, and she finds it familiar (article 10.5.1). It may be the case that the school fills the absence of meaningful connections with the adult world – they spend long hours at school with their teachers. For example, Rico (aged 17) said that he felt that the teachers liked teaching him; likewise, Johan (aged 18) said that he appreciated his teachers.

The theme of 'The Adolescent with Themselves' (article 10.6) and the 'The Adolescent with Therapy' theme (article 10.7), have reciprocal relations with all the other themes – the way the Third Culture adolescents cope is complex across all the parameters, starting from "I do not have a home" through their relations with their friends, the studies, families, siblings, and their attitude to the country of origin and country of residence. The feelings of lack of belonging (article 10.1) and social loneliness (article 10.2), constitute a significant factor in the sadness which might develop into depression and the infliction of self-harm. The warm and beneficial connection with the mother compensates to a certain extent for these deprivations, but at times can feel suffocating (article 10.3.1). The irritating mother and the overload of the competitive curriculum (article 10.5), might create a "pressure cooker" experience whereby the adolescent feels trapped and stressed. The career-led high-achieving father constitutes a mirror for success and achievements (article 10.3.2), which increases the adolescent's and his parents' high expectations for his achievements, be it a social or academic

achievement. The various difficulties and experiences of the interviewees have led them to feel low self-esteem (in Rico's case), low self-confidence, and even have a wrong body image (in Ella's, Monica's and Louise's cases).

Therapy for Third Culture members is highly important, as they find it difficult to find a way to cope with their complex situation in the world of mobility. In the absence of intimate connections, when they are upset and lonely, and they cannot find a close person to share their feelings with and receive advice, at times, they direct their pain inwardly by way of harming themselves. Be it by becoming bulimic, cutting themselves, or being suicidal – inflicting self-harm is a source of refuge for them. Dr. Yael Segal (2015) claims that in many cases of self-harm, the adolescents do it not in order to inflict harm on their bodies or commit suicide, but as an expression of emotional distress, an expression of their pain. The action of inflicting self-harm helps them connect to themselves, release themselves from pain, and/or call for help.

Therapy serves as an outlet for them where they feel comfortable to share their pain. Due to scarce intimate relations in their nomadic lives, the therapist may be the only person on earth who really knows what they are going through, knows their innermost thoughts and secrets. According to Rico, the therapeutic process helped him to connect to himself, and Ben said I knew him better than his friends do (article 10.7). The objective of the emotional therapy is to increase the adolescent's sense of control, where control over their nomadic lives is limited (article 10.1); to regulate the feeling of sorrow over the loss they experienced (article 10.2.2); to encourage relations with the peer group (10.2); and actually, to teach them to express their negative feelings in alternative ways (discussion/talks, art and creation).

11.9. The Difference in Providing Therapy for Third Culture Kids

Providing therapy to members of the Third Culture involves treating adolescents from diversified cultural backgrounds, both the culture in which they live and their original cultures. Added to this is the therapist's culture, which may be different from those of the patients. The therapist, like the patient, is required to be "a cultural lizard" – to know

how to adapt themselves to each patient and each family they meet. Ken is the son of a pious Christian mother who belongs to the Mormon Movement; Ben is a Muslim, he is the son of an African father and a German mother who converted to Islam; Rachel is Nepalese, and Ella is of Korean-Australian origin. Each patient brings their uniqueness and cultural richness. A culturally sensitive therapy requires an acknowledgment of the importance of understanding the patient's cultural background to be able to better identify their physical and mental pains. Understanding that what is considered "normative" in one culture may be considered unusual in another. The therapist must be aware of the level of "normality" of their patients, knowing that there is cultural and conceptual diversity, as well as differences in their personal identities and family dynamics. In order to build a good therapist-patient relationship, the therapist must understand the patient's background.

As is the case in every treatment, there is a considerable dependency on the therapist in therapy for Third Culture members. As the Third Culture patient does not have many beneficial figures in their lives, the therapist becomes even more meaningful. The therapist may find themselves being the only confidante when it comes to extreme behavior, as emerges from Pollock & Van Reken in article 11.6, such as the use of drugs, alcohol consumption, and other endangering behavior. Therefore, the therapist is required to a greater involvement and, at times, they are even required to leave the therapeutic setting of the clinic. For example, carry out visits to schools and maintain constant contact with the professional team (the school's counselor and teachers); acquire a broad acquaintance with family members and, at times, provide a family therapy; and in clinical cases, visit patients in medical institutes. More than once, I have found myself being called for an urgent visit to the psychiatric ward to visit patients who had been admitted to hospital. I am frequently invited to school staff meetings dealing with the adolescent's support system in the framework of their studies. It is possible that as I am also a foreigner in Thailand, there is social solidarity between me and the patients, which deepens the inter-personal connection and creates a good rapport.

Third Culture members experience mourning over unseen loss – separations and moving. In the Literature Review, in article 3.1.3, Boss claimed that these losses are vague and perplexing at times, to the extent that they make it difficult for those who are

on the move to identify the sources of their grief and the adjustment to the new place (Boss, 1999). In their book, Pollock and Van Reken note that the numerous losses result in a constant mourning process (Pollock & Van Reken 2017). The therapist who provides support to this population has to acknowledge the many losses that they experience, be it tangible or intangible, knowing that it is difficult to mourn without being supported.

The childhood and adolescence experience of Third Culture members may seem as 'privileged' and full of opportunities, which indeed it is in many aspects. These adolescents grow up with very high standards of living, in many cases higher than the ones they had in their country of origin, because the dispatching organization provides certain benefits to the relocating family, such as a private driver, home-maintenance staff, and a residence in a prestigious neighborhood. In addition, in many cases, the families living in relocation enjoy a high standard of living compared to the hosting culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017). The therapist of Third Culture Kids should acknowledge the advantages that life in relocation brings but must also understand that these opportunities come with a price. Acknowledging this price provides the patients with a safe space where they can share their problems openly without feeling guilty.

12.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings of this research and the relevant professional literature reflect the lives of Third Culture adolescents aged 16-18 in a world of global mobility. Many times, as it transpires from the examples of my interviewees – adolescents in relocation who live in Bangkok – they encounter day-to-day difficulties in coping with the challenges life presents them, and they come to me for therapy. These youngsters, boys and girls, are burdened and sometimes collapse under the social, familial and academic pressures, deriving, among other things, from frequent moves and the sense of foreignness and alienation together with the competitive environment in which they live. This burden, if left untreated, might lead to extreme behavior such as self-harm, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, and even suicide attempts.

In this chapter, I summarized the findings of the research into brief answers to the three questions of this research:

1. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life affect their ability to create and strengthen social connections with their peers?
2. How does the transience which characterizes their way of life change the nature of their connections with their nuclear family?
3. How do a short-term emotional-dynamic treatment and a positive connection with the therapist help these adolescents change the nature of the relationships with their peers, the relationship in the family, and their academic achievements, and in what way?

Question 1: How does the transience which characterizes their way of life affect their ability to create and strengthen social connections with their peers?

The numerous separations resulting from the transient nature of the adolescent's life in relocation – separation from the country of origin and the family that was left behind; separation from the country where they lived before the move; separation from friends

who leave and move to another country and even separation from the nuclear family (parents and siblings) upon graduating high school and moving to higher education, of their siblings or themselves – all of these factors affect the way in which these adolescents create and strengthen social connections. As demonstrated in the “Discussion” chapter, they want social connections, they like spending time with their peer group, and they are even good at creating connections, but they are also afraid of deepening their connections, of being exposed and of opening themselves to their friends, either knowing or fearing that the social connection is bound to end. Thus, they develop various ways to cope with the loss of connections, be it by avoiding connections or avoiding deepening existing ones, by reducing their deep connections to a small number of friends, or by developing a mechanism which enables them to cut connections, like they cut themselves in the extreme cases, without looking back.

Some of the interviewees described the phenomenon of avoiding connections, saying that they were tired of separation and of creating new connections. Those interviewees developed a defense mechanism to cope with the recurring separations and the pain that followed by refraining from creating connections in the first place, thinking – consciously or sub-consciously – that one cannot lose something which is not there. Evidence of the loss experience and the avoidance can also be found in the professional literature, as emerges from Pollock and Van Reken’s book (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017), in which they mention a constant process of mourning, which these adolescents try to avoid.

Reducing deep connections to a limited number of friends is an additional defense mechanism that emerges from the interviewees’ responses. They allow a very small number of friends to genuinely get to know them, thus reducing the danger of loss to a few people. According to Crossman, these kids develop tests which they use to ascertain whether they can trust a certain person (Crossman, 2016).

A quick severance of the connection is the third defense mechanism that emerges from this research. This mechanism enables the adolescents to detach themselves from social connections that end (seemingly) easily, as they are experienced in separations and acquaintances, detachments and attachments. This method may prevent them

from deepening social connections, as deep and meaningful connections are more difficult to cut off. Pollock and Van Reken also mention this in their book, saying that these adolescents can get attached to a large variety of people, but the connections they form are neither deep nor longstanding.

The findings also show that the International School constitutes a very qualitative academic framework, but also a very stressful one. Most of the interviewees said that they are very preoccupied with their studies and busy with their academic achievements. These adolescents, who are in their last two years of studies, during which they sit their final exams, may not be free to invest in social connections, let alone new connections. This subject was not covered by this research and did not come up directly in the interviews, but their description of the stressful curriculum and the competitive academic setting can be indirectly interpreted as another cause of the socialization difficulties of these adolescents, and it can serve as the foundation for continuing research.

Question 2: How does the transience which characterizes their way of life change the nature of their connections with their nuclear family?

The Third Culture Kids spend a considerable part of their childhood in the host country due to their parents' jobs – jobs they received due to their unique professional ability. Mostly, the parents are ambitious people – businesspeople, diplomats, professionals from the education system, military personnel, and other high echelon professionals. They move together with their families from country to country; the nuclear family is the most permanent resource they have. They move together as one unit, and they need each other.

According to the findings and the data gathered in the framework of this research, it is obvious that the connection with the mother is good, empathetic, and healthy. Still, there are situations whereby the mother is perceived as an annoying figure who interferes too much. In my opinion, the mother's behavior derives, at times, from lack of employment together with a sense of exclusive responsibility for the kids. The division

of roles between the parents is mostly, dichotomous – the father is the provider while the mother is the 'dependent' (as defined in her residence permit). The adolescents may perceive their mother as being dependent as a developmental characteristic – their aspiration for independence and their need for being dependent is projected onto the mother. However, in families where the mother works, the responsibility for the kids still lies with her. This factor was not checked in this research, and there may be room for future research in this subject.

The connection with the father may be distant and hostile due to the adolescent's anger and feelings of frustration towards him. He is the main cause for the moves, and, in fact, the feeling of 'I do not have a home' – the feeling of alienation and loneliness which accompanies every move – can be blamed on him. He is also absent from home and is not involved in their lives. They commented that they felt that their fathers were not meaningful in their lives.

In most cases, there is a close connection with the siblings. This research has found that when the siblings are of the same gender, the connection is of better quality than with siblings of the opposite gender. This finding is interesting and should be further researched. Based on the findings of this research, it is my impression that the moves and the life in a different country magnify the feelings and experiences shared by the siblings, which, in turn, strengthen mutual understanding and the feeling of partnership. The researchers Pollock, Van Reken, and Crossman claimed that the nuclear family, including the siblings, is very meaningful for Third Culture Kids, as they are the most permanent people in their lives.

Question 3: How do a short-term emotional-dynamic treatment and a positive connection with the therapist help these adolescents change the nature of the relationships with their peers, the relationship in the family, and their academic achievements, and in what way?

In general terms, everyone can benefit from emotional therapy, especially if the reason for seeking therapy is some distress. During the years of my work, I found that positive

therapeutic relations are characterized by a mutual commitment to the therapeutic process, the patient's understanding of what happens during the process, and being understood even when they come from a completely different culture to that of the therapist. Likewise, agreeing about the objectives of the therapy, and mutual trust between the therapist and the patient, contribute to positive relations. In the therapeutic setting with Third Culture Kids, there is a large variety of cultures, religions, ethnic origins, different values, and a unique family dynamic. Thus, the therapist should have cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility and show an unconditioned acceptance of each and every person.

Most of the interviewees came for therapy due to deep distress, sadness, and suicidal thoughts: depression, self-harm, eating disorders, taking drugs, and even suicide attempts. The feelings of distress raised by the interviewees during therapy are related to the themes discussed in this research, i.e., feelings of loneliness and alienation, partially satisfactory family connections and a demanding and competitive international school. As can be seen, the issues they need to cope with are complex, and coming for therapy was very important for them. All the interviewees said that they noticed an improvement within themselves, in their family connections and even in their academic achievements. They were satisfied with the therapy and the connection with the therapist, and they persevered with consistent therapy for a long period. In my opinion, therapist-patient relations are very important especially for members of the Third Culture. If there are close, beneficial and qualitative relations, the chance to replicate these relations, build trust and even create romantic relations with other people, will be higher.

13.

The Limitations of the Research

- ❖ The interviewees are adolescents who came for therapy and therefore reflect adolescents with difficulties.
- ❖ The adolescents are my patients and are under a long-term therapy of more than a year. My acquaintance with them is long-term and deep.
- ❖ The research was written in Hebrew and then translated to English. Only the transcripts of the interviews and meeting summaries remained in English throughout the entire process. As a result, there may be language subtleties that got lost in translation.
- ❖ This research focused on the difficulties arising following relocation. There may be advantages and benefits in this process, which the interviewees were not asked about.

14.

Proposals for Future Research

1. The attachment theory and its effect on the creation of connections by third culture members

This research sheds light on the difficulties Third Culture Kids face as a result of relocation. Future research may seek an answer to the question of how the attachment theory can serve as an answer for adjustment difficulties of this population; it can also investigate the reasons for the lack of deep social connections, caused by frequent moves and considering the attachment theory.

2. Segmentation of the members of the Third Culture

Referring to the members of the Third Culture as a unanimous population does not do them justice, as it comprises various populations. It can be divided into sub-groups in various ways and then examine them separately. For example, examining the differences between Third Culture members who come from North America and those who come from Europe; the differences between those whose parents are of the same origin and those whose parents are from different origins; the differences between those who study in an International School and those who study in a single-culture school (for example The Japanese School in Bangkok, the French School in Bangkok, etc.). All the above and more can be subjects for further research about members of the Third Culture.

3. Long-term research

This research examines adolescents in their last two years at high school (ages 16-18) – a period between a year and two years at the most. It would be interesting to examine the same interviewees in a few years, and to check the long-term effects of their adolescence as members of the Third Culture.

4. Quantitative research

This research is a qualitative research, which focuses on a group of nine interviewees only. It will be interesting to examine the questions of the research in quantitative research to try and identify the socialization patterns of the larger Third Culture population.

5. A cross-country research

This research was carried out in Bangkok, Thailand. It will be interesting to carry out similar research in other countries to identify differences in the findings among members of the Third Culture living there.

6. The positive effects of cultural wealth to which members of the Third Culture are exposed

This research focused on the difficulties and negative influences experienced by members of the Third Culture as a result of recurring moves. All the interviewees are my patients who came for therapy due to difficulties. But what about the benefits these adolescents enjoy? The positive aspects of these moves should be examined – the cultural exposure, high-quality studies, and the sense of safety and independence in a foreign country. These are some of the advantages that should be examined in future research.

15.

Where are the Interviewees Today?

Six interviewees completed their high school studies in June 2019 and left Bangkok; five of them continued onto higher education at various universities around the world:

Emmy – returned to her homeland. She is studying for a B.A. in General Studies at a university in Oslo, Norway.

Rico – received a 40% scholarship to study Mechanical Engineering at a university in New York, US.

Ben – received a full scholarship for Performing Arts Degree in one of the Universities in Los Angeles, US.

Johan – studies writing and journalism at the University of Montreal in Canada.

Louise – chose to return to her father's homeland and will start studying psychology at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Ken – went on a gap year to work.

Three of the interviewees are still at high school:

Rachel – progressed to grade 12 at the International School in Bangkok. She wants to study in Britain at a university near her sister.

Monica – progressed to grade 11 at a State School in Hawaii. She wants to study medicine at one of the universities in the US.

Ella – progressed to grade 12. She plans to leave Thailand and move to Australia. She wants to study Agriculture and live on a farm in Australia's plains.

16.

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17.

Annexes

17.1. Annex A: An Informed Consent Form



The Professional School of Psychology

Form of Consent

Participant's name [REDACTED]

1. I hereby authorize *Iris Hertz*, of The Professional School of Psychology, and any research assistants authorized by him/her, to gather information from me on the topic of *Relocation and interpersonal relationships in adolescence*.

I have freely and voluntarily consented to participate in this study, with no coercion, psychological or otherwise, used to elicit my cooperation. I understand that I may terminate participation in this study at any time.

I understand that my participation will involve _____ (answering questionnaires, giving biographical information-- whatever your study calls for) and will take approximately *45 minutes*.

2. I understand that there is physical or psychological risk involved in this participation
I am aware that some people might be offended or embarrassed by some of the questions asked, I have been assured that I must feel free to refuse to discuss any matters that cause me discomfort or that I experience as an unwanted invasion of my privacy.

3. I understand that my participation or nonparticipation in this study will in no way affect my treatment at *Iris Hertz – Clinic* in Bangkok, Thailand.

4. I understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue distress that may that may have been provoked by my participation, consultation will be available to me.

5. These procedures have been explained to me by *Mrs. Iris Hertz*.

Participant's signature

[REDACTED] _____
Name of guardian

1 / February / 2019
Date

Signature

17.2.

Annex B: The Outline of the Interview with the Interviewees

1. Introduce yourself: your name, age, where do you study, what is your country of origin and that of your parents?
2. Tell us about your life: how long have you been living in Bangkok, where did you live before coming to Bangkok, for how many years did you live in each country, why did you move, etc.?
3. Tell us about your family: how many siblings do you have, how old are they, what do your parents do for their living, etc.?
4. Tell us about the relationships in the family: Mom, Dad, siblings and the extended family who does not live near you – the dynamics within the family.
5. Tell us about the connections with your friends and other meaningful figures in your life: classmates, friends in the neighborhood, friends in the country of origin, teachers, neighbors, sports instructors, etc.
6. In general terms, what is the nature of your connections with people?
7. Tell us about your school: the curriculum, difficulties with your studies, the correlation between the curriculum of your current school and that of your previous school, the social dynamics, etc.
8. Moving: what was your experience of moving between countries? Do you remember positive/negative experiences, and why?
9. What are the advantages of life in relocation?
10. What are the disadvantages of life in relocation?
11. Does being a Third Culture Kid make your life easier/harder? In what way?