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## Third Culture Kids as a Specific Migrant Group

The term *third culture kids* (TCKs) refers to children or young persons who accompany their parents to another culture and society. They can live their lives in various places in the world. The parents can work for example in development co-operation, as missionaries, diplomats, governmental workers and business people. The term was developed by the American sociologist Dr. Ruth Hill Useem in the 1950s. David Pollock defines TCK as a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Another often used term is *global nomad* developed by Norma M. McCaig.

One of the characteristics of TCKs is that they are very mobile. Most often, these young people are adaptable. They are not always enthusiastic about change, but they know they are able to manage situations where their environment changes. "Migratory bird syndrome", as Ann-Christine Marttinen expresses, can lead to the inconvenience of staying in one place or even in one country, in one job etc. One of Marttinen's informants said that she has inherited wings and roots from her parents. She gained wings from the family's mobile way of life: she had the ability to move from one culture to another. The roots came from a clear base in the home country and good skills in her mother tongue.

Parents returning to their country of origin are coming home but for their children the country they are leaving that moment can be the country they feel belonging. In

very mobile families, the "home country" for a family's children can be different from person to person. It may depend on how long time and in which age of childhood they have lived in a certain country, and where they started to feel a strong identification.

Adult TCKs are internationally experienced, adaptable and relate easily to a diversity of people. They don't belong anywhere and at the same time everywhere. In a globalizing world adult TCKs are a resource for whom there is surely a wider use. Often they act as bridge builders.

### Sources

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